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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

from : the General Secretariat of the Council
to : the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States
meeting within the Council

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Subject : 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

RESOLUTION
ON COMMON OBJECTIVES FOR VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

WHEREAS:

1. The Commission White Paper entitled "A new impetus for European youth" presented on 21 November 2001 sets out a new framework for European cooperation in the youth field;
2. In its Resolution of 14 February 2002¹ the Council recognised the added value of voluntary activity for young people in the context of the development of community action on youth and adopted the UN strategic objectives².
3. In its Resolution of 27 June 2002³ the Council adopted the open method of coordination as a new framework for cooperation in the youth field and endorsed four priorities i.e. participation, information, voluntary activities and a greater understanding and better knowledge of youth;

¹ OJ C 50 of 23.02.2002, p. 3.

² Strategic objectives of the UN:

- The accessibility and promotion of information provision on voluntary activity, with a view to reinforcing a positive image;
- Recognition and support for voluntary activity, inter alia, by authorities at all levels, public opinion, media, commerce, employers and civil society;
- Support for voluntary activity through incentives and the training of volunteers, their mentors and their associations;
- Networking between all parties involved, with special attention to the perspective of young people themselves;
- Quality care with regard to youth voluntary activity, including health and safety aspects.

³ OJ C 168 of 13.07.2002, p. 2.

4. In its Resolution of 25 November 2003¹ the Council adopted common objectives for the first two priorities i.e. participation by and information for young people;
5. In its Communication of 30 April 2004² the Commission proposed common objectives for voluntary activities of young people, based on the replies of the Member States to a Commission questionnaire and after consulting young people;
6. The Council of 28 May 2004 confirmed the importance of the priority of voluntary activities of young people;
7. The European Voluntary Service (EVS) is an Action of the YOUTH Programme and a quality model for transnational voluntary service that allows young people to engage in volunteering in a variety of areas, thereby promoting their solidarity, active citizenship and mutual understanding;
8. Reference is made to the definitions used by the Commission in its Communication of 30 April 2004 on common objectives for voluntary activities of young people¹, in particular regarding voluntary activities and voluntary service.

CONSIDER

1. Voluntary activities represent important opportunities for non-formal learning. They are an important means for the self-development of young people and their engagement as active citizens. Voluntary activities also contribute to enhancing solidarity, social cohesion and community development.

¹ OJ C 295 of 5.12.2003, p. 6.

² doc. 9182/04 [COM(2004) 337 final].

2. Voluntary activities need to be clearly distinguished from employment and should by no means replace employment.
3. The development of attractive and stimulating voluntary activities needs to be encouraged, in order for young people to be involved in voluntary work;
4. Transnational cooperation in the framework of voluntary activities should be encouraged with a view to promoting a European dimension in this field.
5. Voluntary activities present opportunities for the development and the structuring of civil society.
6. All forms of discrimination and stereotyping should be combatted and equality should be promoted in the field of voluntary activity.

AGREE the following common objectives for voluntary activities of young people:

With a view to enhancing active citizenship and solidarity of young people, voluntary activities should be developed, facilitated, promoted and recognised at all levels:

- (1) Encourage the development of voluntary activities of young people with the aim of enhancing awareness of the existing possibilities, enlarging their scope and improving their quality.
- (2) Make it easier for young people to carry out voluntary activities by removing existing obstacles.

(3) Promote voluntary activities with a view to reinforcing young people's solidarity and engagement as responsible citizens.

(4) Recognise voluntary activities of young people with a view to acknowledging the value of their personal skills thus acquired and their engagement for society and the role that voluntary activities play in terms of facilitating the transition from education to work and adult life.

A non-exhaustive list of the possible lines of action for the above common objectives is set out in the annex hereto;

RECALL that implementation must be flexible, incremental and appropriate for the youth field and must respect the competences of the Member States and the principle of subsidiarity;

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES TO

- specify implementing and follow-up measures, in the light of their particular circumstances and their national priorities with regard to those common objectives;
- submit reports on the national contributions to the implementation of the priority of voluntary activities, by the end of 2006;
- consult and encourage the participation of young people, and their associations, young volunteers and volunteer organisations, as well as national and regional youth councils – if appropriate – for the elaboration of those reports;

NOTE THAT THE COMMISSION INTENDS TO

- prepare, on the basis of the above reports on national contributions to the implementation of the common objectives, a progress report for submission to the Council in order to encourage mutual exchange of information and good practice concerning voluntary activities of young people, after consultation of the European Youth Forum, while not excluding other forms of consultation;

- propose, if appropriate, amendments to the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people;
- suitably inform the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions;

INVITE THE COMMISSION TO

- convene, when appropriate, representatives of the national Administrations in charge of youth in order to promote the exchange of information on the progress made and on best practices;

TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURE

The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council will take the necessary initiatives within the framework of the common objectives, in order to facilitate their implementation. They will adapt, and when appropriate, amend the common objectives on the basis of the progress report and the amended drafts submitted by the Commission.

