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(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

RECOMMENDATIONS

COUNCIL

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

of 5 April 2022

on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union

(Text with EEA relevance)

(2022/C 157/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Articles 165 and 166 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

Whereas:

1. On 15 September 2021, the President of the European Commission announced in the State of the European Union ⁽¹⁾ address that the European Commission would propose to make 2022 the European Year of Youth, 'empowering those who have dedicated so much to others'. The European Year of Youth aims, among other things, at 'support[ing] young people to acquire a better understanding of, and actively promot[ing] the various opportunities available to them from, public policies at Union, national, regional and local level in order to support their personal, social, economic and professional development in a green, digital and inclusive world, while aiming to remove the remaining barriers thereto' ⁽²⁾.
2. As highlighted in the European Parliament Resolution on the impact of COVID-19 on youth and on sport (2020/2864(RSP)) ⁽³⁾ young people have been at the heart of solidarity-motivated activities to respond to the needs of their communities in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, from leading awareness campaigns to working on the front line as part of the European Solidarity Corps, to other volunteering initiatives.
3. Through their volunteering actions in the European Solidarity Corps and other schemes, young people are giving concrete effect to the Preamble of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), which highlights signatories' desire to deepen solidarity between the peoples of Europe, to Article 2 TEU, which mentions solidarity as one of the values common to the Member States, and to Article 3 TEU, which mentions that the Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples. Their humanitarian aid volunteering actions contribute to promoting peace in Europe and in the world and respect for human dignity and human rights.

⁽¹⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/soteu_2021_address_en_0.pdf

⁽²⁾ Decision (EU) 2021/2316 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 December 2021 on a European Year of Youth (2022) (OJ L 462, 28.12.2021, p. 1).

⁽³⁾ Texts adopted - The impact of Covid-19 on youth and on sport - Wednesday, 10 February 2021 (europa.eu)

4. The experiences with the European Voluntary Service (1996-2018) and the European Solidarity Corps, while successful, have shown the need to further facilitate transnational volunteering, in particular for young people with fewer opportunities. In this context, the Council has called for a review of the Council Recommendation of 20 November 2008 on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union ('the 2008 Council Recommendation') in order to strengthen the potential of the European Youth Programmes in reaching out to young people and helping to build a community ⁽⁴⁾. This is expressed in particular in Annex 4 on the Work Plan for the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027. Furthermore, the Commission's Report on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy of 14 October 2021 ⁽⁵⁾ referred to the review of the 2008 Council Recommendation.
5. Most of the issues raised in the 2008 Council Recommendation are still crucial and have been retained in this proposal. The update of the 2008 Council Recommendation has become necessary because of several developments since 2008. An important one is the launch of the European Solidarity Corps in 2016 and the creation of new national volunteering schemes and activities, also with transnational elements ⁽⁶⁾ that sometimes offer very similar opportunities for young people. The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 ⁽⁷⁾ invited Member States and the Commission, within their respective fields of competence, to 'seek complementarity and synergies between EU funding instruments and national, regional and local schemes'.
6. An evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and the 2008 Council Recommendation ⁽⁸⁾ identified the need for inclusion of people from disadvantaged backgrounds as a more pressing issue in 2015 than it had been in 2008. Other needs identified but not addressed by the 2008 Recommendation included quality assurance for volunteering projects, capacity-building opportunities for organisations and better monitoring of the implementation of the Recommendation. An expert group made further policy recommendations ⁽⁹⁾, covering also knowledge-sharing and networking, access to volunteering, administrative obstacles, awareness, recognition, digital volunteering and the environmental context, which have informed the proposed Recommendation.
7. Since 2008, the impact of crises, for instance those that disrupt the transnational physical mobility of volunteers, has been severe. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of ensuring the security, safety and physical and mental health of all participants at all times, including making provisions for managing the potential impact of unforeseen circumstances. Moreover, for a long time, the concept of 'transnational volunteering' referred in practice exclusively to activities involving the physical mobility of volunteers. However, with technological progress and under the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, new volunteering trends have emerged. Digital volunteering has revealed its potential to complement physical mobility or be an optional form of volunteering for young people who are not in a position to travel physically. The inter-generational dimension of volunteering has also clearly

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 456, 18.12.2018, p. 1.

