

RECOMMENDATIONS

COUNCIL

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

of 20 November 2008

on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union

(2008/C 319/03)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 149(4) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,

Whereas:

- (1) Mobility for young volunteers is an integral part of freedom of movement for people, protected by Article 18 of the Treaty.
- (2) The Community may adopt measures to promote the mobility of young volunteers by enhancing cooperation between organisers of voluntary activities, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity as set out in Article 5 of the Treaty. In accordance with the principle of proportionality, as set out in that Article, the present Recommendation does not go beyond what is necessary in order to achieve that objective.
- (3) Council Regulation (EEC) No 1408/71 of 14 June 1971 on the application of social security schemes to employed persons and their families moving within the Community ⁽¹⁾ and related provisions cover only those volunteers who are insured under national security legislation, with the consequence that issues relating to social protection may sometimes act as a disincentive to engage in voluntary activities in another Member State.
- (4) Recommendation 2001/613/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 July 2001 on mobility within the Community for students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers ⁽²⁾ invites Member States to take the measures they consider appropriate, in accordance with Community law and in the framework of their national law, to ensure that

volunteers and their families are not discriminated against as a result of relevant social protection policies, such as health care and social welfare, which may hinder their mobility.

- (5) Recommendation 2001/613/EC and Recommendation 2006/961/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on transnational mobility within the Community for education and training purposes: European Quality Charter for Mobility ⁽³⁾ refer explicitly to volunteers.
- (6) Council Directive 2004/114/EC of 13 December 2004 on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service ⁽⁴⁾ provides for the possibility of issuing special residence permits to third-country nationals who apply to be admitted to the territory of a Member State for the purpose of volunteering.
- (7) The Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 15 November 2004, on common objectives for voluntary activities of young people and the Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 16 November 2007, on implementing the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people ⁽⁵⁾ set out common objectives for voluntary activities of young people, proposed exchanges of good practice and peer-learning activities to strengthen their implementation, and invited Member States to consider the practical means of measuring progress. The latter Resolution also invited the Commission to make further proposals for the promotion and recognition of voluntary activities of young people.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 149, 5.7.1971, p. 2.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 215, 9.8.2001, p. 30.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 5.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 375, 23.12.2004, p. 12.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 241, 20.9.2008, p. 1.

- (8) The European Parliament adopted in April 2008 a report on the 'Role of Volunteering in Contributing to Economic and Social Cohesion' which encouraged Member States and regional and local authorities to recognise the value of volunteering in promoting social and economic cohesion, and recommended the promotion of cross-border voluntary projects,

RECOGNISES THAT:

1. in the framework of this Recommendation, cross-border voluntary activities are characterised as follows: open to all young people, undertaken by their own free will in the general interest, for a sustained period, within a clear framework and in a country other than the country of residence, unpaid or with token payment and/or coverage of expenses. Voluntary activities should not have an adverse effect on potential or existing paid employment, nor should they be seen as a substitute for it;
2. voluntary activities constitute a rich experience in a non-formal educational and informal learning context which enhances young people's professional skills and competences, contributes to their employability and sense of solidarity, develops their social skills, smoothes their integration into society and fosters active citizenship;
3. there is a large variety of voluntary activities throughout Europe, organised by civil society and public authorities. These activities should be preserved and further developed and cooperation between the organisers of such activities should be facilitated;
4. cross-border mobility in Europe can be an important tool to promote education, employment and regional and social cohesion, and to help improve mutual understanding and active participation in society. This is particularly the case for young people in a labour market which increasingly values adaptability and flexibility;
5. local communities hosting young volunteers benefit greatly from their activities, that can take place in a wide array of fields, such as promoting social inclusion, preserving cultural heritage, fostering intergenerational solidarity and protecting the environment. Such activities, at the same time, enrich the cultural diversity of the hosting communities;
6. voluntary activities have been a priority of the open method of coordination in the field of youth, which has already identified a great number of good practices. In this context, the European Voluntary Service (EVS), an action of the EU Youth Programme since 1996, has allowed young people to engage in voluntary service in a variety of areas. The current Youth in Action Programme reinforces this action;
7. despite these efforts, there may still be obstacles to the cross-border mobility of young volunteers across Europe and this Recommendation therefore aims primarily at providing a framework for Member States to intensify their coopera-

tion, without prejudice to the diversity of their national situations;

