Basic information

2013/2064(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Volunteering and voluntary activity in Europe **Subject** 4.10.16 Social and community life, associations, foundations 4.45.02 Cultural programmes and actions, assistance	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
CULT Culture and Education	SCURRIA Marco (PPE)	22/04/2013
	Shadow rapporteur ROTH NEVEĎALOVÁ Katarína (S&D) TAKKULA Hannu (ALDE) BENARAB-ATTOU Malika (Verts/ALE) VERGIAT Marie-Christine (GUE/NGL)	

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
DEVE Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
BUDG Budgets	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
REGI Regional Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Communication	REDING Viviane

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
19/12/2012	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2012)0781	Summary
18/04/2013	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
17/10/2013	Vote in committee		
23/10/2013	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0348/2013	Summary
10/12/2013	Decision by Parliament	T7-0549/2013	Summary
10/12/2013	Results of vote in Parliament		
10/12/2013	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2013/2064(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CULT/7/12463

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE514.578	20/06/2013	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE516.903	05/09/2013	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0348/2013	23/10/2013	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0549/2013	10/12/2013	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2012)0781	19/12/2012	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2014)260	06/05/2014	

Volunteering and voluntary activity in Europe

2013/2064(INI) - 19/12/2012 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to present a report on the implementation, results and overall achievements of the European Year of Volunteering 2011.

BACKGROUND: following consultation launched by the Commission in 2006, the European Parliament adopted a declaration calling for a European Year of Volunteering 2011. In 2009, the European Parliament and the Council endorsed the Commission's proposal to designate 2011 as the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship (EYV2011).

Fully respecting the principle of subsidiarity, the EYV2011 was designed to encourage the efforts undertaken by Member States, regional and local authorities to create better conditions and higher visibility for voluntary activities in the European Union, by pursuing four objectives:

- to work towards an enabling environment for volunteering in the EU in order to anchor volunteering as part of promoting civic participation;
- to empower organisers of voluntary activities to improve the quality of the latter;
- to recognise voluntary activities;
- to raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering.

In accordance with the Decision establishing the European Year of Volunteering 2011, the Commission presents a report offering an overview of the implementation, results and overall achievements of the European Year, building on the conclusions of an external evaluation.

CONTENT: the report states that the EYV 2011 acted as a catalyst for policy changes both at European and national level. Several initiatives were undertaken in the extension of this Year, and the European Year of Citizens 2013 will build upon the achievements of EYV 2011.

Budget: in 2011, a total budget of EUR 7.7 million supported activities at European level and in the 27 EU Member States. A separate budget of EUR 2 994 million for preparatory actions had been available in 2010 to develop an information and communication campaign for the EYV2011 and to set up the coordination structure bringing together the main stakeholders at European level.

Implementation of the European Year in Member States: in order to organise its participation in the European Year, each Member State designated a National Coordination Body (NCB), the range of which showed the diversity of volunteering traditions in Member States. NCBs were granted a total of EUR 3.549 million to coordinate national EYV2011 activities in line with a national work programme developed by each NCB and approved by the Commission.

The report describes the activities that took place at national, regional and local level, including: (i) awareness-raising activities (communication campaigns, visibility events, competitions and award ceremonies, websites, leaflets, promotional items, media work, social networking, etc.); (ii) debates (conferences, seminars, meetings, etc.); (iii) expertise-related activities (research, studies, publications, etc.).

European actions: the EU also co-financed certain “flagship” initiatives to promote networking and innovation in the field of volunteering. This corresponds to one project per country in fourteen Member States, as well as multiple projects in certain countries. The budget allocated to the co-financing of flagship projects was EUR1 964 million. The Commission's co-financing was limited to a maximum of 60% of a project’s total eligible costs.

Priority was given to projects testing and developing new and innovative schemes and building long-term partnerships between civil society organisations and public sector bodies involved in volunteering.