⁽⁵⁾ Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2021), COM/2021/636 final.

⁽⁶⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/888 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the European Solidarity Corps Programme. Volunteering activities can take place in non-EU countries:

- as provided in article 7.2 of Regulation (EU) 2021/888, 'volunteering under the "participation of young people in solidarity activities" strand may take place in a country other than the participant's country of residence ("cross-border volunteering") or in the participant's country of residence ("in-country volunteering")'. A country other than the participant's country of residence may be a third country associated to the Programme or another participating country;

- as provided in article 10.2 of Regulation (EU) 2021/888, 'volunteering under the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps may only take place in those regions of third countries in which humanitarian aid activities and operations take place and there are no ongoing international or non-international armed conflicts'.

Moreover, as provided in article 2 (3), participation in the Programme is also open to third country nationals 'who are legally residing in a Member State, in a third country associated to the Programme or in another participating country under this Regulation'.

⁽⁷⁾ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42018Y1218\(01\)&qid=1578414694481&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42018Y1218(01)&qid=1578414694481&from=EN)

⁽⁸⁾ Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers, 2016.

⁽⁹⁾ 'Promoting the mobility of young volunteers and cross-border solidarity, a practical toolbox for actors and stakeholders in the field of youth and recommendations for policymakers', developed by the expert group set up by the European Commission to support the process of reviewing the 2008 Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers, 2021 (work undertaken from September 2019 to September 2020).

shown its importance in tackling the demographic challenges of our society. Concerns for the environment and climate change are at the top of the EU political agenda and need to be reflected in activities that involve transnational mobility.

8. The European Commission Communication on establishing the European Education Area by 2025 ⁽¹⁰⁾ emphasised the importance of inclusiveness, quality and recognition of cross-border experiences under the European Solidarity Corps. Guarantees of the quality of the available opportunities and provisions for appropriate support for participants at every stage of their volunteering experience constitute a prerequisite for the volunteering activities to benefit communities as well as young volunteers.
9. In the Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), the Council confirmed in priority area 1 of the strategic framework that 'Fostering, valuing and recognising non-formal learning including volunteering, and enhancing the inclusiveness, quality and recognition of cross-border solidarity activities' is a concrete issue for action.
10. One of the first difficulties that young people interested in transnational volunteering experience encounter is access to user-friendly information about their status and rights as volunteers, on a dedicated national website, so that they can start their transnational volunteering activity fully aware of what impact it will have on their social security rights and entitlements in the host Member State as well as in the Member State of their usual residence ⁽¹¹⁾. Pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1724 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 October 2018 establishing a single digital gateway to provide access to information, to procedures and to assistance and problem-solving services, the Commission and Member States are already obliged to provide user-friendly online information to EU citizens on rights, obligations and rules laid down in Union and national law in the field of volunteering in another Member State ⁽¹²⁾.
11. Many issues related to transnational mobility cannot be tackled at national level alone, as the activities involve both sending and hosting Member States. Administrative and legal frameworks on volunteering can vary between Member States. Youth-friendly and comprehensive information relating to the national legal and administrative rules governing volunteering, in particular information on social security coverage in both sending and hosting Member States, is very important for young people wishing to engage in a transnational volunteering activity.
12. The Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Action Plan on integration and inclusion 2021-2027 ⁽¹³⁾ recognises the role of volunteering in integration and inclusion of those with fewer opportunities. For many of them, volunteering activities may represent the most accessible option for engaging in cross-border mobility, especially in formats of short-term volunteering or volunteering in groups or teams.
13. Third-country nationals may face administrative and practical obstacles to cross-border volunteering if they need to apply for a short or long-term visa or residence permit for the purpose of volunteering service in another Member State. Directive (EU) 2016/801 regulates the conditions for obtaining a long-term visa or a residence permit in order to be admitted to an EU Member State for the purposes of voluntary service. However, it does not contain provisions on intra-EU mobility of third-country volunteers.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on achieving the European Education Area by 2025, COM(2020)625 final, available at EUR-Lex - 52020DC0625 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

⁽¹¹⁾ It should be recalled that Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems provides for the coordination of social security rights, including of sickness benefits, in cross-border situations and applies to volunteers moving between Member States.

