

**Expert Seminar “Young People with Fewer Opportunities and Volunteering”
Strasbourg, 11-12 December, 2006**



Expert Seminar

Young people with fewer opportunities and volunteering

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Seminar report

Foreword

The Expert Seminar, organised by the Partnership in the Field of Youth between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, gathered youth work practitioners, policy makers and researchers dealing with the topic of the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities in various types of voluntary activities. What are the benefits and what are the challenges of their involvement? What may and should be done to increase the positive effects of volunteering for those young people? These and other questions were at the core of the discussions which took place during the seminar. Several valuable conclusions emerged which can be found in this report. The seminar team sincerely hopes that the seminar outcomes can be helpful for everybody working with and for this target group. Please do not hesitate to contact the Partnership secretariat for further information.

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Recommendations

Improving Accessibility to Volunteering for Young People with Fewer Opportunities

1. Policy and Procedures:

1. Regulate visa procedures in a co-ordinated and co-operative effort between all authorities concerned to increase the mobility of all young people.
2. Develop a legal status for volunteers to ensure their safety and social protection. In this context consider social and health insurance and child protection issues. Explore other areas to improve the social position of volunteers, in particular of young people with fewer opportunities, such as legal assistance, reductions for public transport, the creation of a discount card for volunteers like the International Student Card (ISIC). Establish a „European Charter of the Rights for Volunteers”, similar to the European Voluntary Service (EVS) Charter (2007) adapted to national realities in its implementation phase.
3. Encourage the development of national voluntary service or other appropriate forms of volunteering for young people with fewer opportunities where such possibilities do not yet exist. Consider developing national voluntary services or other appropriate forms of volunteering without age restrictions and provide opportunities for adults and senior volunteers to integrate in action programs similar in structure to EVS.
4. Enhance partnerships between stakeholders who support volunteering opportunities for young people including policy makers, enterprises, administrations, educational institutions, researchers, youth workers, youth organizations, etc on national as well as on European level. Encourage national and European level exchange of expertise on the research and practice of volunteering.
5. Match policy objectives with local needs. Establish a mutual process between grass-root workers and policy makers. Use structured dialogue and develop a co-management system where appropriate. Research experts, youth policy makers, practitioners and young people should meet together on every level.
6. Introduce more flexibility in volunteering opportunities and structures. Develop new types of voluntary projects or adapt existing ones to meet the specific needs of the target group and to better match the capacities of volunteers from fewer-opportunity backgrounds. Strive for a balance between regulations and flexibility/innovation.
7. Simplify financial procedures in order to balance the time devoted to administration and the time devoted to the content of the project.

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2. Publicity and Promotion

1. Produce tailor-made information and promotional material with a clear image of both the exact target for which it is intended and the activity envisaged. Formulate concrete, straightforward messages.
2. Highlight the benefits of participation for individuals by stating clearly the rewarding experience and the genuine service to the community that volunteering brings.
3. Ensure a balanced presentation of volunteering - underline the positive aspects, but also draw attention to the potential hardships involved. Create a positive image of volunteering as an inter-generational activity.
4. Promote a positive image of volunteering through mass media, employment services, authorities and civil society organizations. Counteract the image of volunteering as a lower-category occupation or as being inferior to employment. Make use of different media and channels to get the message across including word-of-mouth campaigns and the involvement of key figures, e.g. in local youth work. Individualized personal contacts are recommended.
5. Involve young people in the design of promotional materials using tools such as SMS, video clips, pod-casts, graffiti, etc.
6. Promote volunteering not only as activities defined by established organizations but also as individualised projects initiated by young people.
7. Acknowledge volunteers in public on behalf of the community to stimulate new interest for volunteering and encourage others to emulate the efforts.
8. Publicise celebration and achievements using the end of year, festivals, International Day of the Volunteer (December 5th) etc.
9. Identify a network of reliable actors who work at grass-roots level and build up trust in the concept of volunteering involving local youth workers, former volunteers, senior volunteers, EVS participants, etc.
10. Make volunteering easily accessible, e.g. ask people directly to volunteer.

