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Shadow report

on the implementation of the third priority of the Open Method
of Coordination in the youth field, Voluntary Activities

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What is the European Youth Forum?

The European Youth Forum is an international organisation established by National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations to represent the interests of young people from all over Europe at the European and International level. Its members, which are federations in themselves, bring together tens of millions of young people from all European countries.



Education and Culture

Youth



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Foreword

Changing the World for Good!

Volunteerism is the heart of prosperous societies. Without people who are willing to engage in activities of their own free will, working for the common good and thus creating communities around them, societies would be poorer - not only in the financial sense but also in terms of human development, social cohesion and well-being.

The European Youth Forum has published this Shadow Report on the Voluntary Activities of young people in order to give voice to youth organisations and volunteers at the moment of the first evaluation of implementation of the priority areas of voluntary activities in the context of the Open Method of Coordination in the youth field. The aim is also to make the findings public and visible while encouraging EU Member States to do the same and not let the national evaluations gather dust behind locked doors. At the same moment, a larger reflection on volunteering policy in the European Union is also taking place. The European Youth Forum welcomes this reflection and wants to emphasise the need for a cross-sectoral approach and collaboration by different institutions and services to address the needs of volunteers and volunteer organisations.

This Shadow Report is the result of hard work throughout Europe. Member Organisations from almost all EU Member States have evaluated the state of affairs in their countries; in addition, organisations active at the European level have given their input. The message to the decision makers is clear: policies supporting, recognising, and facilitating voluntary activities need to be reinforced; focus should be put on working in partnership with civil society, developing their possibilities to offer more volunteering opportunities to young people - and not taking the place of civil society by putting governmental volunteering schemes in place.

Now it is time to look at the situation of the voluntary activities of young people and draw the necessary conclusions; it is also an opportunity for the European Union. Europe begins at the doorstep of every young person, at the local level, where young people are involved in movement. If the Union wants to get nearer to its citizens, it is absolutely crucial to recognise, support and collaborate with the civil society that seams young Europeans together through a broad and powerful spectrum of voluntary activities. Young people have the commitment to work together to change the world for good. It's up to institutions and governments to back this commitment through reinforcing their own commitments to develop volunteering policies.

International Volunteer Day, Brussels, 5 December 2006

European Youth Forum



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Introduction

Following its strong and long lasting involvement in the design, the definition and the implementation of the White Paper on youth and subsequently, the Open Method of Coordination, the European Youth Forum (YFJ) is continuing its commitment to contributing to and analyzing the implementation of the priorities of European Youth Policy. After its first shadow report, on the implementation of the Common Objectives on participation and information, the YFJ is seizing a second opportunity to look at what has been done and what achieved, in order to better know how and where to go further.

The 2005-2006 YFJ Shadow Report on the implementation of the first two Common Objectives of the OMC in the youth field clearly showed that even if the whole White Paper process was participatory and therefore reflective of the issues of concern to young people, the situation in most countries after the consultation process of the White Paper did not improve. The working culture among European countries has not yet been established, and further efforts need to be made to ensure that well functioning working structures which involve youth organisations and young people in the design and implementation of policies affecting them, are in place.

Yet saying that nothing has changed would not, however, reflect European realities, but saying that the Common Objectives have been realised, or even stating that we are half way through, would be a lie! Since the definition of the Common Objectives in 2004, the implementation time had been rather limited and actually this time might have been mainly used as a time of reflection and design of what could be done.

If the OMC in the youth field recognizes volunteering as a crucial issue for youth, the contribution of volunteering is recognized as such, politically, in Declaration 38 on voluntary service activities, which is attached to the Final Act of the Treaty of Amsterdam, recognising the important contribution made by voluntary service activities to developing social solidarity. It states that the European 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.

In the understanding of youth organisations, volunteering and participation are closely linked, as volunteering is understood as partaking in an organisation. It is about devoting part of one's time to a project, and action, but also taking part in the life of an organisation, participating in its democratic structures, its progress and the choices that the organisation is making.

