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COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 3.7.2007
SEC(2008) 2174

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

accompanying the

Proposal for a

RECOMMENDATION OF THE COUNCIL

on mobility of young volunteers across Europe

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

{COM(2008) 424}
{SEC(2008) 2175}

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1. PROCEDURAL ISSUES

1.1. Lead service

Directorate-General for Education and Culture, Youth Policy Unit (DG EAC.D1).

1.2. Other involved services

The other service involved are: SG; LS; BEPA; EMPL; JLS; ESTAT; JLS; DEV; AIDCO; ECHO; REGIO; TAXUD; COMM.

1.3. Reference to the Commission Work Programme 2008

The proposed Recommendation on Mobility of Young Volunteers across Europe will be part of the EU's "Renewed Social Agenda: Opportunities, Access and Solidarity in 21st Century Europe".

1.4. Roadmap

ROADMAP	
2007 - 2008	
<u>2007</u>	
Adoption of Commission Communication "Promoting Young People's Full Participation in Education, Employment and Society" announcing a new initiative on youth volunteering	5 September
Adoption of Council Resolution on Voluntary Activities of Young People	19 November
<u>2008</u>	
Adoption of the opinion of the Committee of the Regions (Declan and Donnell) on the contribution of volunteering to social and economic cohesion	6 February
Meeting of EP interest group on volunteering	13 February
Stakeholder consultation	25 February
Consultation of Member States	13 March
Meeting of Directors-General for Youth, Slovene Presidency, Brdo, Slovenia	21 April

Adoption of MEP Harkin's report on the value of volunteering	23 April
Adoption by the Commission	2 July, as part of the EU's "Renewed Social Agenda: Opportunities, Access and Solidarity in 21 st Century Europe"
Seminar on youth volunteering, French Presidency, Lyon, France	3-5 September
Seminar of Italy on international aspect of youth volunteering	11-13 September
Seminar on civic services, AVSO ¹ and IANYS ²	November
Council of Youth Ministers	20 November
2009	
Seminar on volunteering and non-formal learning, Czech Presidency	March 2009

1.5. Impact Assessment Board

This impact assessment was sent to the Impact Assessment Board on 30 April 2008. On 21 May 2008 representatives of DG EAC were invited to discuss it with the Board. Further to this meeting, the Board submitted its written Opinion on 26 May.

The Board recognised the clear presentation of results of the stakeholder consultation and the good explanation of how the initiative respects the subsidiarity principle.

Further to the Board's comments, definitions have been integrated and the scope, content and legalities of the preferred option have been clarified. The ambition and its added value in relation to other initiatives in the field of the proposed initiative have been explained and costs have been estimated for each option.

The difference between primary objectives (mobility and interoperability) and secondary effects (education and employability, competitiveness and citizenship) has also been accentuated.

1.6. Legal basis

The legal basis for proposing a new initiative on voluntary activities of young people is Article 149 (4) of the Treaty establishing the European Community, which also provides the legal basis for the Youth in Action Programme and its Action 2, the European Voluntary Service (EVS).

¹ Association of Volunteering Organisations

² International Association for National Youth Service

1.7. Inter-service consultation meetings

Two inter-service consultation meetings of the established Interservice Group on Youth Issues with other services of the European Commission took place on 27 February and 24 April 2008 with colleagues from various DGs: SG; LS; BEPA; EMPL; JLS; ESTAT; JLS; DEV; AIDCO; ECHO; REGIO; TAXUD; COMM. Their comments have been taken into account in the proposal and in the impact assessment.

1.8. Introduction to the Impact Assessment Report

1.8.1. Purpose

This initiative is addressed to 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 conducted abroad during a limited period of time, typically several months in areas such as civil protection, social inclusion, cultural preservation, regional development and environment. They are described by the Commission Communication of 2004³ as voluntary engagement in another country that is characterised by the following aspects: open to all young people, undertaken by own free will, fixed period, with clear objectives, structure and framework, unpaid but pocket money and coverage of expenses. Volunteering must be clearly distinguished from employment and is no substitution for work.

This proposal will be part of the EU's "Renewed Social Agenda: Opportunities, Access and Solidarity in 21st century Europe" in contributing by opening up new opportunities for mobility, non-formal education and solidarity.

The purpose of the proposal is to promote the mobility of young people in Europe by inviting the Member States to remove constraints on cross-border volunteering. Such mobility should contribute to the development of quality education (volunteering being an important form of non-formal learning), and consequently enhance Europe's competitiveness. It will increase solidarity and strengthen a sense of European citizenship. Concretely, the initiative aims to enhance the interoperability between Member States of existing youth volunteering schemes, whether organised by civil society or public authorities.

It must be ensured that all young people can take advantage of these opportunities that are mainly - and still to an insufficient degree - taken up by students and workers who are often already high-skilled. In this respect the significance and added value of volunteering activities needs to be better appreciated.