3. Maximizing the quality of volunteering

1. Provide training for youth workers and organisations to support them in answering the needs of volunteers with fewer opportunities.
2. Ensure evaluation and continuation of voluntary projects. Long-term results and findings should be translated into tool-kits, guides, sets of criteria, etc and be widely disseminated. Already existing quality support materials should be widely promoted and used.
3. Strengthen the quality preparation of both individual volunteers and of project placements by using up-to-date guidelines, materials and other resources, such as the EVS Charter.

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4. Improve monitoring and evaluation processes oriented towards better understanding the needs of young people with fewer opportunities (e.g. undertake on-going research to determine the needs of the target group on local level).
5. Provide financial resources and structures to develop external and/or peer coaching of volunteers on an individual and sustainable basis.
6. Promote networks with local actors who offer volunteering opportunities like the religious communities, fire brigades, schools, etc.
7. Provide (financial) support for existing NGOs to greater enhance the culture of volunteering.

Maximizing the quality in the Youth in Action Programme/European Voluntary Service

1. Strengthen the Inclusion Strategy in Youth in Action as a tool for integrating more youth with fewer opportunities in the activities. Promote the use of financial means for building local partnerships (institutions and social welfare organizations) and by allowing a part of activity budgets to be used to organize preparatory work.
2. Promote more links and/or progression between Youth Initiatives and EVS as up to 70% of Youth Initiative participants come from the fewer-opportunity target group. Implement a long-term mentoring approach with support from the SALTO Resource Centres on Inclusion and Youth Initiatives. Encourage National Agencies to develop mentoring and practical coaching specifically to support young people with fewer opportunities.
3. Promote the use of youth exchanges as initial intercultural experiences for young people with fewer opportunities and to motivate potential volunteers through offering a European dimension to their work and experience.
4. Ensure that innovation is not given more importance than reinforcing structures or than ensuring a long-term sustainable approach towards youth with fewer opportunities. Realistic long-term strategies are needed.
5. Promote new Action 3 “Youth in the World” as a good tool for learning about social inclusion practices in international and civil society organizations from different cultures.
6. Ensure valorisation of the work done in EVS up to now. Use the EVS guidelines already in place (e.g. in terms of training, risk assessment documents, reports, booklets, documents, etc.) that aim to assure quality as far as possible. As quality assurance is much further developed in EVS than in some other programmes (e.g. Leonardo) this work deserves recognition on all levels.
7. Ensure quantity together with quality. The two aspects should always be considered together including quality control and risk assessment.
8. Encourage organizations on national and European levels to partner up in order to exchange experiences and practices concerning the target group.

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9. Limit administrative work to help new organizations with no experience to access the EVS Programme more easily.
10. Allocate funds for training and further development on quality issues in the frame of National Agencies’ “Training and Cooperation Plans” (e.g. SOHO training courses). Continue the work on quality in partnership with experienced EVS organizations.

4. Valorisation and Recognition of Volunteering

1. Ensure formal and informal recognition of volunteering and of the competencies acquired, especially for young people with fewer opportunities. Valorise volunteering as a way of learning “soft” social skills like communication and other interpersonal skills that improve a young person’s chances in the labour market.
2. Create or strengthen links between the sectors of non-formal education and employment.
3. Promote the use of Youthpass (a recognition and validation tool of non-formal learning promoted in the Youth in Action programme) among educational and business sectors.
4. Establish evaluation as a process on internal (by volunteer) and external (by coach, mentor, organization, local community) levels. Develop personal learning plans with clear indicators to help mentors and young people to follow the progress being made.
5. Create an award system to recognise and promote good practices at national and European level.

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1. BACKGROUND

The Expert Seminar “Young People with Fewer Opportunities and Volunteering”, held in the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg on December 11-12 2006, was organised by the Partnership on Youth between the Council of Europe and the European Commission. The seminar identified the obstacles which continue to block the participation of young people with fewer opportunities in voluntary activities. The seminar also considered which measures might be taken and which co-operation on various levels could be envisaged in order to better promote volunteering to this specific target group.