⁽¹²⁾ OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 32, annex I, section E. Implemented through the 'Your Europe' portal: Your Europe (europa.eu)

⁽¹³⁾ COM (2020) 758 final.

14. A volunteering experience provides volunteers with learning outcomes that increase their employability. National or EU frameworks (that is to say, Youthpass⁽¹⁴⁾ and Europass⁽¹⁵⁾) supporting the identification, documentation and validation of learning outcomes of volunteering activities exist. The Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning⁽¹⁶⁾ invited employers, youth and civil society organisations to promote and facilitate the identification and documentation of learning outcomes acquired at work or in voluntary activities. The evaluation⁽¹⁷⁾ of the 2012 Council Recommendation identified areas where further action is needed to achieve the goals of the 2012 Council Recommendation, to provide people with access to more and better validation opportunities, enabling them to access further learning and to put their skills to good use in European society and the labour market. The Europass Decision of 18 April 2018 defines volunteers among its target groups.
15. New developments since 2008, evidence about barriers to transnational volunteering and the policy recommendations of an expert group regarding the promotion of the mobility of young volunteers call for a new Council Recommendation on volunteering, with a view to facilitating and improving the quality of transnational youth volunteering and encouraging mutual learning, networking and synergies between volunteering schemes and activities in Member States and the European Solidarity Corps.
16. This Recommendation fully respects the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

RECOGNISES THAT:

17. For the purposes of this Recommendation, the same definition of 'volunteering' is used as in Regulation (EU) 2021/888 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the European Solidarity Corps Programme, namely a solidarity activity that takes place, for a period of up to 12 months, as a voluntary unpaid⁽¹⁸⁾ activity that contributes to the achievements of the common good. Where transnational schemes existing in the Member States envisage solidarity activities of a duration exceeding 12 months that otherwise correspond to the definition of volunteering, these are to be considered as volunteering for the purposes of this Recommendation and thus included in its scope.
18. Youth volunteering under this Recommendation comprises volunteering across the EU by EU nationals or third-country nationals who are residing in one Member State and moving to a second Member State for the purpose of voluntary service, under the European Solidarity Corps or any national cross-border volunteering scheme or activity in Member States. To the extent possible, the actions undertaken by Member States and the Commission in response to this Recommendation should also take account of volunteering activities between Member States and third countries. Voluntary activities should not have an adverse effect on potential or existing paid employment, nor should they be seen as a substitute for it. The terms 'youth' and 'young' cover the age bracket of 18 to 30 years.
19. Young people with fewer opportunities means young people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, due to their migrant background, or for reasons such as disability and educational difficulties or for any other reason, including a reason that could give rise to discrimination under Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities⁽¹⁹⁾.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Youthpass is the main recognition and validation instrument available to all Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps participants to reflect the learning process and document their learning outcomes in the Youthpass certificate.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Decision (EU) 2018/646 of the European Parliament and the Council of 18 April 2018 on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass) and repealing Decision No 2241/2004/EC (OJ L 112, 2.5.2018, p. 42) establishes a European framework to support the transparency and understanding of skills and qualifications acquired in formal, non-formal and informal settings, including through practical experiences, mobility and volunteering.

⁽¹⁶⁾ OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers (europa.eu), 2016.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Volunteers are not paid for their time but expenses usually limited to travel, food or accommodation and/or other small personal expenses may be covered.

⁽¹⁹⁾ See the same definition in Regulation (EU) 2021/888, Art. 2 (4).

HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT THE MEMBER STATES:

Continue to promote transnational volunteering in Europe and beyond, while having due regard for national frameworks and legislation in the field of voluntary activities, and Member States' overall national priorities, existing local opportunities and public expenditure regimes.