Volunteering plays an important role in the social, professional and economic integration of young people and also benefits the communities they serve. This is particularly important for young people with fewer opportunities, for whom this engagement is often a second chance to acquire new skills and competences and thereby improve their employability. These benefits are even greater in the case of

³ 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, COM(2004) 337 final, Brussels, of 30 May 2004

cross-border volunteering. Experience shows that voluntary engagement in another country impacts strongly on a young person and his/her personal development and also has the further added-value of making him/her a more attractive candidate for jobs in the international marketplace. The cross-border community in which the youth volunteers is also enriched both culturally and economically by the volunteer's participation and activity in that particular community.

The existing national approaches would be reinforced by the promotion of a European and cross-border dimension of volunteering by young people. National schemes alone find it, however, difficult to meet this specific demand, which underscores the need for better interoperability between them.

The degree of the ambition of the proposal is not radical change but an evolution of already existing mechanisms in the field within Member States. Based on existing Resolutions on youth volunteering and mobility Recommendations, the goal is to propose operative recommendations for a quantum leap towards mobility of young volunteers in Europe.

1.8.2. *Background*

Voluntary activities of young people have gained importance at national and European level in recent years. The European Voluntary Service, an integral part of the Union's youth programmes since 1996, is constantly undergoing development. Mobility Recommendations of 2001 and 2006⁴ have already started a process of steadily enhancing the mobility of young volunteers in Europe.

Following the adoption of the White Paper on Youth in 2001, Member States agreed on the application of the open method of coordination and adopted common objectives in the youth field. Two Council Resolutions specific to volunteering have been adopted on this issue in the framework for the open method of cooperation in the youth field, setting and confirming common objectives for voluntary activities in 2004⁵ and 2007⁶.

In this context the Commission carried out an analysis of the reports of Member States on the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people. In this report⁷ the Commission concluded that whereas some progress has been achieved, a committed joint effort at European level is required to make further significant progress. Based on this analysis, the Commission proposed in its Communication "Promoting Young People's Full Potential in Education, Employment and Society" of 5 September 2007⁸ to launch a consultation and impact

⁴ Recommendation 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, OJ L 215/30 of 9.8.2001, and Recommendation 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, OJ L 394/5 of 30.12.2006

⁵ 13996/04 of 15 November 2004

⁶ 14427/07 of 19 November 2007

⁷ Commission staff working paper "Analysis of national reports from the Member States of the European Union concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people", SEC1084(2007) of 5 September 2007

⁸ COM(2007)498 of 5 September 2007

assessment on a new initiative at EU level to promote and recognise voluntary activities of young people. This is the purpose of the current proposal.

In April 2007 the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA) presented the reflection paper "Investing in Youth – An Empowerment Strategy" which outlines the importance of citizenship and participation as factors to increase social capital. In this context reference is made to volunteering as one form of youth engagement.⁹

1.9. Purpose of the impact assessment report

This impact assessment report aims to support a policy action at EU level to improve the cross-border mobility of volunteering by young people.

The report defines the problem at stake as well as the rationale for a policy action at EU level and addresses the aims of the initiative in terms of general and specific objectives. Finally it presents a range of different policy options to achieve such objectives and an analysis and comparison of their possible impact.

The results of the stakeholder consultations, as well as evidence material, are presented, and ways to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the proposed initiative are addressed.

1.10. Main sources of information and consultations

The main sources of information are the Member States' reports on the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people and the Commission's subsequent analysis report as well as two consultation meetings with Member States.

Findings concerning volunteering in the Eurobarometer survey 2007 on youth are also taken into account, as well as the evaluation of the European Voluntary Service (EVS). The outcomes of two inter-service consultations of Commission services as well as the reports and opinions of the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions have also been taken into account.

The results of consultations of civil society as well as stakeholder documents on the issue have also been taken on board. For detailed information about the above mentioned evidence please see chapter 6 below.

2. PROBLEM DEFINITION

2.1. Description of the situation in the Member States

The main responsibility for developing volunteering schemes for young people is at the national, regional and local level, and these activities are often managed by civil society. They are also characterised by a diversity of approaches and players. In some Member States, civic services play a prominent role. In other countries

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/policy_advisers/index_en.htm

volunteering is almost completely implemented by civil society organisations with the state being involved only in the context of the EVS.

The current importance of volunteering at European level is underscored from recent developments in Member States. For example, Germany, France and Italy - all of which already have a civic service in place - support and develop the volunteering of young people for reasons that are also important to the European Union; that is, to offer youth a concrete experience of active citizenship and non-formal learning. The Member States have expressed interest in adding a European dimension via an exchange of experiences supported and coordinated by the Union.