The Council of Europe and the European Commission are both dedicated to the promotion of voluntary activities and have been involved in organizing numerous consultations, expert group meetings, seminars, etc, in pursuit of this aim. Using as a basis the previous events and resulting documents on the one hand and the experience and expertise of the participants on the other hand, the seminar set out to identify the current state of the development of voluntary service in Europe.

This Seminar continued and intensified discussions that began during the Research Seminar on Voluntary Activities (July 2004)¹. It referred to the documents of the Council of Europe aimed at enhancing volunteering at national and transnational levels². The Expert Seminar was also inspired by one of the action lines proposed by the Annex to the “Resolution on Common Objectives for Voluntary Activities of Young People” (adopted by the Council of the European Union and the representatives of the governments of the Member States, 2004). The Resolution confirms the importance of the priority of voluntary activities of young people in Europe and it states that voluntary activities should be developed, facilitated, promoted and recognised at all levels with a view to enhancing active citizenship and solidarity of young people. The Annex identifies the need to:

"analyse more carefully the phenomena that lead to the exclusion of certain groups of young people from voluntary activities and develop approaches focused on encouraging them to participate in voluntary activities, particularly for young people with fewer opportunities."

1.1. Aim

In this context, the Expert Seminar aimed to:

- provide space for the exchange of knowledge, experience and practical examples on the topic
- draw conclusions and propose viable solutions for the target group and those working with them
- make concrete recommendations to policy makers.

1.2. Seminar team

The seminar team consisted of:

- Karin Lopatta-Loibl, European Commission,
- Marta Medlinska and Hans-Joachim Schild, the Partnership in the Field of Youth between the Council of Europe and the European Commission,

¹ See seminar proceedings in the edited collection “Charting the Landscape of European Youth Voluntary Activities”, ISBN 92-871-5826-6, Council of Europe, December 2005

² For more information see:

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Resources/Documents/Bibliographies/Volunteer_en.asp

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- Kathy Schroeder, freelance trainer; facilitator and proofreader,
- Magdalena Jakubowska, freelance trainer; reporter.

1.3. Participants

A total of 15 participants attended the seminar. Among this group were researchers, policy makers and practitioners as well as representatives of young people (the European Youth Forum). The participants represented different approaches to working with young people with fewer opportunities, different approaches to volunteering, and different levels of involvement ranging from local to transnational levels in EU and Council of Europe Member States. This led to a wide range of shared expertise.

1.4. Structure of the meeting

The obstacles blocking the participation of young people with fewer opportunities from participating in volunteering activities are numerous and varied. In order to make an effective analysis it was necessary to try to categorize the main areas where obstacles are known to exist.

The 1, 5 working days of the programme examined the volunteer experience in three distinct (chronological) phases:

Recruitment & Preparation phase	Implementation Phase	Evaluation & Follow-up phase
<i>Improving accessibility to volunteering</i>	<i>Improving the quality of volunteering</i>	<i>Improving the long-term impact of volunteering</i>

Each of these three phases poses different types of difficulties. The first of these, the „Recruitment and Preparation” phase, is directly linked with issues concerning (the lack of) access to volunteering. This first phase is often the focus of attention as it remains difficult to reach and motivate the target group to become involved in voluntary activities in general. However, experience and research show that attention also needs to be paid to the particular problems that the target group faces in the „Implementation” and „Evaluation & Follow-Up” phases.

To tackle these complex issues, the participants in the Expert Seminar were asked to consider the following questions:

1. What specific problems or barriers do young people with fewer opportunities need to overcome **before** they can become involved in volunteering (in the recruitment and preparation phase)?
2. What specific types of difficulties does this target group have to cope with **during** the volunteering experience (in the implementation phase)?
3. What are the most important issues facing fewer-opportunity youngsters **after** the volunteer experience has ended (in the evaluation and follow-up phase)?

Once the obstacles had been identified, participants were asked to make recommendations: how can the accessibility, quality and long-term impact of volunteering be improved for young people in this target group?