In order to be a fully efficient way of developing civil society and therefore democracy, and to be a genuine learning process as well as civic exercise, the YFJ believes that volunteering should take place, as far as possible, in a participatory NGO context, in which volunteers can actually contribute to the life of a structure. This is of primary importance to young people and the development and acquirement of the bases of citizenship.



The European perspective -

implementing the youth policy Common Objectives on voluntary activities at the European level

During the process of determining the Common Objectives, the Member Organisations of the European Youth Forum agreed on guiding principles focusing on three main areas: the need to have a stronger legal basis for young volunteers, to promote more voluntary activities for young people and a greater recognition of young people's activities. The action lines agreed by the Council continued in the same direction as the Member States committing to the facilitation of voluntary activities, removing obstacles as well as promoting volunteering and recognising skills and competences learned in voluntary activities.

Stronger legal basis for young volunteers

The Council agreed in 2004 on the framework of the Common Objectives to be considered at all levels, which legal means and instruments could be implemented to make it easier for young people to carry out voluntary activities, and on the need for organisations to develop quality activities. At the European level the results so far have not been very tangible.

While recognising that the legal status and necessary protection for volunteers are the competences of Member States, actions at the European level could be taken in collaboration between institutions. Many issues related to volunteering, such as equal opportunities, taxation of NGOs, and European association law, are dealt with in areas where the EU has competence to act. An important tool at the European level would be the development of a European charter of rights for volunteers. This would establish quality standards and criteria for the development of a national volunteer status and allow certain coherence in the future national developments based on the different experiences across Europe.

More promotion of voluntary activities for young people

In the Common Objectives it was agreed to launch appropriate information actions at the European level with a view to promoting voluntary activities to young people as well as the values of volunteering. The results of these actions have not so far been very visible to youth organisations. Yet the need for promotion is crucial. Most of the effort made at European level has been put on promoting the YOUTH programme, e.g. through the European Youth Week, organised in December 2005. While promotion of the programme is important, it represents only a limited view of the scope of voluntary activities available to young people and does not take into account long-term commitments and the participatory nature of involvement in the life of an organisation.

The focus of the Common Objectives at the European level is only on the promotion of voluntary activities through information campaigns. Apart from information activities

further efforts should be made. Concretely, this would mean investing more in youth organisations, allowing them to involve more volunteers in their daily work, to offer better structures for the volunteers but also to promote volunteering through campaigns. This would be a first step in order to change the perception of volunteering among governments and society in general. There is a crucial need to promote the added value of volunteering, and this will also happen through better recognition.

Greater recognition of young people's voluntary activities

Volunteering must be viewed as a vital dimension of democratic and social life, not merely to be valued for the services it provides or the activities it facilitates. One of the major outcomes of the follow-up to the White Paper and Common Objectives on voluntary activities was the adoption of the Council resolution on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in May 2006, under the Austrian EU Presidency.

In the Council Resolution in May 2006 the Member States committed themselves to work on the recognition of the work young people do in their voluntary activities. We truly believe that the recognition of the skills and competences young people acquire through non-formal education is of great importance for the recognition of volunteering. The European Youth Forum and its Member Organisations are following and contributing to the different existing European processes linked to the recognition of non-formal education, such as the Youthpass for the Youth in Action programme, the Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers or the youth supplement of Europass. We believe that such tools will contribute to raising the profile of volunteering across Europe.

European Voluntary Service

The implementation of the Common Objectives on voluntary activities at the European level has focused mainly on the development of the new European Voluntary Service for the Youth in Action programme 2007-2013: structures for former EVS volunteers were also created from the initiative of the European Commission.

The European Voluntary Service (EVS), established in 1996, has changed the perception of European volunteering in many ways. The arrival of the EVS was an important moment as voluntary service was, at that time, recognized as a type of project to be supported. The arrival of the EVS valued the philosophy and the ideology of volunteering, the outcomes and benefits for organisations, volunteers (individuals) and communities, and therefore provided a political and financial framework in which to develop projects. In addition, the EVS has made possible the access to volunteering for a larger number of people, through its structure and its financial support: it became easier to look for projects and to take part in volunteering activities. In turn, work was as such made easier for the volunteers themselves and also for the organisations.