Other Member States show interesting developments as well. The UK has set up a central coordination body for voluntary activities of young people, which had otherwise been organised in a decentralised way. The Czech Republic is considering improving the legal situation of young volunteers and their social protection in particular. Denmark is striving for a higher quality of voluntary activities of young people through a Quality Reform Programme. Luxembourg developed a new service called "Service volontaire d'orientation" in the framework of a new law supporting youth volunteering. In Spain a National Volunteering Plan (2005-2009) was adopted that strengthens NGOs. New volunteering plans have also been adopted at regional level. Lithuania inscribed volunteering in the framework of the achievement of the Lisbon Agenda. It adopted a National Social Inclusion Action Plan (2006-2008), which seeks to make volunteering more popular, motivate and train volunteers, and create a volunteering database and webportal. Ireland created support opportunities for volunteering, as shows the example of Foróige, a national volunteering organisation, which enjoys a large variety of support from different sources.

Given the national developments above, the situation in the Member States could thus be described as promising but fragmented in the sense that they lack an adequate European cross-border dimension that could satisfy the increase in demand.

A 2007 Eurobarometer¹⁰ survey of youth in the Member States found that while only 16% of the interviewed young people participate in a voluntary activity, 74% would be interested in a volunteering experience if there were more programmes encouraging it.

Furthermore, a 2008 survey by the Association of Voluntary Organisations (AVSO) of 138 volunteer organisations estimates that the number of their volunteers has grown by 57% from 2007 to 2008¹¹.

The European Voluntary Service financed approximately 4 000 cross-border volunteers in 2007, meeting three quarters of the number of requests. In that particular year it was necessary to raise the EVS budget by 5% to the detriment of other Actions in the Youth in Action Programme. EVS requests have further increased by 17% so far this year.

¹⁰ "Looking Behind the Figures: The main results of the Eurobarometer 2007 survey on youth", Office of Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxemburg, 2007, ISBN 978-92-79-05540-9; http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm

¹¹ Survey of AVSO and Youthnetworks; NoBorders Foundation, Netherlands, 28 February 2008; <http://www.avso.org/>

There are currently 96 million young people between the age of 15 and 29 in the European Union¹². Under the assumption that volunteering would reach the level of 15%¹³ already attained in certain countries and that one third of these volunteers would wish to participate in a transnational volunteering project, this represents per year a potential of 320 000¹⁴ young people. Even if only 1% of all young people in the age group wished to participate in a transnational volunteering project, this would still represent 64 000¹⁵ young volunteers abroad per year.

2.2. Underlying motives

Currently the number of cross-border volunteering opportunities is low. There is a lack of opportunities for trans-European volunteering. Where such opportunities exist, there is often a lack of organisation in information dissemination, with the consequence that young people who wish to volunteer abroad in Europe have difficulties accessing the existing possibilities.

Former initiatives of the European Union to strengthen mobility were the Mobility Recommendations within the Mobility Charter. But these focus primarily on students and teachers and to a much lesser extent on volunteers. They deal with general issues such as recognition, obstacles and the conditions of mobility, but lack tailored proposals that adequately address the particular needs of young volunteers. While helpful, these past initiatives should not be seen as an obstacle to further progress in promoting mobility for youth volunteers.

While EVS is well accepted by young people, its budget is limited and it has yet to achieve wide brand recognition as, for example, the ERASMUS programme.

The European Parliament recognised the problem of lack of interoperability of national schemes for volunteering of young people at European level, and proposed some preparatory measures in the 2008 budget for improving the situation through a project called Amicus (see chapter 6.5.1).

2.3. Why is it a problem?

2.3.1. *Consequences for the European Union*

As a leading form of non-formal learning, cross-border volunteering experience can lead to enhanced skills and competences which increase youth employability. The lack of mobility in the context of youth volunteering is an unnecessary loss of EU competitiveness. With high youth unemployment in many parts of the EU¹⁶ and market demand for young workers particularly high in some sectors, volunteering is a means to bridge the gap between school education and employment. Today's globalising marketplace puts a premium on people who are multilingual and

¹² EUROSTAT "Population by sex and age on 1 January of each year", latest update 25 April 2008, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>

¹³ 15.1% of young Italians are already involved in civic service. Source: "Youth Civic Service in Europe, Policies and Programmes: France, Germany, Italy, the Czech Republic, Poland and at European level", edited by the Association of Voluntary Organisations (AVSO), Pisa: Plus-Pisa university press, c2005

¹⁴ 96.000.000 multiplied with 15% multiplied with 1/3 divided by 15 years

¹⁵ 96.000.000 multiplied with 1% divided by 15 years

¹⁶ 14,6% of young people in the EU; source: EUROSTAT, Euro-Indicators 44/2008 of 1 April 2008

multicultural. For creativity and innovation to flourish, the EU's youth should have the widest of opportunities to broaden their horizons and realise their human potential. Opening up more cross-border volunteering opportunities for all youth across Europe would be a means to implement the European Youth Pact and help achieve the Lisbon goals.

In the context of the final evaluation of the Youth Programme (2000-2006),¹⁷ young volunteers having participated in the EVS expressed, among others, the following opinions: 76% of them considered that the experience had changed or influenced their jobs and future plans and 90% of them considered that their command of one or more languages spoken in the host country improved as a consequence of their participation in a cross-border volunteering experience.

