

European volunteering: remove remaining barriers, urge MEPs

Plenary sessions [27-10-2016 - 12:39]

The EU needs a better coordinated policy on volunteering, to give volunteers a proper legal status and help them join programmes, say MEPs in a resolution voted on Thursday. Almost 100 million EU citizens have taken part as volunteers in education, culture or arts, sport events, humanitarian and development aid work. Young people should take advantage of volunteering schemes to develop skills and acquire experience that helps them to find jobs afterwards, stresses the text.

Despite the real social and economic benefits of volunteering for individuals and organisations, participation in the European Volunteering Service remains modest and many barriers still have to be removed. People of all ages should be encouraged to take advantage of volunteering to improve their skills and understanding of other cultures, and thus improve their chances of finding a job, say MEPs.

To encourage volunteering, a more supportive environment is essential, including a legal framework with clear rights and responsibilities for programme managers and volunteers, as well as fair funding, say MEPs.

Volunteer work - a real value to take into account when applying for EU funds

Organisations should be encouraged to step up their participation in programmes involving volunteers, inter alia by allowing volunteer work to be accounted for as a “co-funding” contribution to projects by member states, alongside EU grants. If organisations could use EU structural funding in this way, they would have a stronger incentive to offer volunteering opportunities and develop their programmes and thus deliver more benefits for communities, MEPs note.

The European Parliament asks the European Commission to improve its communication strategy and public access to information about opportunities in the European Volunteering Service and also to develop a more coordinated volunteering policy, with a single contact point in the EU institutions and a simpler application system for both individuals and organisations.

Solidarity Corps

MEPs voice support for the Commission’s new EU Solidarity Corps initiative, but stress that its implementation should not undermine existing volunteering programmes and their funding.

On Thursday morning, MEPS asked the European Commission to encourage participation by people of all ages in volunteering programmes, facilitate access to them for third-country nationals wishing to volunteer in Europe and propose a European Volunteering Statute, to ensure that volunteer organisations are given proper legal and institutional recognition.

Procedure: non-legislative resolution

Press release

Facts

- EVS started in 1996 as a pilot action. Later, EVS became part of the Youth programme (2000-2006), and continued to be a flagship activity under the Youth in Action Programme (2007-2013) and within the current Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020)
- EVS project is a partnership between two or more promoting organisations.
- Projects last from 2 weeks to 12 months.
- Volunteers – aged between 17 and 30– receive support to cover travel and living costs, as well as pocket money and insurance.
- Upon completion of the project, volunteers obtain a certificate confirming their participation.

Further information

- Adopted text (B8-1126/2016) will soon be available here (27.10.2016)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html>
- Video recording of debate (click on 27.10.2016)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/search-by-date>
- EbS+ (27.10.2016)

: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/ebs/schedule.cfm?sitelang=en&page=3&institution=0&date=10/27/2016>
- EPRS - At a glance - Volunteering in the EU
: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2016/589841/EPRS_ATA\(2016\)589841_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2016/589841/EPRS_ATA(2016)589841_EN.pdf)
- EPRS Podcast : Volunteering in Europe

: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UgR_ibyqFU&feature=youtu.be
- European Youth Portal - European Volunteering Service

: https://europa.eu/youth/EU/volunteering/european-voluntary-service_en
- EVS - factsheets and impacts

: https://europa.eu/youth/eu/article/46/39034_en
- Audiovisual material for professionals

: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/default.aspx>

Political groups

- News pages of the EPP group
: <http://bit.ly/1WuQLqB>
- News pages of the S&D group
: <http://bit.ly/1WWG6F4>
- News pages of the ECR group
: <http://bit.ly/1Y0YFj>
- News pages of the ALDE group
: <http://bit.ly/1XbSQs6>
- Press release by the GUE/NGL group
: <http://bit.ly/2eJ24J8>
- News pages of the Greens/EFA group
: <http://bit.ly/1TV9vvr>
- News pages of the EFDD group
: <http://bit.ly/1TUnDFU>
- News pages of the ENF group
: <http://bit.ly/2cxzxcR>

Press release

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