Lastly, the European Year covered awareness-raising at EU level and awareness of the Year amongst relevant stakeholders and the general public was promoted by means of a series of actions described in the report.

Main conclusions: the main **conclusions** of the report are as follows:

- The European Year of Volunteering has had a **positive impact on the world of volunteering**, both at European and at national level. The objectives and activities of the Year were relevant, and the targeted, results-oriented approach was successful in reaching the objectives in all Member States, even though the impact varied according to specific national situations.
- The European Year **created and catalysed changes in the volunteering environment** at European and national level and led to the adoption or modification of volunteering strategies and legislation in some Member States. For example, a specific legal framework was created for the first time in Slovakia, Slovenia and Lithuania during 2011. In Bulgaria, a law on volunteering was elaborated during 2011 and adopted in 2012. Poland adopted a new strategy on volunteering, Austria renewed its law on volunteering and Portugal prepared a new law to be adopted in 2012. The idea of a European Charter for Volunteering, built on a rights-based approach and initiated by the European Youth Forum, was discussed during 2011.
- The EYV **empowered organisers** to improve quality, and to focus attention on areas such as corporate volunteering and volunteering as a non-formal learning experience. It increased the recognition of volunteering through a wide range of initiatives and raised awareness of volunteering and its value to society through the media and the European communication campaign. The national activities had a valuable multiplier effect for these EU-level activities.

- The European Year contributed above all to the **development of networks and new initiatives**. It complemented existing activities and it highlighted the European dimension of volunteering.
- The EYV 2011 left a **legacy** in the continuation of activities and structures which were put in place during 2011 and in the adoption of good practices that will bring changes in the years to come.
- The EYV 2011 triggered the **adoption of five EU policy documents** dealing with volunteering in the European Union, i.e. a Commission Communication, two sets of Council Conclusions, an Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee and a Report of the European Parliament.

The European Year of Active Ageing 2012 has ensured some **continuity** with EYV 2011 through some specific actions. Sustainability will be assured through synergies with the European Year of Citizens 2013. By organising a series of European years on themes related to citizenship focussing on different aspects (European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010, European Year of Volunteering 2011, European Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity 2012 and European Year of Citizens 2013), the Commission has sought to contribute to the exploration of the concept of civic engagement in its different dimensions.

Volunteering and voluntary activity in Europe

2013/2064(INI) - 23/10/2013 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Culture and Education adopted the own-initiative report by Marco SCURRIA (EPP, IT) on volunteering and voluntary activity in Europe.

Members recalled that the severe economic crisis, austerity measures and tax pressures are jeopardising the financial stability of many NGOs, sports bodies and voluntary organisations. Recognising the various forms of volunteering practised in Member States, Members called for a multicultural approach from the Member States, and from the Commission a detailed analysis of national volunteering practices and traditions with a view to **fostering a common European approach**. This would create more opportunities for young people's mobility and employability by allowing them to acquire valuable skills. Members encouraged Member States to continue creating an enabling environment for volunteering, by establishing a legal framework where one was still lacking.

Better recognition of skills acquired from volunteering: measures recommended were:

- promoting volunteering, especially among schoolchildren, students and other young people;
- promoting the 'electronic portfolio', which provides a comprehensive picture of individuals' skills, including those acquired during volunteering work, as well as promoting the proposed 'Europass Experience' document would allow volunteers to describe and record skills;
- strengthening gender parity within the voluntary sector.

Members believed that the skills acquired by young people during volunteer work should be included in the **European Skills Passport and Europass**, so that formal and non-formal learning were treated in the same way. Volunteering could also offer young people who have broken off their schooling an inclusive environment and inclusive activities.

Volunteering among both young and elderly people: reiterating its support for the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps initiative, Members pointed out that volunteering was becoming increasingly common among both young and elderly people. Such activities enabled them to make a contribution to society and earn recognition and esteem in return.