Equally important, cross-border volunteering would contribute to the development of a greater sense of EU citizenship by increasing the knowledge and understanding of one's neighbours. Young volunteers are a considerable resource which can help to strengthen social solidarity in Europe and their activities could be put to assist other EU policy goals such as civil protection, social inclusion, regional development and the environment seeing young people do "good works" would also help to turn what is often a negative image of youth in some national media. The EU also needs to raise awareness of its value to young Europeans for the EU project to move forward.

In the context of the evaluation of the Youth in Action Programme mentioned above, 80% of young volunteers having participated in the EVS considered that their participation in general made them more active in youth, societal or political organisations and 77% considered that, after having carried out their project, they felt more responsible for helping people in other countries.

2.3.2. *Consequences for the Member States*

Welcoming more youth volunteers from other Member States, in turn, contributes to the development and cultural richness of the local communities they serve. Member States lose out on a valuable opportunity to develop the skills and sense of citizenship of their youth, a demographic group which in most Member States is in decline. Member States simply cannot afford not to make the most of a diminishing human asset if they wish to sustain their social model and way of life.

2.3.3. *Consequences for the target groups*

As the latest Eurobarometer on youth shows, young people appreciate mobility and wish to make more out of it. Youth seek to be actively engaged in the world around them during the "youthful" period of their lives and often wish to do so in another country or culture. In doing so, they do not only acquire important competences to enter the labour market, such as language skills, but they also win self-esteem through acts of solidarity. But current opportunities are still limited and far from achieving their great potential.

Youth workers try to promote volunteering not without a certain success. But when they wish to launch cross-border voluntary activities, they face a number of

¹⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm

challenges. They lack information about volunteering abroad, they lack training for the specific requirements of trans-European volunteering and their mobility needs to be increased in order to allow them to better understand the situation in other countries than their own.

2.4. Why the EU should act

Youth volunteering is a domain where the subsidiarity principle applies and Member States have the principal responsibility to develop actions. Yet the internationalisation of volunteering is a difficult task for any national voluntary system.

Individual Member States are less effective to solve alone the problems linked to the challenge of trans-European youth volunteering. It is at EU level that an overview of the different situations in the Member States exists. Therefore part of the solution can best be proposed at EU level, which, given its knowledge of the problem and needs common to all Member States and of the various national youth volunteering situations, can propose some elements of the solution that are matched to the Member States' possibilities, thereby respecting the proportionality of the proposal.

Mobility is at the very core of European affairs, and experience, as in previous examples of reinforced mobility of other groups of population (workers, students, etc.) shows that it is clearly at the level of the EU that action is appropriate and effective.

3. OBJECTIVES

3.1. General objective

The general objective of the proposed initiative is to promote the mobility of young people so that they have the opportunity to volunteer anywhere in Europe if they wish to do so. Better education, employability, competitiveness and citizenship are all side effects of this primary objective.

3.2. Specific objectives

Specific objective 1: To improve the knowledge of national youth volunteering schemes and cross-border opportunities of volunteering for young people

There is a need to improve the knowledge of the national schemes and cross-border opportunities of volunteering for young people and transfer this information to the European Commission for further dissemination in order to achieve a global and coherent view of the situation at national and European levels. In addition, exchange of information and good practices should be reinforced between Member States.

Specific objective 2: To increase exchange opportunities for young volunteers

The number of cross-border exchanges of young volunteers need to be increased. In order to do so, more opportunities of hosting and sending organisations need to be created. It would be necessary for the hosting and sending organisations to liaise with

their counterparts in other countries. Greater linkages and contacts between the European, regional and local level should be developed.

Specific objective 3: To assure a reasonable level of quality

Civil society flags a need for improved quality of youth volunteering. To respond to this demand regarding cross-border volunteering activities, some basic quality requirements should be developed and implemented according to the specificities of each Member State: the quality of organisations involved in volunteering; training of volunteers and staff; activity preparation and accompaniment; voluntary activities themselves and their tracking and follow-up. Member States should address also the issue of lack of adequate social protection provisions for young volunteers that could act as a disincentive to their mobility.

Specific objective 4: To promote skills and competence acquired by young volunteers

Skills and competences acquired in trans-European volunteering should be recognised appropriately in order to facilitate school reintegration and/or improve employability of young volunteers. European-wide recognised instruments such as the European Qualification Framework (EQF), Europass for CVs and self-assessment modules and Youthpass for certificates, should be used more. In this way the contribution of trans-European voluntary activities to economic integration would be strengthened and made more visible for employers and public institutions.

Specific objective 5: To target cross-border support for youth workers and young people with fewer opportunities for mobility

Youth workers

Training and qualification of youth workers dealing with cross-border volunteers should be improved and linked to the EQF. Mobility of youth workers aimed at a better knowledge of other national schemes should also be encouraged.