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Throughout the seminar it was stressed that increasing the involvement of the target group in volunteering is not just an issue of quantity but is also one of quality. The challenge at this time is to propose solutions which will not only increase the number of young people participating but which will also guarantee those young people a quality experience, one which responds to their specific needs.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Opening of the seminar

Michael Ingledow (Council of Europe) presented the view of the Council of Europe, highlighting previous attempts by the Council to identify concrete measures towards the promotion of volunteering, including³:

- The Recommendation for the Committee of Ministers including incentives for volunteering at national and transnational levels (Recommendation No. R (94) 4);
- The “European Convention on the Promotion of a Transnational Long-Term Voluntary Service for Young People” open to signature since 2000 but to date not in force due to insufficient number of ratifications;
- Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1496 (2001) on “Improving the status and role of volunteers in society: a contribution by the Parliamentary Assembly to the International Year of Volunteers 2001”;
- The „Study on the Implementation of the Follow-Up of Voluntary Service for Young People in Europe”. The replies to the study showed a gulf in terms of what voluntary service is and its diversity in Europe (while very little work is being done in some countries, especially in terms of legislation and support, others - e.g. Spain and the Netherlands - are actively promoting volunteering.)

The clear conclusion was that many Council of Europe member states, especially the new ones, need support in building systems and structures and that these should be based on good international practices.

Karin Lopatta-Loibl (EC) presented the “Resolution on Common Objectives for Voluntary Activities for Young People” of 16 November 2004⁴ and the European Voluntary Service programme⁵. She highlighted the efforts made within this framework to encourage young people with fewer opportunities to participate more in this action of the Youth in Action Programme.

Hans-Joachim Schild (Partnership CoE - EC) explained the main basis and scope of activities of the Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission⁶, highlighting those that concerned voluntary activities of young people in Europe. These include the Research Seminar on Voluntary Activities (2004)⁷, T-Kit no.5 on International

³ For more information see: Footnote 2

⁴ For more information see: <http://europa.eu/bulletin/en/200711/p121012.htm>

⁵ For more information see: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc82_en.htm and http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/documents/info_kit_0407.pdf

⁶ For more information see: <http://www.youth-partnership.net>

⁷ It identified the need for more resources, for extra support, for social protection and recognition of volunteering, for stronger policy commitment and for stronger infrastructures. For more information see footnote 1.

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Voluntary Service⁸ and several articles in Coyote Magazine that focused on various issues related to volunteering and inclusion⁹.

2.2. Introduction of participants

In the introduction round all participants were invited to describe their or their organisation's contribution to the transnational mobility of young people as a tool for learning and personal development.

Organizations:

AVM gGmbH Germany: AVM and its project **Voluntary Year of Social Training (FSTJ)** were presented. AVM works directly with young people with fewer opportunities (immigrants, unemployed). AVM offers a form of vocational training that includes an optional period of „local social work” (volunteering) where participants can apply their vocational skills for the benefit of the local community. Eighty percent of young people find work after completing the vocational training programme; the „local social work” element makes an important contribution to this success rate. Challenges to the organisation include: encouraging larger numbers of young people from immigrant backgrounds to become involved in voluntary service and international exchanges. Represented by Silvia Weber.

The European Volunteer Centre (CEV): CEV is an association of 43 national, regional and local volunteer centres and volunteer development agencies in 22 countries across Europe. CEV is a member of the European Social Platform, CIVICUS and the International Association of Volunteer Effort (IAVE). The objectives of CEV include: supporting and promoting voluntary actions, disseminating information about new policies, lobbying on national and European level and providing expertise. Represented by Kamila Czerwinska.

European Youth Forum (EYF): Independently established by youth organisations, the European Youth Forum is made up of more than 90 National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations, some of which are federations of youth organisations in their own right. The EYF represents tens of millions of young people from all over Europe and their common interests. EYF works to empower young people to participate actively in the shaping of Europe and the societies in which they live, and to improve the living conditions of young people as European citizens in today's world. As a platform, it is the representative body of its member organisations towards institutions and partners active in the youth field. Successes include: lobbying successfully for greater attention from policy makers on young people with fewer opportunities and for increased recognition of volunteering; the development of tools allowing for increased participation of young people with fewer opportunities, also in voluntary service. Represented by: Maxime Cerruti.

Reykjavik Youth and Sport Council: A municipal organization, the Reykjavik Youth and Sport Council is responsible for youth policy, programmes, evaluation, education, training and research. Challenges include: new volunteering policy, cross-sectorial work, empowerment of youth towards use of social capital. Represented by: Gisli Eggertson.