The EVS, and mobility programmes in general, have contributed to debates around issues such as key competences, work and initiatives pertaining to the recognition and validation of non-formal education, the development of evaluation systems, 'quality standards', 'charters', indicators, of principles by organizations, institutions, and other



types of structures.

Looking back over 10 years, it can be stated that the EVS has gradually transformed the work and the vision of volunteering at the European level. Young people who take part in an EVS project do not talk about volunteering but about the EVS itself. While this is of course a great benefit when it comes to the visibility of the programme, it has to a degree changed the vision that young people may have of volunteering.

The role of the EVS also reflects a broader issue: volunteering at the European level is mainly referred to solely as voluntary service. Longstanding and long-lasting voluntary activities, which take place at the local or community level, are much less widely addressed and discussed. This does not reflect the reality of volunteering across Europe, nor the volumes: 35000 young people have participated in the EVS during its 10 years of existence. This corresponds with the membership of a medium-sized national youth organisation. For the diversity of youth volunteering to be fully recognised in policy development, a broader approach should be taken.

From the perspective of youth organisations this moment of evaluation of the implementation Common Objectives should also be used to reflect how the action lines could be developed to correspond to the diversity of youth volunteering also at European level.

Mobility

In a 2004 Resolution, the Council decided inter alia to take measures, as considered appropriate, to remove the legal and administrative obstacles to the mobility of people undertaking a voluntary activity, and to reinforce cooperation between the relevant authorities in order to facilitate the issuing of visas and residence permits to young volunteers. Unfortunately, obtaining visas for volunteers from outside the EU still remains a major challenge. It would not be a lie to say that on average for each activity, one empty chair, symbolising a volunteer who didn't get a visa, can be put around the table.

The directive (2004/114/EC) of 13 December 2004 on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service, should help to facilitate the movement of volunteers. But this directive applies only to volunteers staying in a given country for more than three months. Indeed, the directive still needs to be fully applied and a lot of reservations were made for Member States; in any case, it is hard to envisage its full and equal implementation, as the directive is subject to national restrictions.

The directive does not, furthermore, solve the difficulties for volunteers willing to come to attend activities or projects for a short-term period.

“Community code of visas”

In July 2006, the European Commission published its proposal for a community code of

visas (COM 2006(403)) aimed at replacing the current common consular instructions. It is a general outline of the visa policy and can be seen as a recasting of the visa policy.

This community code of visas, according to the current proposal, will be more binding on Member States. Notably, the proposal introduces discussions around provision of a maximum issuing time, a clear distinction between inadmissible applications and formally refused applications, full transparency of the list of third countries whose nationals are subject to prior consultation, a harmonised form providing proof of invitation, sponsorship and accommodation, as well as an obligation for Member States to notify and motivate negative decisions. From the perspective of the Member Organisations of the European Youth Forum it would be crucial to include in this proposal a grant for visa facilitation for voluntary activities, especially for young volunteers active in a project and in youth organisations.

The European Parliament will not take any position on the European Commission proposal before April 2007, and the timeline of the Council is not yet known. Following the Common Objectives on voluntary activities now is an important moment to raise awareness on the specificity of youth work amongst the officials responsible for Justice and Home Affairs. Young people are more sensitive to changes in visa policy, in view, for example, of their economic position, and are often considered as possible immigrants, with their visa applications therefore frequently refused. There is a clear need to address the obstacles to voluntary activities in a cross-sectoral way. At European level this means collaboration between the Directorates-General responsible for Youth and Justice and Home Affairs. At national level, the responsibility lies within ministries responsible for youth and other relevant ministries.

European Youth Forum activity - “GET VISABLE” campaign

To sensibilise public opinion, raise awareness and try to overcome these obstacles, the European Youth Forum is coordinating a pan-European campaign “GETVISABLE”, which is being carried out by the network of its Member Organisations. The main aim of the campaign is to gather worse practice from across Europe, report on current obstacles, and lobby relevant authorities to soften the regulations for the volunteers willing to travel to Europe. This is a long-term campaign as finding solutions and adopting new regulations is a long process.