Young people with fewer opportunities for mobility

Volunteering constitutes a particularly valuable possibility of mobility for those young people who benefit less, or not at all, of mobility schemes. It would therefore be an interesting instrument for young people with fewer opportunities, but these young people have specific needs that must be taken into account. Young people with fewer opportunities for mobility are understood to be young people, who are not enrolled at university and those who are low-skilled.

4. POLICY OPTIONS

In the following different options are presented. After a short description of the option, its impact is evaluated according to its ability to fulfil the general and specific objectives and its estimated costs.

4.1. Option 1: Status quo

Description

The status quo is based the open method of coordination, EVS and the Mobility Recommendations.

The open method of coordination (OMC) focuses on the definition of common objectives to improve volunteering of young people within Member States. It aims at developing, facilitating promoting and recognising voluntary activities of young people within the Member States.

EVS offers cross-border volunteering opportunities to a restricted number of young people (see option 3 and chapter 6.3).

The Mobility Recommendations focus primarily on students and teachers and to a much lesser extent on volunteers. They deal with general issues and do not take the specific needs of young volunteers into account.

Impact

The OMC common objectives on volunteering, EVS and the Mobility Recommendations, have all brought about good results but demonstrate some limitations.

The definition and follow-up of common objectives helped raise awareness about the importance of volunteering of young people in Members States and to develop new national schemes. Pressing obstacles still persist and trans-European cross-border mobility is weakly developed. Apart from a few bilateral agreements EVS has been successful and the number of applications already exceeds budgetary and organisational possibilities. The current financial and organisational equipment of EVS falls short of demand.

The Mobility Recommendations have proven to be useful but insufficient. They also lack tailored proposals that would adequately address the particular needs of young volunteers.

Amicus, the pilot project described in chapter 2.2., for which preparatory measures are underway, is a one-shot approach and a demonstration of the existing need for more cross-border volunteering. It might help achieve the objectives, but is not a comprehensive and sustainable solution in itself.

Costs

The current situation would entail no additional cost, neither for the Union nor at national level.

Conclusion

Concluding it can be said that the status quo might allow some improvements concerning the specific objectives regarding knowledge, recognition and quality, but it is not appropriate to reach the general objectives, as it does not permit to do the

qualitative and quantum leap which is necessary to increase the cross-border mobility of young volunteers in Europe. It would neither have any additional effect on competitiveness, citizenship and solidarity. The status quo could satisfy a limited number of Member States not having a much elaborated state national scheme.

4.2. Option 2: Improving the interoperability of existing schemes in the Member States

Description

This option aims at improving the interoperability between the existing national youth volunteering schemes, whether organised by civil society or public authorities in the Member States through a variety of measures. The aim is for national voluntary schemes to open up "slots" for volunteers from other Member States and to keep the specific needs of such "visiting volunteers" in mind when designing their activities.

Better knowledge of national schemes and on civil society organisations could be stored with the European Commission for further dissemination.

Other assets would be support to the hosting organisations in the country, information towards young people, youth workers and youth leaders about opportunities abroad, and highlight of the value of and promote much more the European youth/mobility cards, which allow a variety of discounts on accommodation, travel, culture, sport, etc.. Promotion of a form of "quality assurance" to protect volunteers going cross-border and encourage participation in schemes unfamiliar to youth elsewhere would be another cornerstone of this option. Quality assurance would also comprise information about requirements to hosting and sending organisations and would address issues of social protection for volunteers going abroad.

- Greater importance would be attributed to the adaptation of learning outcomes of youth volunteering to national and European qualification frameworks or their equivalent, the promotion of the use of Europass for trans-European volunteering of young people, the development of a certificate based on Youthpass or equivalent and the promotion of trans-European volunteering of young people towards employers, authorities, institutions, etc.

A specific focus would be on youth workers and youth leaders, their information and training in organisations, local authorities and civic services about trans-European volunteering of young people. Trans-European mobility of youth workers and youth leaders themselves would be encouraged as well as targeted cross-border support for youth with fewer opportunities.

Under this option the Commission would be able to support the Member States' efforts by enhancing access to volunteering opportunities via the further development of the European Young Volunteers' Portal as part of the existing Youth Portal. The Commission will also have an important role concerning the recognition of voluntary activities of young people via EU instruments like EQF, Europass and Youth Pass.

In this option, EVS shall continue as a stimulating programme (not mass programme) of cross-border volunteering and as a laboratory for testing quality, recognition and support improvements.

This option will complement existing Recommendations on mobility, which lack tailored proposals that adequately address the particular needs of young volunteers, and Resolutions on youth volunteering that focus on voluntary activities within the Member States and lack cross-border provisions.

To get the appropriate impact, the proposed legal form for this option is a Recommendation. A Commission Recommendation, though legally possible, would not have more impact than option 1 (status quo), as a Commission Recommendation would only engage the Commission and not involve the Member States as much as a Council Recommendation would do. A Council Recommendation would have the advantage of replying to both these requirements and is expressly foreseen in the legal basis, Article 149 (4) of the Treaty.