European Network of Animation (ENOA): ENOA aims to support local actors working directly with youth in order to raise the participation of young people from local to

⁸ ISBN 92-871-5568-2, Council of Europe and European Commission, July 2002, reprinted in 2004; to be downloaded at http://www.youth-knowledge.net/INTEGRATION/TY/Publications/T_Kits.html .

⁹ To be downloaded at <http://www.youth-knowledge.net/INTEGRATION/TY/Publications/coyote.html> .

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international level and to increase youth involvement in decision-making processes. Tool: action trainings for groups with fewer opportunities. Represented by Pieter-Jan Uyttersprot.

Centre for Social Action, De Montfort University, Youth Action Network, UK: The Centre for Social Action is a leading organization on national level delivering specialist capacity building services to the youth volunteering sector. The Centre works with a range of organizations at local, regional and national level with the objective of increasing the capacity of the youth volunteering sector to offer more and better quality volunteering opportunities to young people. Activities: participative research project around social capital and the impact of volunteering on building social capital; qualitative and quantitative research; training on participation and youth leadership; youth-led research; promotion of participation on organizational level. Represented by: Thilo Boeck.

Armenian Young Women’s Association (AYWA): Founded in 2004, AYWA is a non-profit non-governmental organization based on voluntary membership. The organization seeks to develop the skills and experience of young women and girls educated in different spheres and with various specializations for the benefit of the economic, political and social development of the Republic of Armenia. It also seeks to support and advocate for young women and to protect their rights. Successes include: Armenia’s joining the “European Convention on the Promotion of a Transnational Long-Term Voluntary Service for Young People”. Challenges include: involving young people with fewer opportunities in policy *making* and not only policy *consumption*; changing these young persons’ image of themselves; collaborating with state and international institutions on developing the law on voluntary service. Represented by: Lilit Asatryan.

Service Civil International (SCI): SCI is a peace organisation that co-ordinates international voluntary projects for people of all ages, cultures, religious and economic backgrounds. The work of SCI is based on the belief that all people are capable of living together and co-operating with mutual respect and without recourse to violence to solve conflicts. Through international voluntary work SCI aims to give people the chance to experience this way of living while contributing in a useful manner to the community. Represented by: Jeroen Wils.

Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO): AVSO is a European platform of non-profit organisations offering opportunities for long-term full-time international and/or national voluntary service. Including their members, AVSO represents more than one hundred national organisations across Europe. Its aim is to promote long-term voluntary service by advocacy activities, lobbying governmental institutions at the national and European level, networking with public organizations and supporting them by voluntary oriented services. Represented by: Renate Lange.

Researchers:

Soren Kristensen, freelance researcher, Denmark: focus on transnational mobility in Europe, participation of disadvantaged youth, voluntary work.

Sergiu Mustatea, Pedagogical University of Chisinau, Moldova: expert in youth policy (also legal frameworks), contributed to the (now approved) National Youth Strategy. At the time of the Seminar working on a new national law on volunteering.

3. DESCRIPTION OF SESSIONS

3.1. What is volunteering?

After the introduction round it was clear that each of the participants actively supported the notion of “volunteering”. But are different organizations as similar as they appear at first glance? Do they share the same understanding and vision of what “volunteering” is, how it should be implemented, and what it should be leading to?

This first session aimed to highlight the diversity of realities behind and ways of understanding the concept of volunteering and to show potentially large differences in understanding. The “Take a Stand” method was used to encourage participants to define their own personal view of volunteering and to illustrate the extent to which opinions can differ.

Some of the most controversial points of view discussed included:

- “Volunteering is not mostly about helping others but should be mainly about personal development.”
- “Volunteers are very often non-professional, so they should never receive payment in any form.”
- “Finding employment should never be a goal of volunteering.”

During the exercise it quickly became apparent that there are considerable differences in the way that individuals and their organizations see “volunteering”, in how they define the concept, and in the different ways that volunteering is applied to suit the needs of fewer-opportunity young people. The exercise demonstrated that defining a common approach and making effective recommendations would require a thorough understanding of the needs of this target group and its diversity and not just of the obstacles blocking their participation.