Other aims of the campaign including creating trust with governments in order for them to understand and accept that when young people are travelling abroad on behalf of youth organisations, this means that the knowledge and the experience that they will gain will have a key role in the future development of their own countries. Therefore it is beneficial to make mobility easier and accessible.

By allowing young people to travel freely, governments are making an investment in the future, participating to the shape of more aware, more prepared, motivated and inspired citizens. They will make change a natural process of evolution, facilitating a sense of belonging to a larger community while preserving their national identities. This is one



of the necessary steps to build up European Citizenship and contribute to civil society development.

This campaign is ongoing. A website, HYPERLINK "<http://www.getvisable.org>" www.getvisable.org, gathering the different activities and actions taking place, and also recording various experiences, is a good access tool to better understand the work on "GETVISABLE".

The European Youth Forum believes that the removal of visa obstacles is also a link to the broader debate on the recognition of volunteering within society, and therefore improving this within Europe will facilitate the course to removing obstacles.

What has been done? National views -

implementing the youth policy Common Objectives on voluntary activities at the national level

The different contributions gathered in this report reflect the variety of realities regarding youth volunteering across Europe. The overview of the contributions presented here or the information received shows that despite the different national realities, cultures and constraints, there are common trends which can be identified and examined.

Implementation of the Common Objectives

The impact of the OMC process as such is difficult to measure as the time for implementation has been relatively short - two years - and moreover, most governments are neither making mentioning of the OMC, nor spreading the Common Objectives domestically. It is also clear that most of the departments responsible for youth policy do not spread the Common Objectives to other ministries which would be concerned by the implementation. However, in some countries such as Luxembourg, cross-sectoral committees have been created and are allowing the broadening of perspectives on volunteering.

Whether a committee is established or not is strongly linked to whether a national action plan or strategy on the OMC is in place, and more specifically, whether one is in place for each priority. In November 2006 Member States agreed to develop such strategies on the Common Objectives of Information and Participation. The trend should be continued and such strategies should be developed for voluntary activities.

An issue related to the existence of national action plans or strategies is the involvement of youth organisations in the design of such strategy. In some countries such as Finland or the Netherlands, National Youth Councils were either involved or consulted on the development of the White Paper, but this remained very rare. When it comes to implementation, National Youth Councils are not consulted at all. This does not follow government commitments nor does it help the implementation of the Common Objectives. Some governments, at the time of the evaluations, asked National Youth Councils what they had been doing on the implementation of the Common Objectives, regardless of whether the NYCs had been consulted at all over the previous two years. This practice shows that even in countries where the initial consultations did not succeed, governments and youth organisations are natural partners and therefore there is a real need for proper partnership at all stages.

In many countries, local authorities are actually responsible for the partial or total implementation of the Common Objectives. The lack of information and consultation greatly diminished the opportunities to actually realize the Common Objectives. Therefore we do see the national strategies as a good mean to promote the OMC



Common Objectives and fix the priorities for the country with local authorities. When it comes to volunteering, as for participation, the local level is of utmost importance as it is the first place where young people start volunteering, within their community. It can also be noted that local authorities who have the competence to work on volunteering often do not have the financial means to support youth organisations properly. Therefore a solution needs to be found between the State and the local authorities regarding funding issues.

Last but not least, some countries, such as the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Luxembourg have the tendency to promote the EVS programme as a national action and almost a governmental programme and therefore are not doing anything specific for volunteering. The EVS is a European programme aimed at European mobility and focusing on voluntary service and thus does not promote volunteering in a broader context.

Definition on volunteering

Despite the terms voluntary activities, voluntary service and civil service were defined and agreed by Member States in November 2004, it seems that today the understanding of the different aspects of volunteering remain quite diverse across Europe.

In some countries, voluntary civic service, in place of military service, or the inclusion of volunteering in school curricula (such as in the Netherlands) contributes to the creation of a tendency for “compulsory” voluntary activities. Raising awareness and offering volunteer opportunities is a trend that youth organisations fully support however, using volunteering as replacement for former obligations or as a compulsory activity goes against the principles of volunteering.