The report stressed that the existence of a broad range of volunteering activities, as well as ease of access to such activities, as regards cost, availability of information and infrastructure, and provision of liability and accident insurance cover, were essential if volunteering is to be promoted among all age groups.

Added value of volunteering: Members considered that volunteering, as an active method of building civil society, could contribute to the development of intercultural dialogue and play a major role in combating prejudice and racism. They called on the Commission and Member States to give due recognition to the key contribution that volunteering is making at this time of serious economic crisis.

European Year of Volunteering (EYV): Members deplored the poor results achieved for EYV 2011 because of a lack of financial resources. They called on Member States to ensure the sustainability of the results achieved at national level during EYV 2011.

Member States were asked to:

- take the requisite steps to institutionalise volunteering **in a manner consistent with their national labour laws;**
- set up national coordination websites and search engines that will allow easy and well-structured access to volunteering opportunities;
- provide a stable and sustainable support framework for both national and cross-border volunteering that supports both volunteers and volunteering organisations;
- keep in place the national coordinating bodies set up in connection with EYV 2011;
- set up a single point of contact in the form of a service with responsibility for volunteering policy and for coordination in this area between Commission departments and the various institutions.

The report stressed the need for a **centralised EU portal** providing a pan-European platform for coordination in this area, which should include a volunteering best practice database.

Facilitate access to volunteering: Members invited Member States to implement the provisions of Directive 2004/114/EC on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for purposes of study, pupil exchange, **unremunerated training or voluntary service**, and to simplify the procedures for the **granting of visas**, or to abolish them, for those wishing to undertake voluntary activities as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

National, regional and local authorities were also asked to make **adequate funding** available, streamline administrative procedures and provide tax incentives for volunteers' organisations and networks, in particular small organisations with limited resources. In this connection, Members asked for the **concept of grants to associations to be clarified** so that funding for associations was no longer confused with state aid, which could hamper competition in the for-profit sector.

Members called on the Commission to look into the **possibility of counting the economic contribution made by voluntary work as matching funding for European projects.**

Member States must also:

- make it compulsory for volunteers to have proper insurance cover, in order to protect their health and safety during volunteer work;
- facilitate volunteering through the provision of formal, informal and non-formal training to enhance volunteers' skills and empower them in their work;
- promote the European Voluntary Service in universities and other higher education institutions.

More resources for volunteering: Members invited the Commission to marshal the necessary resources to set up a **European Volunteering Development Fund**, in order to ensure that appropriate support infrastructure is put in place. They emphasised the need to make it easier for NGOs to gain access to European funding, in particular under the ESF, at national and European level.

Lastly, they called the Commission to recognise volunteer time as **eligible in-kind cofinancing for all European grants.**

Volunteering and voluntary activity in Europe

2013/2064(INI) - 10/12/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on volunteering and voluntary activity in Europe.

It recalled that the severe economic crisis, austerity measures and tax pressures are jeopardising the financial stability of many NGOs, sports bodies and voluntary organisations. Recognising the various forms of volunteering practised in Member States, Members called for a multicultural approach from the Member States, and from the Commission a detailed analysis of national volunteering practices and traditions with a view to **fostering a common European approach.** This would create more opportunities for young people's mobility and employability by allowing them to acquire valuable skills. Parliament encouraged Member States to continue creating an enabling environment for volunteering, by establishing a legal framework where one was still lacking.

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This also encouraged:

- intercultural learning;
- a **sense of European identity**;
- intergenerational solidarity;
- active ageing; and
- lifelong civic participation.

Parliament stressed that the existence of a broad range of volunteering activities, as well as ease of access to such activities, as regards cost, availability of information and infrastructure, and provision of liability and accident insurance cover, were essential if volunteering is to be promoted among all age groups.

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Parliament drew attention to the need for volunteering to be encouraged as part of corporate social responsibility strategies, in keeping with voluntary international standard ISO 26000:2010 on guidance on corporate social responsibility.

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