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COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

accompanying the

Proposal for a

RECOMMENDATION OF THE COUNCIL

on mobility of young volunteers across Europe

SUMMARY OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

{COM(2008) 424}
{SEC(2008) 2174}

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cross-border mobility of young volunteers in the European Union is low. Young people who wish to volunteer abroad in Europe do not have enough opportunities to do so.

This is why the proposed initiative aims at enhancing the mobility of young volunteers throughout Europe. Positive side effects will be enhanced opportunities for non-formal education and increased employability, competitiveness, social inclusion and citizenship. The initiative concerns young people in the European Union under 30 years of age who wish to volunteer in a country other than their own. Its scope covers voluntary activities clearly distinguished from employment conducted abroad during a limited period of time, typically several months, as described by the Commission Communication "Follow-up to the White Paper on a New Impetus for European Youth - Proposed common objectives for voluntary activities among young people in response to the Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field" of 2004¹.

The situation of youth volunteering is fragmented in the Member States. It includes civic services organised by public authorities as well as civil society-organised volunteering. In its proposal the Commission strives for a solution that allows all existing volunteering systems to interoperate.

Large consultation exercises with stakeholders, volunteering and youth organisations, and Member States preceded the proposed initiative. The results of these consultations have been taken on board of the proposal as far as possible. Recently issued opinions of the European Parliament², the European Economic and Social Committee³ and the Committee of the Regions⁴ have been taken into account.

While the primary objective of the proposed initiative is to enhance mobility of young cross-border volunteers, specific objectives are to improve the knowledge of cross-border opportunities of volunteering for young people, increase exchange opportunities for young volunteers, assure a reasonable level of quality, promote skills and competence acquired by young volunteers, target youth workers in their support of young cross-border volunteers and encourage young people with fewer opportunities to volunteer abroad.

The Commission analysed four options in order to verify which one would allow to reach these objectives best: keeping the status quo, improvement of the interoperability of existing systems in the Member States, extension of the European Voluntary Service (EVS) or the harmonisation of national youth volunteering schemes. While clinging to the status quo would not bring about any improvement, an extension of EVS would be too expensive, and harmonisation is ruled out by the Treaty. This leaves only one feasible option, improvement of the interoperability of existing systems in the Member States, which allows for realising all objectives.

Interoperability in this context means that national voluntary systems open up opportunities for volunteers from other Member States and keep their specific needs in mind when

¹ COM(2004) 337 final, Brussels, of 30 May 2004

² REGI/6/50546, 2007/2149, of 21 April 2008

³ SOC 243, of 13 December 2006

⁴ ECOS-IV-017, of 6-7 February 2008

designing their activities. This could be done through better knowledge of national systems and on civil society organisations, support to the hosting organisations in the country, information towards young people, youth workers and youth leaders about opportunities abroad, and highlighting the value of European youth mobility cards. These efforts would be supported by a "quality assurance" of volunteering opportunities, adaptation of learning outcomes to national and European qualification frameworks, the use of Europass and Youthpass, and the promotion of trans-European youth volunteering towards employers, authorities, institutions, etc.. The Commission would support the use of these instruments and develop further the European Young Volunteers' Portal as part of the existing Youth Portal.

To get the appropriate impact, the proposed legal form for this option is a Recommendation. A Council Recommendation would involve Member States to a greater extent than a Commission Recommendation and is expressly foreseen in the legal basis, Article 149 (4) of the Treaty.

For the youth field this would be a quantum leap forward, as this will be the first Council Recommendation. The ambition of the proposal is not to bring about radical change but rather an evolution of mechanisms already existing within Member States. Based on existing Resolutions⁵ on youth volunteering and mobility Recommendations⁶, the goal is to propose operative recommendations towards improved mobility of young volunteers in Europe. The Recommendation will be part of the EU's "Renewed Social Agenda: Opportunities, Access and Solidarity in 21st Century Europe".

⁵ 13996/04 of 15 November 2004 and 14427/07 of 19 November 2007

⁶ 2001/613/EC of 10 July 2001 and 2006/961/EC of 18 December 2006