The debates launched during the “Take a Stand” exercise served as a starting point for the subsequent working group discussions.

3.2. Working Group Sessions

The working group sessions consisted of a two-step process. First, participants were asked to use their own experience on local, national or international level to reply to the questions asked at the start of the seminar: what specific problems/barriers/issues face young people with fewer opportunities in the “before”, “during” and “after” phases of the volunteering experience? Next, using their answers as a basis, the participants were asked to come up with a list of recommendations for improvement which could then be passed on to decision-makers at all levels.

If big steps are to be made in removing the obstacles facing fewer-opportunity young people, the actions of individual youth workers and organizations are no longer enough. The working group sessions therefore aimed to push the group to go beyond already-known or previously-tried solutions and to make recommendations to the highest possible levels. This could include, for instance, the Ministers of the Member States and top-level policy makers inside and outside of the European Union as these are bodies with the political power to make substantial changes on local, national as well as European levels.

The working groups were structured around a series of three general topics. Within each general topic two specific sub-categories were chosen to guide the recommendation process:

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- 1) Improving Accessibility to Volunteering (the “before” stage)
 - a) Publicity and Promotion
 - b) Policy and Procedures
- 2) Maximising the Volunteering Experience (the “during” stage)
 - a) Maximising Quality (general)
 - b) Maximising Quality in Youth in Action / EVS
- 3) Strengthening links between volunteering and the “real world” (the “after” stage)
 - a) Valorising and Recognising Volunteering
 - b) Volunteering as a Lifetime Activity

In the first round, “Improving Accessibility”, participants discussed both sub-categories as promoting volunteering and motivating fewer-opportunity young people to get involved remains the biggest challenge with this target group. In the second and third rounds (“Maximising Quality” and “Strengthening Links”), participants selected only one of the two sub-categories.

3.2.1 Improving Accessibility to Volunteering

Despite many good initiatives across Europe, promoting the concept of volunteering and motivating fewer-opportunity young people to get involved in voluntary activities remains a considerable challenge. The first working group session focused on ways to improve the overall accessibility to volunteering.

Each sub-category was approached from the point of view of the young people as well as from the point of view of organizations. Consideration was also given to different types of volunteering, on formal and informal levels. Participants looked critically at different existing solutions in an attempt to determine what has worked up to now and what has not.

The „Publicity and Promotion” session underlined the importance of involving young people directly in preparing and running promotion campaigns, of using tools that are popular and appreciated by the target group (e.g., SMS messages, mobile phone jingles), of expressing ideas in „their” language (rather than in formal sophisticated terminology) and of involving former or currently active volunteers to pass information on a peer-to-peer basis. It was stated that promotion techniques should be evaluated regularly and should be based on on-going research into young people’s needs.

One element that should not be underestimated is the importance of promotion and recognition of voluntary service among relevant actors like public authorities, the private (economic) sector and schools. This would provide a basis for a common appreciation in society and change the image of volunteers from being more than just people who work for free. International, national and local celebrations (e.g. Volunteers’ Day) should be used to promote voluntary service in public spaces and in the media in order to gain wider understanding.

The „Policy and Procedures” session focused on factors that can be influenced by policy changes on local, national and European levels. Obstacles like visas were mentioned, as well as the need for the creation of a legal status for volunteers. Accessibility of young people would likely also be increased by the development of well-known tools for the recognition of the volunteer’s competencies on all levels. Such tools would need to be known and accepted by potential employers as well as by the formal education sector.

The sustainability of policies is reliant on the ability to respond to the realities they wish to address, therefore the development of policies on European and national levels should happen in parallel with one another.

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3.2.2. Maximising the Quality of Volunteering

The second round of working groups dealt with the improving quality during the implementation phase of voluntary service.