Facilitate the development, for that purpose, of the following lines of action:

20. Consider measures contributing to or maintaining an adequate and clear legislative and implementation framework for the health, safety and security of participants in transnational volunteering activities by:
 - a) ensuring that all volunteers can benefit from social security coverage in a Member State, in accordance with the provisions of Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems;
 - b) supporting organisers involved in the implementation of volunteering activities in ensuring that clear and reliable procedures are in place to care for and assist volunteers in the event of crises, emergencies and other unforeseen circumstances.
21. Provide accessible information and raise awareness about volunteers' rights as stipulated in the dedicated framework set out above, in particular:
 - a) ensuring that there is a national website, which complies with the requirements of the Web Accessibility Directive ⁽²⁰⁾, to provide practical, accessible and comprehensive information for volunteers relating to the national legal and administrative rules governing volunteering and the impact of volunteering in another Member State on the existing and future social security rights and entitlements ⁽²¹⁾ of the volunteer (both for incoming and outgoing EU volunteers);
 - b) supporting youth information providers through encouraging training in developing youth-friendly information relating to the national legal and administrative rules governing volunteering;
 - c) encouraging collaborations with established networks and services such as ERYICA in developing such information;
 - d) encouraging organisers of existing national cross-border volunteering schemes and activities to point to relevant national and European websites ⁽²²⁾ that inform volunteers about their rights, obligations and applicable rules with regard to volunteering in another Member State.
22. Enhance the quality of volunteering opportunities by supporting organisers of volunteering activities in their capacity-building endeavours. In particular, this can be achieved by:
 - a) encouraging organisers in both sending and receiving Member States to cooperate, including by providing sufficient information about the volunteering activity, its organisers and the volunteer, so as to enable both parties to make an informed decision about the activity's sustainability and to meet any legal requirements;
 - b) encouraging organisers of volunteering activities to put emphasis on quality, among other things by basing the organisation of volunteering activities on an analysis that supports identifiable needs and leads to beneficial outcomes in local communities.
 - c) encouraging organisers of volunteering activities to put adequate emphasis on the learning dimension of volunteering activities, including language learning in transnational volunteering;

⁽²⁰⁾ Directive (EU) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 October 2016 on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies (OJ L 327, 2.12.2016, p. 1).

⁽²¹⁾ Including information about the procedures for applying for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) and detailed information on what is and is not covered by national health care systems.

⁽²²⁾ The multilingual 'Your Europe' portal under Regulation (EU) 2018/1724, (OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 1); the Youth Wiki section of the European Youth Portal; information on the Europa portal, e.g. on EHIC: Applying for a card - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission (europa.eu)

- d) supporting organisers of volunteering activities in a more systematic and generalised use of existing national or EU frameworks (i.e. Youthpass and Europass) to support the identification, documentation and validation of learning outcomes of volunteering activities;
 - e) recognising youth work as a key promoter of volunteering opportunities for young people and as one of the main tools for quality development of volunteering activities in the EU and contributing in this way to the implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda ⁽²³⁾;
 - f) promoting the cross-border mobility of those active in youth work and in youth organisations;
 - g) supporting the training of youth workers and organisers of volunteering activities, recognising their key role in accompanying and guiding young volunteers through a high-quality volunteering experience;
 - h) encouraging organisers of transnational volunteering activities to apply for the European Solidarity Corps quality label;
 - i) developing and promoting general quality standards for volunteering while drawing inspiration from the comprehensive system of quality, support, inclusion and certification measures contained in Regulation (EU) 2021/888 ⁽²⁴⁾, wherever feasible in the national context;
 - j) adopting measures to ensure that volunteering activities do not lead to job substitution.
23. Ensure that access to transnational volunteering activities is a realistic opportunity for all young people, including those with fewer opportunities, including by:
- a) supporting the creation and/or operation of national gateways and regional and local structures, such as youth work infrastructures and youth information centers where they exist, to provide information and guidance regarding existing volunteering opportunities, in formats that are accessible to persons with disabilities, to young potential volunteers, including young people with fewer opportunities, civil society/solidarity organisations, and other stakeholders in the field. These structures can include alumni networks (such as EuroPeers) and local youth workers, using their capacity to empower and support potential volunteering candidates, and, where relevant, could work in conjunction with the National Agencies implementing the European Solidarity Corps;
 - b) facilitating access to transnational volunteering experiences for young people with fewer opportunities through promoting targeted and accessible information and outreach by relevant organisations and networks ⁽²⁵⁾, such as Eurodesk and ERYICA, including through the raising of awareness regarding the importance of intercultural competences and language learning as a stepping-stone to transnational mobility;
 - c) ensuring that organisers of volunteering activities are encouraged to promote social inclusion, including by providing reasonable and suitable accommodation that is accessible to young people, in particular those with disabilities;
 - d) supporting organisers of volunteering activities to develop aspects of inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities for their projects ⁽²⁶⁾, among other things by putting them in touch with experts from services in charge of the promotion of social inclusion who could support and train them;