Volunteering, to youth organisations, signifies a long term commitment, and is closely linked to the development of citizenship. The type of voluntary activities which seemed to be promoted across Europe are mainly related to voluntary service - therefore time limited - or volunteering with a charity: this can not be seen as the achievement of volunteering policy. The UK example is therefore really interesting: following the foundation of the v foundation, the National Youth Council applied for funding to run volunteering projects of between three and six months. The framework of the v project foresees a timeframe which does not encourage the volunteer to continue as a volunteer in an organisation, therefore the British Youth Council itself organizes follow up activities which give the possibility for the volunteer to continue volunteering within its structure.

Promotion & Recognition of volunteering

If the promotion of volunteering is about encouraging more young people to be motivated and engaged as volunteers, it is also about increasing the recognition of volunteering and responding to questions such as “why should I be a volunteer?”, “what would I gain from it?”. Taking the examples of Poland, Bulgaria or Romania, there is a real need

to better promote the values of volunteering; youth organisations, based as they are on volunteers’ dedication, are the best ambassadors to do this, and stable funding is crucial to enable them to realise this. The Dutch report shows that this is a real concern and that stable and proper funding is one of the bases in order to offer proper structures within which volunteers can work, and in order to offer worthwhile training and organise campaigns promoting volunteering as a positive value. The purpose of such campaigns is not to convert and convince everyone, but to deliver proper and well explained information on volunteering to the majority of young people.

As noted previously, volunteering is closely linked to citizenship, therefore some countries recommend including volunteering in the school curricula, and more specifically, in citizenship programmes. Opening schools to NGOs to present their work and activities would also help the spread of information.

In the above section on the definition of volunteering, we also mentioned the different forms of volunteering that can be seen across Europe. Therefore, work done at the national level, as in Finland, on the recognition of non formal education is of crucial importance, as this focuses on the values of volunteering, rather than any specific form of voluntary activity itself. The Austrian NYC example shows that there is in turn a need to involve all actors concerned, otherwise this undermines the process and may not fulfil the expectations or needs of the volunteers.

Removing obstacles

Where international organisations are focusing their efforts on visa obstacles, there remain lots of different issues to be addressed regarding volunteering at the national level. The Common Objectives give less attention to these issues, of which most would require better coordination and collaboration between different governmental actors. As always, this is not yet reflected in current working practices.

A few bases for removing obstacles can be identified:

Establishing a legal status for volunteers in order to solve questions linked to social protection and insurance.

The need to solve the financial and taxation issue, c.f. in Finland and in the Netherlands. This implies also resolving the status of youth organisations in relation to taxation in general.

Allow free time from school or from work. The Luxembourg example of “congés d’éducation” can be cited as best practice here. The question of school students and higher education students also needs to be raised in this regard.



National Youth Councils



Austria / ÖJV

The implementation process

In 2002, the Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection (BMSG) founded a national counselling committee for the implementation of the White Paper. This counselling committee was substituted last year by an inter-ministerial work group (IMAG) which took a cross-sectoral approach to youth policy in Austria. The IMAG consists of the following members: all Austrian ministries, all Federal States' Youth Advisory Councils and Youth Information Centres, the Social Partners and the National Youth Council. Their representatives do not, however, constantly participate in IMAG meetings, which makes continuous work difficult.

Since its formation, the IMAG has held four meetings all of which focused on raising awareness of youth issues and the Youth Pact in general. We appreciate the opportunity to be part of a working group that includes all ministries dealing with, or in need of dealing with, youth policy. But taking into account the size of the working group and the frequency of the meetings the IMAG obviously isn't able to push the implementation of White Paper. We are looking forward to a special IMAG meeting in November 2006, which should have the character of a seminar. The agenda has not yet been fixed, though.

We pin our hopes on the BMSG's efforts to implement a promising new initiative which aims at establishing a network of all relevant organisations active in the field of youth policy. This network includes the BMSG, the NYC, the office for the coordination of "open" youth work (working with non-organised youth), the Youth Information Centres and the working group on participation (which consists of representatives of the Federal States and the NYC). Taking up our suggestion, this network wants to provide an input to the IMAG and is seen as a chance to work more efficiently towards the implementation of the White Paper. This network is, however, still in its earliest stages of work.