Taking into account that the main effort to increase mobility of young volunteers has to be made by Member States, such a Council Recommendation appears most appropriate.

Impact

This option would take a qualitative and quantitative leap forward in order to allow for a significant development of young people's mobility through volunteering in Europe, with numerous positive consequences on their education, employability, competitiveness, and citizenship. It would also allow developing solidarity further in Europe, which is particularly important given the social reality of demographic development and the growing intergenerational gap. It respects subsidiarity as it is based on existing national schemes.

The complexity of the operation is however not to be underestimated. This is why a progressive implementation should be envisaged.

Costs

The budgetary impact at national level would be limited to the costs linked to the greater interaction of national schemes. On the basis of the current experience of EVS, the travel and training costs related to the linguistic preparation of the volunteer can be estimated at 1 000 EUR per volunteer, with the other costs being neutralised on the basis of reciprocity. On the hypothesis of 64 000 young cross-border volunteers (see point 2.1), this would represent a global cost of around 64 MioEURO per year spread across 27 Member States and NGOs, depending on their capacity and interest. A part of this budget would also be covered by existing cross-border activities. On the side of the EU budget, the cost for the portal is already covered by the Youth in Action Programme.

Conclusion

Concluding it can be stated that this option appears to best meet the general objective of mobility and the specific objectives of knowledge, exchange opportunities, quality, promotion of skills and competences and targeted support for youth workers and young people with fewer opportunities.

4.3. Option 3: Expansion of the European Voluntary Service

Description

This option would be the expansion of EVS as a universal service, offering each young person who wishes it the opportunity to carry out a trans-border voluntary experience. This would be organised and paid by the European Union.

Impact

This option would have the advantage of offering a quality European volunteering service to each young European resident who wishes for it. It would require an enormous organisational and administrative body at EU level and would need a significantly higher budget.

This option would allow reaching the general objective of mobility. It would have positive consequences in terms of education, competitiveness, citizenship and solidarity, but it would only lead to a partial realisation of the specific objectives, namely of quality, recognition and support for youth workers and young people with fewer opportunities, but not the one on knowledge of national situations. Another important drawback would be the risk of reducing the diversity of schemes that currently exist in Europe, which is one of the main characteristics of the voluntary sector that should be preserved and valorised.

Costs

This option would entail additional costs for the budget of the Union. On the hypothesis of 64 000 young volunteers abroad per year (see point 2.1), this would represent a cost of around 640 MioEUR¹⁸ per year for the budget of the Union, to be compared to the current budget of 36 MioEUR for EVS. Such expenses are obviously not compatible with the budgetary framework of the financial perspectives for the period 2007-2013.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that this option does not appear to be feasible for practical and financial reasons.

4.4. Option 4: Harmonisation of national youth volunteering schemes

Description

This option would target a Regulation aligning the existing national youth volunteering schemes, with a view to inciting Member States to create civic services. A civic service is a voluntary service managed by the State or on behalf of the State.

Impact

¹⁸ EVS cost +/- 10 000 EURO per volunteer

If all Member States had civic services in place, the interchange of young volunteers would be easy. The States would be in charge, the structures would be the same, support as well as information would be centralised. This option would allow reaching the fixed general and specific objectives in terms of mobility and interoperability with positive consequences in terms of education, competitiveness, citizenship and solidarity, but does not appear to be feasible for reasons of subsidiarity. The Treaty expressly excludes harmonisation measures. In addition Member States object a harmonisation in this field because they all have different and diverse youth voluntary schemes.

Costs

Costs have not been estimated

Conclusion

This option has been discarded for a lack of EU competence and respect for subsidiarity.

5. COMPARISON OF THE DIFFERENT OPTIONS AND THEIR EXPECTED IMPACTS

5.1. Likely economic, social and environmental impacts

While the option "status quo" would have a limited economic, social and environmental impact, other options would be designed to have positive social impacts not only for the young volunteer in question, but also for society. In this respect, it should be noted that in particular young people with fewer opportunities of mobility would benefit and enjoy social (re)integration through such volunteering.

Options 2, 3 and 4 would also improve the young volunteers' economic integration as described before. Europe's Internal Market needs a more skilled, competent, multilingual and mobile workforce.

Apart from economic and social impacts, option 2, 3 and 4 could also trigger positive environmental impacts, as one of the domains proposed for the opening up of more opportunities for young volunteers is that of the environmental and civil protection.

The option "Expansion of EVS" would have a negative economic impact for the EU, as it would be very expensive to step up the budgetary means for a European-level quality youth volunteering service.

5.2. Impacts outside of the EU

Positive spill-over effects could also be expected in the area of external relations as better interoperability of national schemes and more information sharing may stimulate young Europeans to engage more in volunteering in third countries and allow more exchanges with third countries.

The conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service are set out by in a Council Directive¹⁹, which provides the possibility of granting special residence permits to third-country volunteers. While students, pupils and trainees obtain visa more easily, Member States are free to decide applying the Directive also to young volunteers. In this context Member States should consider applying the Directive also to young volunteers in the same way as to students.

5.3. Conclusions

Concluding it can be stated that by comparing the different options, option 2 should be considered as the preferred option in order to better achieve the full range of objectives.

No negative economic, social and environmental effects are expected, on the contrary, there will be a positive economic, social and environmental impact.

CRITERIA	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3
1. Impact on:			
Mobility	low	high	high
Competitiveness	low	high	high
Citizenship	low	high	high
Solidarity	low	high	high
2. Feasibility	yes	yes	no
3. Subsidiarity	yes	yes	no
4. Proportionality	no	yes	no

Administrative costs related to the preferred option will be limited to those of the reporting exercise (every four years).

6. STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATIONS AND EVIDENCE MATERIAL

6.1. Results of stakeholder consultation

In February 2008, a stakeholder consultation of 17 European level umbrella youth and volunteering organisations and national youth and volunteering organisations took place. At this meeting, it became clear that civil society counts on the Commission to take action in order to facilitate and improve the situation of young

¹⁹ 2004/114/EC of 13 December 2004

volunteers. They also confirmed the challenges identified by the Commission and expect that the most pressing obstacles to volunteering, such as social protection and visa difficulties, be solved, that the quality of youth volunteering be improved, and that voluntary activities be better recognised. They are ready to assume a more active role in implementing the new initiative. To this end they would need more support from Member States.

Following this meeting, some of the organisations present delivered their comments in writing to the Commission. Among those were the most important and powerful EU umbrella volunteering organisations, such as the Association of Voluntary Organisations (AVSO) and the European Centre of Volunteering (CEV). CEV underlines the need for a closer cooperation between volunteering at local and European level, while AVSO calls for new innovative volunteering partnerships in the Member States. AVSO is also in favour of an EU approach with a view to life-long volunteering. This argument is also supported by CEV. Both NGOs regret the lack of professional approach of some volunteering organisations. AVSO points at the incompatibility of volunteering with unemployment benefits as great obstacle. The recognition of volunteering through EU instruments was strongly supported by both NGOs.

The European Youth Forum (EYF) also confirmed the need to have a Recommendation adopted by the EU in order to add European value to the voluntary activities of young people. They insisted that the Recommendation should cover all kinds of national schemes and not only national civic services. They requested a European Framework for the Rights of Volunteers and to base the quality assurance on a self-assessment tool.

6.2. Results of Member State consultation

The national reports of Member States on youth volunteering of 2006/2007 show that all Member States support voluntary activities of young people. The support can be political, legal or financial. France, Luxembourg, Belgium and the UK have made it a political priority of the government. Those countries that have a voluntary service in place also have a legal basis. All Member States have increased financial support for volunteering. The financial support takes the form either of support for voluntary organisations and their networks, for volunteering programmes or for specific measures like training. Altogether the reports show that, while good results were reached at national level, the interoperability between the national schemes needs to be improved. The objective of the open method of coordination is to improve youth volunteering at national level, but it did not touch upon cross-border volunteering. For this a new instrument is needed. For many Member States, EVS is the main (or the only) tool of trans-European youth volunteering. Member States praise EVS but recognise its limited outreach due to budgetary and organisational constraints as there are many more young people than volunteering opportunities under EVS. Only few Member States have established trans-border volunteering.

Some Member States have trans-border volunteering limited to the field of development cooperation; as for example Sweden and Denmark. One Member State, Austria, is starting to develop a small trans-border volunteering programme.

Altogether it can be concluded that there is a wish and need for more mobility in youth volunteering but that so far achievements in this direction are very limited.

In March 2008 the Commission organised a consultation meeting with Member States. There was a consensus on the importance among the Member States of the mobility and interoperability concept presented by the Commission. Member States' concerns were about respect for the diversity of national youth volunteering schemes. On 21 April 2008 the Commission's ideas were discussed with the Member States' Directors-General for Youth. Many Member States expressed their support, and no objections were made to the Commission's proposals. On the contrary Member States were interested by the idea of creating greater interoperability of national youth volunteering schemes and a better mobility for young volunteers. There was confirmation that it would be important to tackle social obstacles to youth volunteering.

6.3. Evaluation of the European Voluntary Service

An evaluation of the EVS was part of the final evaluation of the former Youth Programme (2000-2006)²⁰. In general this programme is considered by the evaluators to have been very successful in improving young participants' citizenship competencies, especially when it comes to attitudes, communication and social skills. The feeling of being a European citizen as indicated by the young people was already relatively high among participants prior to the start of the activity, but the percentage increased quite considerably after participation (from 70% to 85-90%). The attitude towards Europe also became more positive due to participation in the programme, especially for ex-EVS participants from new Member States. The evaluators consider the programme to be effective in these aspects. They also note that the effectiveness of the programme on employability has been higher for EVS than for other Actions. Ex-EVS participants report a very positive effect on their employability, especially in terms of job orientation (62% of the EVS participants state that participation influenced their professional career, while 56% indicated it has given them better job opportunities).