8. better cooperation between the organisers of voluntary activities in different countries and greater information sharing may stimulate all young Europeans, whatever their nationality, to engage further in voluntary activities in third countries;
9. special attention should be paid to young people with fewer opportunities, as voluntary activities constitute a particularly valuable possibility of mobility for those young people who otherwise would benefit less, or not at all, from mobility programmes.

HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT THE MEMBER STATES:

- A. promote the mobility of young volunteers across Europe by enhancing the conditions for cooperation between the organisers of voluntary activities in different countries, whether civil society or public authorities, so that every young person shall have the opportunity to volunteer in Europe if she or he wishes to do so;
- B. facilitate the development, for that purpose, of the following lines of action, while having due regard for their national frameworks and legislation in the field of voluntary activities, and their overall national priorities, existing local opportunities and public expenditure regimes:
 1. improve the level of knowledge of voluntary activities within their national territories and transfer this information to the European Commission for further dissemination;
 2. make information on opportunities for voluntary activities abroad easily accessible to young people and to those active in youth work and in youth organisations;
 3. make information available to all the relevant actors on the rights and opportunities that arise from existing provisions at European and national level on cross-border voluntary activities;
 4. promote the exchange of information on the opportunities for voluntary activities in other Member States and the simplification of the procedures to be followed with the aim of making it easier for young volunteers of a Member State to take part in voluntary activities in other Member States;
 5. adopt, where appropriate, a flexible approach to developing opportunities for cross-border voluntary activities in Europe, for example by:
 - supporting the development of the hosting capacity for cross-border volunteers,
 - supporting the creation of contact points for young European volunteers, in connection, if feasible, with National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme,

- promoting the use of existing European mechanisms that can help youth mobility, such as, for instance, mobility cards,
 - promoting the cross-border mobility of those active in youth work and in youth organisations,
 - supporting the development of information and training, for those active in youth work, youth organisations, local authorities and civic services, on the cross-border voluntary activities of young people;
6. increase awareness of the importance of intercultural competences and language learning among young people in order to reduce barriers to their cross-border mobility;
 7. encourage organisers of voluntary activities to develop self-assessment tools, taking into account the EVS experience, in order to ensure the quality of the cross-border voluntary activities they are taking part in;
 8. encourage organisers in both sending and receiving Member States to cooperate in providing assurances about the protection of young volunteers and service recipients. This should include sufficient information about the voluntary activity, its organisers and the volunteer, so as to enable both parties to make an informed decision about the activity's suitability and meet any legal requirements;
 9. examine further relevant social protection provisions through the appropriate existing EU fora with a view to making full use of the possibilities under EU and national legislation;
 10. promote the appropriate recognition of learning outcomes of voluntary activities, in line with Community provisions and within the respective national

systems or frameworks for qualifications, where existing;

11. promote the use of instruments at EU level that can facilitate cross-border voluntary activities by ensuring the transparency of qualifications, such as Europass, Youthpass and the European Qualifications Framework;
12. give particular attention to young people with fewer opportunities in order to enhance their access to voluntary activities and especially to cross-border voluntary activities.

HEREBY ENDORSES THE COMMISSION'S INTENTION TO:

1. support the Member States in the above tasks by using the EU cooperation framework in the field of youth and, in particular, the open method of coordination and the Youth in Action programme;
2. encourage and organise, in liaison with Member States, the exchange of information and experiences about cooperation between the organisers of voluntary activities in different countries, whether representatives of civil society or public authorities;
3. develop a European Youth Volunteer Portal on voluntary activities based on national youth volunteering portals, databases or specific websites, where they exist;
4. report to the Council four years after the adoption of this Recommendation in order to determine whether the measures proposed are working effectively and to assess the need for further actions.

Done at Brussels, 20 November 2008.