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MEASURES FOR ACHIEVING THE COMMON OBJECTIVES FOR VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

In the light of the actual circumstances and the priorities of each Member State, the following non-exhaustive list of lines of action may be pursued:

1. Encourage the development of voluntary activities for young people with the aim of enhancing awareness of the existing opportunities, enlarging their scope and improving their quality

At national, regional and local level

- (a) In view of creating a clear and visible picture of voluntary activities available for young people identify existing models of voluntary activities (e.g. voluntary service, occasional voluntary engagement, etc...) and voluntary organisations.
- (b) Enhance existing voluntary activities of young people by:
 - developing the different categories of these activities, and in particular broaden their range of possibilities,
 - supporting activities of particular interest to young people,
 - supporting civil society organisations active in voluntary engagement of young people,
 - reinforcing voluntary services where they already exist and, where appropriate, encouraging the creation of new ones.
- (c) With a view to improving the quality of voluntary activities and their organisational framework foster training opportunities for young volunteers and those coordinating and managing such activities.

At European level

(d) Encourage:

- a better coordination of the transnational cooperation of civic services, where they exist,
- an enhanced exchange of young volunteers in various domains;
- an enhanced exchange of information on national voluntary programmes and their European dimension.

(e) Develop and promote the European Voluntary Service (EVS) further within the framework of the current Youth Programme.

(f) Take into consideration the feasibility of extending the European Voluntary Service (EVS) to a wider range of actions with a view to giving young people the possibility to participate in actions of solidarity of the European Union.

2. Make it easier for young people to carry out voluntary activities by removing existing obstacles,

whilst respecting immigration controls, visa and entry requirements of Member States

At all levels

- (a) Take the measures considered appropriate to remove the legal and administrative obstacles to the mobility of persons undertaking a voluntary activity, as set out in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on Mobility.¹
- (b) Reinforce cooperation between the relevant authorities in order to facilitate the issuing of visas and residence permits to young volunteers when and where appropriate.

¹ OJ L 215 of 9.08.2001, p. 30.

- (c) Enhance the exchange of information, experience and good practice of all relevant actors in the field of voluntary activities of young people with the aim of removing all kinds of obstacles and developing simplified procedures.
- (d) Consider which legal means and instruments can be implemented to make it easier for young people to carry out voluntary activities and for organisations to develop quality activities.

3. Promote voluntary activities with a view to reinforcing young people's solidarity and engagement as responsible citizens

whilst combating all forms of discrimination and stereotyping and promoting equality

At national, regional and local level

- (a) Disseminate information on volunteering at all appropriate levels, with the aim of raising young people's awareness about volunteering, informing them about concrete possibilities to volunteer, providing advice and support and promoting a positive image of volunteering.
- (b) Encourage an enhanced cooperation between all relevant actors (young people, youth and voluntary organisations, public authorities, private economic sector, schools, etc...) on the promotion of voluntary activities, by exchanging information, experience and good practice.
- (c) 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.

At European level

- (d) Launch appropriate information actions with a view to promoting voluntary activities of young people as well as the values of voluntarism.

- 4. Recognise voluntary activities of young people with a view to acknowledging the value of their personal skills and their engagement for society and the role that voluntary activities play in terms of facilitating the transition from education to work and adult life.

At national, regional and local level

- (a) Acknowledge young people's voluntary engagement, acquired individual skills, knowledge and competencies, by developing measures that lead to an enhanced recognition of voluntary activities at all levels, by various actors, e.g. public and private employers, social partners, civil society and young people themselves, and in the appropriate form.
- (b) Acknowledge the added social value that the voluntary sector offers to society by developing actions that lead to an enhanced recognition by society of voluntary activities such as promotion activities.

At European level

- (c) Ensure a better recognition of voluntary experience of young people in the framework of ongoing processes and by existing means in other policy fields, as e.g. the open method of coordination in the education field, the life-long learning strategy, the development of Europass, the social dialogue, etc...
