

RESOLUTION

of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council,

of 14 February 2002

on the added value of voluntary activity for young people in the context of the development of Community action on youth

(2002/C 50/02)

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

Whereas:

- (1) The Treaty provides that Community action is to be aimed at encouraging the development of exchange programmes for young people and youth workers.
- (2) The European Parliament and the Council adopted the 'Youth' Community action programme by Decision No 1031/2000/EC⁽¹⁾. This programme, which has been increasingly successful in all the Member States, contains an important component devoted to 'European voluntary service', which provides a clear definition of transnational voluntary work.
- (3) The Umeå Conference (16 to 18 March 2001) on 'Conditions for young people in Europe', organised by the Swedish Presidency and the Commission, underlined in its recommendations the importance of assigning voluntary activity by young people a clearly defined position at European level.
- (4) The United Nations has proclaimed 2001 as 'International Year of Volunteers'.
- (5) The conclusions of the Lisbon European Council on 23 and 24 March 2000 state that the European Union requires an overall strategy aimed at preparing the transition to a knowledge-based economy and society and that as a consequence existing models for learning and working must be adapted.
- (6) The Commission Memorandum on lifelong learning of 30 October 2000 and the Commission's preparatory activities with a view to its communication for lifelong learning are of particular importance. In the discussions on progress conducted over the past six-month periods, attention has been clearly drawn to the added value of informal and non-formal learning resulting from voluntary activity.
- (7) The Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 14 December 2000 on the social inclusion

of young people⁽²⁾ invites the Commission and the Member States, each within its own sphere of competences, to study common objectives directed at developing the conditions to enable all young people lawfully residing in a Member State to play a full part in economic and social life.

- (8) The action plan on mobility approved by the Nice European Council and the 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⁽³⁾, listed a series of measures to promote mobility. In particular, the European Parliament and the Council identified in the Recommendation on mobility a series of measures which Member States consider appropriate to remove obstacles to mobility for volunteers.
- (9) The Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 28 June 2001 on promoting young people's initiative, enterprise and creativity — from exclusion to empowerment⁽⁴⁾, points to the importance of the creative environment as a valuable source of support.
- (10) Declaration 38 on voluntary service activities, which is attached to the Final Act of the Treaty of Amsterdam, recognises the important contribution made by voluntary service activities to developing social solidarity and states that the Community will encourage the European dimension of voluntary organisations with particular emphasis on the exchange of information and experience as well as on the participation of the young and the elderly in voluntary work,

FIND AND ACKNOWLEDGE THAT:

1. In all the Member States, countless young people are active in various forms of voluntary activity. Despite differences between the Member States, young people everywhere represent a significant proportion of the total number of volunteers active in the Community in initiatives, projects and in non-governmental organisations of a mainly social and humanitarian nature and for the benefit of a democratic society and sustainable development.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 374, 28.12.2000, p. 5.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 215, 9.8.2001, p. 30.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 196, 12.7.2001, p. 2.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 117, 18.5.2000, p. 1.

2. Various forms of voluntary activity for young people, including those in the context of the European Union action entitled 'European voluntary service' forming part of the 'Youth' action programme, have added social value because:

- (a) they transmit universal values with regard to human rights, democracy, anti-racism and solidarity, and sustainable development;
- (b) they promote social participation, voluntary engagement and active citizenship and strengthen civil society at all levels;
- (c) they promote the social inclusion of young people, contribute to the development of young people's creativity, enterprise and social innovation.

3. Youth voluntary activity provides the opportunity for young people to develop a number of personal and professional skills, and as such contributes to their greater employability and to their participation in society in general.

4. Youth organisations and projects have significant potential as informal and non-formal learning environments for young people, and, partly on account of their diversity, contribute to the realisation of life-long and life-wide learning in all its aspects.

5. Non-governmental organisations, youth organisations and all other organisations active in the area of youth voluntary activity play a specific role as environments where voluntary activities by young people are given shape, at local, national and European level.

6. Young volunteers themselves play an important role in the development and implementation of projects in the framework of various actions of the 'Youth' Community action programme.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES:

To take the measures they deem appropriate to remove legal and administrative obstacles so as to provide every opportunity for youth voluntary activity in a national and international context.

To prevent voluntary activity for young people from restricting or being used as a substitute for potential or existing paid employment.

INVITE THE COMMISSION AND THE MEMBER STATES, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE:

1. To take measures to strengthen and to further develop the role of voluntary activity for young people, and in so doing to take as their guide, where appropriate, the strategic objectives formulated by the United Nations in the framework of the International Year of Volunteers.

2. To develop policy on voluntary activity for young people and strengthen European cooperation in this area, using the following elements which result from the strategic objectives of the UN Resolution proclaiming 2001 the International Year of Volunteers:

(a) the accessibility and promotion of information provision on voluntary activity, with a view to reinforcing a positive image;

(b) recognition and support for voluntary activity, *inter alia* by authorities at all levels, public opinion, media, commerce, employers and civil society;

(c) support for voluntary activity through incentives and the training of volunteers, their mentors and their associations;

(d) networking between all parties involved, with special attention to the perspective of young people themselves;

(e) quality care with regard to youth voluntary activity, including health and safety aspects.

3. To recognise the importance of experience gained in the context of youth voluntary activity and to collate and exchange good practice with regard to youth voluntary activity.

4. To support all the parties involved in the implementation of voluntary activity for young people.

5. To make voluntary activity more easily accessible to young people and to avoid all forms of social exclusion or discrimination.

6. To promote and support research into voluntary activity for young people via regular monitoring of developments in the field and by appropriate policy decisions.

7. To involve non-governmental organisations, youth organisations and all other organisations active in the area of voluntary activity for young people, as well as young volunteers themselves, in drawing up and implementing policy for supporting youth voluntary activity, in an atmosphere of participation and making use of the experience of volunteers and their associations.
8. To incorporate these policy objectives or measures in the follow-up which may result from the European White Paper 'Youth' published by the Commission of the European Communities.

INVITE THE COMMISSION:

1. To develop synergies between the initiatives of the European Community, the Council of Europe and initiatives of other

international organisations, at both strategic and operational levels.

2. To take account of the important contribution of young volunteers to the activities of the 'Youth' programme, and to examine how youth voluntary activity can be further encouraged when the programme is evaluated and further developed.

EXPRESS THE WISH THAT:

This Resolution contribute to the development of the policy of cooperation in the youth field, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, particularly through recognition of the added value of voluntary activity with and by young people.