6.4. Eurobarometer

The Eurobarometer survey on youth of 2007²¹ confirms that for 90% of the consulted young people the European Union means freedom to travel, to study and to work elsewhere. The meaning of "being a citizen of the European Union" is for 77% of the respondents the right to move permanently to another country. 74% of those interviewed said that they would increase their activity as citizen in society if there were more programmes encouraging volunteering.

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/youth/2007/prog/sum_en.pdf

²¹ "Looking Behind the Figures: The main results of the Eurobarometer 2007 survey on youth"

6.5. Contributions of other European institutions

6.5.1. European Parliament

In April 2008 the European Parliament adopted the report on the "Role of Volunteering in Contributing to Economic and Social Cohesion"²², prepared by MEP Marian Harkin. In this report the European Parliament encourages the development of civil society and of participative democracy by making it easier to bring Europe closer to its citizens. To this end it proposes the promotion, support and facilitation of voluntary action. The report also outlines the contribution of volunteering to social capital and to economic cohesion as well as its support of the Lisbon objectives through the promotion of employability and social inclusion. The economic value of volunteering and its contribution to social cohesion, intergenerational support, integration, intercultural dialogue and cultural development is highlighted as well as the role of volunteering in bridging divided societies. In the report the Commission is called upon to investigate the development of a common framework in which national and local tools operate to enhance the mobility of volunteers.

On the other side, the European Parliament, as the EU's budgetary authority, has introduced a new preparatory measure in the field of youth volunteering into the 2008 budget, named Amicus. This initiative aims at facilitating the interoperability of existing national volunteering schemes in view of promoting trans-national volunteering. Amicus will open national volunteering schemes to trans-national mobility by offering young Europeans the possibility to participate in volunteering activities, proposed by civil society or civic service bodies in another EU country. Amicus will also be the occasion for Member States to deal at EU level with the conditions of interoperability, such as quality standards, recognition mechanisms and the support of trans-European youth volunteering actions through youth work.

6.5.2. European Economic and Social Committee

In December 2006 the European Economic and Social Committee adopted an opinion on "Voluntary activity: its role in European society and its impact"²³. In its opinion the European Economic and Social Committee recognises the need of defining volunteering. It makes the link with the Lisbon strategy and refers to the European Youth Pact. It calls for a better recognition of volunteering and volunteering organisations. It also dedicates a lot of attention to the socio-economic role of volunteering for society and calls for the elimination of obstacles and in particular in the field of taxation, social security and insurance. The European Economic and Social Committee also calls for a closer cooperation of all actors (employers, organisations, public authorities, etc.).

6.5.3. Committee of the Regions

In February 2008 the Committee of the Regions adopted an opinion on "The contribution of volunteering to economic and social cohesion"²⁴. In this opinion the Committee of the Regions underlines the importance of volunteering in contributing

²² REGI/6/50546, 2007/2149, of 21 April 2008

²³ SOC 243, of 13 December 2006

²⁴ ECOS-IV-017, of 6-7 February 2008

to the Lisbon Agenda, refers to the lack of research and statistical data on volunteering, demands a particular attention on the legal status of volunteers, asks to step up the support for volunteering organisations, underlines the role of volunteering in social cohesion, and expressly requests that an EU dimension be developed in volunteering.

7. MONITORING SYSTEM

The Commission will monitor the implementation of the Council Recommendation and intends to ensure the political follow-up by:

- Meeting regularly Member States for implementing the recommendation and monitoring indicators;
- Inviting Member States to report regularly on the progress of implementation (this could be done in intervals of three years as already agreed by Member States for the regular European youth report);
- Analysing the Member States' reports, evaluating the progress made and, proposing how to proceed further in order to better and completely achieve the set objectives;
- Reporting on the implementation of the Council Recommendation to the other EU institutions, to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. The EC will report to the other EU institutions by using, inter alia, the outcomes of the Member States' triennial reports as well as the outcomes of an external evaluation on the implementation and impact of the Council Recommendation (planned). Such a reporting will also indicate possible proposals order to better and completely achieve the set objectives

7.1. Indicators

The Commission is in the progress of developing indicators in cooperation with the Member States and with scientific support for the youth field by the Centre of Research on Lifelong Learning (CRELL)²⁵. The following indicators are in development:

- State of knowledge on youth volunteering
- Number of young trans-European volunteers
- Measures to eliminate obstacles
- Recognition of skills and competences acquired through volunteering
- Extent of employment offered to young volunteers
- Development of hosting capacities (or: number of bi- and multilateral agreements - purpose to measure degree of interoperability)

²⁵ <http://crell.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>

- Number of organisations that fulfil a reasonable level of quality
- Number of cross-border youth volunteers using Europass
- Number of youth workers proficient in supporting cross-border volunteering.