⁽²³⁾ Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda (2020/C 415/01).

⁽²⁴⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/888 of the European Parliament and the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the European Solidarity Corps Programme and repealing Regulations (EU) 2018/1475 and (EU) No 375/2014 (OJ L 202, 8.6.2021, p. 32).

⁽²⁵⁾ See Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy for guidance on how to do this: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/implementation-guidelines-erasmus-and-european-solidarity-corps-inclusion-and-diversity_en

⁽²⁶⁾ In line with EU equality strategies and inclusion policy frameworks targeting specific discriminated and disadvantaged groups adopted in 2020-2021: EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025 (COM(2020) 565 final, 18 September 2020), EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation (COM(2020) 620 final, 7 October 2020), LGBTIQ equality strategy (COM(2020) 698 final, 12 November 2020), Action plan on integration and inclusion (COM(2020) 758 final, 24 November 2020), Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (COM(2021) 101 final, 3 March 2021).

- e) providing targeted support to the development of volunteering activities, specifically promoting inclusion, equality and empowerment of disadvantaged groups or groups at risk of discrimination, and incentivising young volunteers from these communities to engage in volunteering and act as multipliers or even as role models in their own community;
 - f) supporting relevant organisations and networks in the promotion of local volunteering activities (including short-term, part-time and group formats) as a potential first step towards participation in transnational activities and providing additional targeted support for the development of volunteering opportunities that cater for young people who cannot participate in physical transnational mobility for various reasons, for example by offering, among other things, digital volunteering opportunities;
 - g) further promoting existing transnational tools that can facilitate youth mobility, such as mobility cards and encouraging their use in all transnational volunteering activities ⁽²⁷⁾;
 - h) resolving, where possible and without prejudice to the Schengen acquis and Union law on entry and residence of third-country nationals, administrative and practical issues that create difficulties in obtaining visas and/or residence permits for third-country nationals for the purpose of voluntary service.
24. Increase awareness of the benefits of volunteering activities, through information, guidance and outreach activities, including by involving national stakeholders in the education, training, employment, social services and youth sectors. Pay particular attention to equitably reaching out to young people with fewer opportunities. That includes promoting that:
- a) volunteering activities provide young people with a concrete way of contributing to tackling societal challenges and displaying solidarity with people in a vulnerable situation;
 - b) a volunteering experience enhances the personal, educational, social, civic and professional development of young people and helps them develop competences needed and valued by the labour market;
 - c) frameworks exist to support the identification, documentation and validation of learning outcomes of volunteering activities (including Youthpass and Europass).
25. Support and promote community-building activities related to volunteering. That includes:
- a) encouraging at a national level the operation of networks of volunteers, especially of those who take part in activities that have a long-term vision, that is to say are not linked to or limited by the duration of individual projects;
 - b) promoting existing European networks linked to volunteering, in particular the European Solidarity Network and Europeers, as well as other resources and platforms accessible via the European Solidarity Corps Portal on the European Youth Portal;
 - c) encouraging former volunteers to share their experiences through youth networks, educational establishments and workshops in roles such as ambassadors or as members of a network, and to train current or future volunteers;
 - d) encouraging the organisers of volunteering activities to support volunteers in their integration into the host community during their activity and in continuing their engagement in volunteering activities after their return home, with special focus on accompanying young people with fewer opportunities.
26. Explore new trends and alternative dimensions and formats of volunteering, including through:
- a) promoting the testing of formats and the gathering of evidence on digital volunteering in a transnational context, as a complement to physical mobility or even as a stand-alone format of volunteering activities;

⁽²⁷⁾ This was already a good practice of the former European Voluntary Service; now the European Solidarity Corps provides for a European Youth Card to every volunteer free of charge.