We were sent the EC's guideline questions along with an invitation to contribute to the final report on the implementation of CO3. All we were able to do, though, was to describe our activities and the best practice examples of our member organisations.

Results and obstacles of the implementation

We appreciate the Resolution on non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field (adopted in April 2006) and know that our ministry made great efforts to push the process forward during the Austrian presidency of the European Union. Undoubtedly, this was a great step towards the recognition of voluntary activities and the work of youth NGOs, but concrete measures must follow.

Within the last years the BMSG has established different tools concerning voluntary activities:

1. the "Freiwilligenrat", a committee where relevant actors in the field of voluntary services is consulted by the ministry
2. www.freiwilligenweb.at, a website with relevant information and initiatives (e.g. an award) on it
3. the "Freiwilligenpass", a certificate for voluntary activities/non-formal learning that can be used by volunteers and NGOs

ad 1. Along with the ministries, social partners and NGOs active in the field of voluntary services, the Austrian NYC, the ÖJV, is one of the members. This advisory council's focal point is voluntary activities in general. In 2005 various topics were discussed, but due to the fact that this committee can merely propose something, we do not see any concrete results or measures. For reasons unknown, the "Freiwilligenrat" had its last meeting in November 2005 and no activities whatsoever in 2006.

ad 2. We do not consider this website to be an appropriate way to inform and encourage young people in the field of voluntary activities. Concrete information which helps to become active is hard to find.

ad 3. The "Freiwilligenpass" was presented to the "Freiwilligenrat" just for information. (It remains unclear who was involved in developing it.) We are not committed to this certificate because we do not think it works. A lot of questions (concerning administration, distribution and the measurable benefit) are still unanswered.

We particularly miss specific focus on youth activities the way the implementation of the CO 3 would demand it. We think that an evaluation of the "Freiwilligenpass" has to be the next step. The perspective of volunteers should be taken into account as well as the perspective of NGOs which are intended to certify voluntary activities. The evaluation should also bring clarification whether this tool was appropriate for and useful to young people.

Best practice examples

72 hours without compromise

This project is organised by the Catholic Youth and has been realized three times so far (in 2003, 2004 and 2006). It encourages more than 5000 young people all over Austria to get active in civil society for (at least) 72 hours. For the continuation of three days, groups of 5 to 20 people between the ages of 14 and 25 try to solve different problems. The challenge is that the precise task is unknown to the participants until they begin to work. Tasks have included renovating rooms for social institutions, developing a game for an old people's home, picking up trash in a forest, and many more. Apart from learning skills in a non-formal way, young people participating in this project are able to experience that their engagement can actually change society and that solidarity makes all the difference.

72 hours without compromise is sponsored by various ministries, media and also the private business sector.
www.72h.at



Social Voluntary Year (FSJ)

This project is the responsibility of different Christian Youth NGOs and the Scouts and has a tradition of more than 35 years in Austria. Young people volunteer to work full-time in a social institution for 10 or 11 months. Several fields of the social sector, mainly institutions caring for old people, children, disabled people, refugees or homeless, are cooperating with the project initiators. FSJ prepares and supervises the participants, who must be at least 18 years old, in their voluntary activity. Many young people become volunteers after their school leaving examination. Most of them want an orientation if a job in the social sector is right for them. FSJ is sponsored by BMSG, the Austrian Bishops' Conference and the Federal States.

www.fsj.at

State of affairs

From our point of view, well-known problems attached to voluntary activities of young people are still unsolved and a lot of work remains to be done, such as finding an answer to questions concerning social insurance and family assistance payments during the Social Voluntary Year. We propose the development of a law as it exists in Germany to give projects like FSJ the framework they demand and to enlarge young people's access to voluntary activities.

Last but not least, a lot of voluntary work is done by young people in our member organisations. This work is an important contribution to our society. Therefore we demand once more an adequate and sustainable funding for youth work.