It was stated that quality can actually be impaired by the imposition of too many standards. Participants felt that what is needed is not a long list of standards but rather a focus on fewer and higher standards, (i.e. in terms of transparency, accountability, open access, anti-discrimination policies, etc.) In short, there should be adequate procedures but not an overload of rules. The pursuit of quality should not lead to the creation of additional barriers but should ensure equal opportunities. The work should be done structurally on all levels and according to subsidiary rule (a general framework provided on national level would be complemented by regional and local level standards adequate to local needs, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds etc.). Such standards would be consulted and agreed on jointly with the different stakeholders: voluntary organizations, municipalities and the business sector.

The “Maximising Quality” session discussed the need for a tailor-made offer focusing on the individual needs of concrete volunteers in the context of particular organisations was underlined. Specially designed programmes of activities, one-to-one coaching and follow-up activities were listed as quality factors in organizations that involve young people with fewer opportunities in voluntary work.

The whole process should be evaluated and monitored on an on-going basis by exchanging conclusions on all levels and through regular meetings of experts (practitioners but also researchers and policy makers) on European level.

“Maximising Quality in the new Youth in Action Program (2007–2013)”. The working group on this sub-theme had a closer look at the question of how to use the frame of the YiA program in the best way to ensure high quality levels in volunteering. Different elements of “voluntary activities” exist in other Actions of the program, not just in Action 2 European Voluntary Service (for example, Youth Initiatives and even some types of Action 1 exchanges have a high degree of volunteer input from the participants).

Quality in YiA relies to a large extent on what organizations make out of the program’s Actions, so it is necessary to find a good balance between the YiA program’s objectives and the specific objectives of the organization implementing the project. A more holistic approach for the development of individual skills throughout the program would be extremely valuable, one that would take the individual through different learning stages (e.g. starting in a youth exchange or group initiative at the beginning and use the experience for EVS and its follow up). At the same time the wide range of trainings offered and financial support for mentors and coaches should be maximised.

In European Voluntary Service (EVS) the main recommendations focused on quality measures that already exist within the program, meaning training and preparation for both volunteers and organizations. Additional focus on a more individualized approach towards the project is promoted as a good tool to respond to a young person’s needs and to create a more valuable experience for them.

3.2.3. Strengthening Links between Volunteering and the “Real World”

The last round of working group discussions aimed at identifying follow-up activities and quality measures to ensure that the lessons learned and the experiences gained during the volunteer experience can be put to use by fewer-opportunity youngsters „in the real world”

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(i.e. in life after or beyond volunteering). Further questions were raised regarding the steps, which need to be taken to ensure that volunteering does not become a „one-off activity” but rather a „lifetime activity” for young people in this target group.

Valorising and Recognising Volunteering

The discussion considered links and differences between the concepts of identification, visibility, valorisation, validation, recognition, accreditation and certification. Two key aspects were identified for the process: evaluation of the competencies and skills gained (e.g. by means of Youth Pass in YiA) and further recognition beyond the youth sector (including the field of formal education, the economic sector, within institutions and organizations on local levels). Detailed measures were put forward as recommendations.

Volunteering as a Lifetime Activity

The group identified several measures that could take volunteering from being a „one-off experience” to becoming a „lifetime activity”. There are normally two sides to the process: the creation of a positive image and culture of volunteering and the creation of sustainable structures that will make them possible. Both involve developing new policies on the local level and increasing co-operation between local actors with the help of national and international funds and expertise. The creation of voluntary service programmes for adults would be more than welcome.

4. OFFICIAL CLOSING

Karin Lopatta-Loibl thanked the participants for their active participation and announced that she aims to spread the recommendations as appropriate and as opportunities arise.

Hans Joachim Schild underlined that the recommendations will be forwarded not only to policy makers but also to the youth work field, to political structures and in particular to the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and the Advisory Council at the Council of Europe. An electronic version of the report will be available in the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy. After this seminar, two research seminars are planned in 2007: the first one on youth employment (in May 2007) and the second one on equal opportunities for all (including volunteering, in November 2007).

5. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

5.1. Background Documents and useful links

5.2. Final Programme of the seminar

5.3. List of participants

**Expert Seminar “Young People with Fewer Opportunities and Volunteering”
Strasbourg, 11-12 December, 2006**

Attachment 1

Background Documents

- “Charting the landscape of European youth voluntary activities”, Howard Williamson and Bryony Hoskins with Philipp Boetzelen (Eds.)
- Commission Staff Working Paper, Analysis of the replies of the Member States of the European Union and the acceding countries to the Commission questionnaire on voluntary activities of young people, 14.05.2004, SEC(2004)628
- Communication from the Commission to the Council, Follow up to the White Paper on a New Impetus for European Youth, 30.04.2004, COM(2004)336 final
- Council Conclusions on Youth in the framework of the Mid-Term Review of the Lisbon Strategy, 23 February 2005, 6326/05 JEUN 5 SOC 52
- European Convention on the promotion of a transnational long term voluntary service for young people, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 11.05.2000
- “European Seminar for EVS Sending and Hosting Organisations” Agence française du Programme Européen Jeunesse - Institut national de la Jeunesse et de l’Education Populaire (INJEP - France) & Narodowa Agencja programu MŁODZIEŻ (Poland) (2006)
- Follow-up to the White Paper on a New Impetus for European Youth, Proposed common objectives for voluntary activities among young people COM(2004) 337
- “Partnership 4 Inclusion”, Agence française du Programme Européen Jeunesse - Institut national de la Jeunesse et de l’Education Populaire (INJEP - France) (2005)
- Recommendation on the promotion of a voluntary service Rec(94)4E, Adopted by the committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 24 May 1994
- Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on common objectives for voluntary activities of young people, 15.11.2004, 13996/04
- Study on the implementation of the follow up of the voluntary service for young people in Europe, Council of Europe, Directorate of Youth and Sport, Strasbourg, DJS(2004)1
- “Young People with Disabilities in EVS”, Kati Virolainen – CIMO (Finnish National Agency of the European Youth Programme)

Other useful links (not mentioned in the text)

Institute of Volunteering Research (UK):

- “1997 National Survey of Volunteering in the UK”:
<http://www.ivr.org.uk/nationalsurvey.htm>
- “Generation V: Young people speak out on volunteering”(2004):
<http://www.ivr.org.uk/generationvbulletin.htm>
- “What Young People Want From Volunteering”:
<http://www.ivr.org.uk/youngresearch.htm>

**Expert Seminar “Young People with Fewer Opportunities and Volunteering”
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Attachment 2

**Expert Seminar
“Young People with Fewer Opportunities and Volunteering”
Strasbourg, December 11-12th, 2006**

Final Programme

	<i>Sunday, Dec. 10th</i>	<i>Monday, Dec. 11th</i>	<i>Tuesday, Dec. 12th</i>
<i>Breakfast 08:00-09:00</i>			
<i>Morning Session</i>		09:00-09:30 Official Welcome & Introduction to Programme and of the experts present Marta Medlinska (Partnership) & Kathy Schroeder (facilitator)	09:00-09:30 Presentation by Practitioners - AVM & SCI
		09:30-10:30 Inputs from the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the Partnership	09:30-11:00 Working Groups - Topic # 2 Maximising the Volunteering Experience for Fewer Opportunity Young People
		10:30-11:00 Coffee Break	11:00-11:30 Coffee Break
		11:00-12:00 Introduction to participating Organisations / Institutions “Our successes and challenges in stimulating the participation of young people with fewer opportunities in Volunteering”	11:30-13:00 Working Groups - Topic #3 Strengthening links between volunteering and “the real world”
		12:00-13:00 What is volunteering? What is a volunteer? Take A Stand	
<i>Lunch 13:00-14:00</i>			
<i>Afternoon Session</i>	Arrival of participants	14:00-15:45 Working Groups - Topic #1 Improving Accessibility to Volunteering for Fewer-Opportunity Young People	14:15-15:30 Presentation of Recommendations - Topics #2 & 3
		15:45-16:15 Coffee Break	15:30-16:00 Evaluation & Official Closing
		16:15-17:45 Working Groups - Topic #1 (continuation)	16:00 onwards Departures
		17:45-18:30 Presentation of Recommendations	
<i>Dinner 19:00</i>			

**Expert Seminar “Young People with Fewer Opportunities and Volunteering”
Strasbourg, 11-12 December, 2006**

Attachment 3

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

N°	Title	First Name	Family Name	Country of Residence	Organisation/institution	E-mail
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