- b) acknowledging the value of and promoting inter-generational volunteering as a valuable contribution to the challenges faced by an ageing society as well as a way of engaging young people in an inter-generational dialogue, facilitating inter-generational knowledge-transfer and improving social cohesion.
27. Create synergies, complementarities and continuities between volunteering schemes and activities existing at European level and at various levels in Member States. That includes, for example:
- a) exchanging information amongst Member States on existing volunteering schemes, including national civil service schemes and activities where they exist, and transmission of such information to the European Commission, with a view to facilitating its publication on the European Youth Portal, the Youth Wiki, and the development of best practices;
 - b) considering measures that would promote and support the transfer of best practices between volunteering schemes or activities.
28. Support volunteering activities that make a meaningful contribution to tackling climate and environment-related challenges, by:
- a) encouraging the integration of green practices into all volunteering projects and activities as well as promoting environmentally sustainable and responsible behaviour among participants and participating organisations;
 - b) promoting the reduction of the environmental footprint of volunteering activities, for example by reducing waste, recycling and, whenever possible, using sustainable means of transportation;
 - c) promoting the development of volunteering activities that address the topic of environmental protection, sustainability, climate goals and disaster prevention and recovery.
29. Include information about progress in following this Recommendation in regular updates made under the EU Youth Strategy, in particular as part of the Youth Wiki.

HEREBY INVITES THE COMMISSION TO:

30. Facilitate exchange of practices between Member States on how to address obstacles that may prevent young people from participating in volunteering, for example through peer learning activities, Commission expert groups or the EU Youth Strategy Platform.
31. Support the Member States in following this Recommendation through the cooperation mechanisms and tools of the EU Youth Strategy, the European Youth Work Agenda and the EU youth programmes, in particular the European Solidarity Corps.
32. Facilitate mutual learning and exchanges among Member States and all relevant stakeholders at various levels through activities such as peer learning, peer counselling, expert groups, networking and other cooperation structures, including with a focus on synergies and complementarities between EU and national level schemes or activities, including national civil service schemes where they exist. For this purpose, make use of existing spaces such as the Youth Wiki and the European Youth Portal where resources and knowledge can be shared amongst Member States and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at different levels.
33. Explore new trends and formats of volunteering which respect the basic principles for equal opportunities and non-discrimination, accessibility, inclusiveness and high quality of activities, through the gathering of evidence, development of best practices and preparation of guidance and handbooks, in particular regarding digital or blended volunteering and inter-generational volunteering.
34. Promote and disseminate information about European opportunities for youth volunteering, in particular for people with fewer opportunities, through the European Youth Portal, which contains the registration tool for solidarity activities under the European Solidarity Corps. In cooperation with Member States, include on the European Youth portal links to relevant national websites ⁽²⁸⁾.

⁽²⁸⁾ With information foreseen under point 2 a) of this Recommendation, as well as information on national volunteering schemes or activities.

35. Further develop, promote and provide support for the use of existing EU tools that support the validation of outcomes of non-formal and informal learning, in particular Youthpass and the Europass platform, including through European digital credentials for learning.
36. Support research and data collection on the long-term impact of volunteering and solidarity activities for individuals and organisations, as well as on society, including lessons learnt and insights from the COVID-19 pandemic on the volunteering sector and its preparedness for similar crises, through studies, surveys, statistics, research and data analysis.
37. Use the online platform Youth Wiki to gather information on Member States' progress in following this Recommendation.
38. Report on the use of this Council Recommendation in the context of the work on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy and of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond.

This Recommendation replaces the Council Recommendation of 20 November 2008 on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union.

Done at Luxembourg, 5 April 2022.

For the Council
The President
R. BACHELOT-NARQUIN