Cyprus / CYC

Contact with government

Cyprus National Youth Council (CYC) has not been involved in any way in the consultation process. Even though the contact with government and other official tripled during the last one year, they were always as a result of our initiative and were mostly of an informative character regarding youth work and volunteering. No contacts were made towards this target from the government.

Understanding of the process

Government and CYC have a clear different approach and understanding of voluntary activities and volunteering. The government has a specific budget line through which only charity organisations are funded. Some voluntary organisations may receive some funding from ministries (e.g. environmental organisations from the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment) but this is not widely the case. Youth organisations may apply for an administrative grant to the Youth Board, but limited funds can be allocated to each organisation separately. Extra funds may be applied for, again to the Youth Board, but only on an event or campaign base. But we still have a long way to go before we can effectively have some kind of institutional recognition of non-formal education as an official qualification, to be sought out in Curriculum Vitas.

The government has a policy of funding active youth NGOs that apply for an administrative fund each year to the Cyprus Youth Board, even if the sum is quite small and inadequate for most organisations. This sum can be increased during the year with requests for project-based or activity-based funds, submitted again directly to the Cyprus Youth Board. The possibility of extra funding applied for directly to different ministries and government departments exists, but fewer organisations choose to do so.

There is no actual strategy to promote voluntary activities that CYC is aware of. The only remotely connected issue is the decision of the government to enforce four year's worth of community work to young men that claim to have mental disabilities so as to be disqualified from army service (which is compulsory for all Cypriot male Cypriots once they turn 18 years old).

Measuring implementation

No new tools to promote active volunteering of young people have been applied since November 2004 when these common objectives were decided upon. CYC is not aware neither on any strategies, local or national, aiming at providing information to young people on voluntary activities.

¹Cyprus Youth Board: a semi-governmental organisation that is liable to the Ministry of Justice and is the official "department" of the government that deals with Youth issues". The Board is comprised of representatives of the four political youth organisations whose mother-parties achieved in having more than 5 representatives elected in the parliament. At this point in time 4 political parties are represented in this Board.



We are not aware of such a strategy. All youth policies are left to the Cyprus Youth Board, and to the various campaigns and strategies their Board of Directors decides upon. In theory the Cyprus Youth Board could be involving its Consultative Body in various decision-making processes, but this is not effectively applied. The Board has already set up information points (KEPLI) in Nicosia, Larnaka and Pafos cities, and they have plans to set one up in Limassol, as a medium to disseminate information on youth issues. Unfortunately the info point of Nicosia, the capital, is to be dismantled by the end of the year and no plans exist as yet concerning its reestablishment.

No other policies which could be linked to voluntary activities, besides the OMC, is known.

Results

Besides the rapid evolvement and visibility of the Cyprus Youth Council along with many Non Governmental Youth Organizations, things have not changed in the last 2 years.

The only body pursuing youth interests at government level is the Cyprus Youth Board. It is highly unlikely that a semi-governmental organisation can effectively promote youth policy issues on behalf of NGOs, even if the actual members of the Board of directors are representatives of 4 political youth organisations. The Cyprus Youth Council, on the other hand, can effectively lobby youth interests and pursue NGO aims at government level, but is being constrained by lack of essential funding, funding that is directly controlled by the Cyprus Youth Board, which we are now asked to shadow report. We are sure that the irony and dilemma is fairly obvious.

Our suggestions are as follows:

- 1 Official recognition of the volunteers and volunteer organizations
- 2 Formal education to promote volunteerism and active citizenship in school curricula.
- 3 Development of a European Benchmarking system and regular evaluation reports for each Member State on the situation of young people and encouragement of youth volunteerism
- 4 The Cyprus Youth Council needs to receive a yearly budget that will allow for youth workers to be employed and effectively represent and promote youth policies and interests, with none of the practical constraints a government body faces.
- 5 The Cyprus Youth Council needs to have its yearly budget approved by the Parliament itself, and should be liable for its expenditures directly to the Ministry of Economy, and not the Cyprus Youth Board and its political administration, or the Ministry of Justice to which it is liable.
- 6 The Cyprus Youth Council needs to be an official partner representing youth NGOs during consultation processes on behalf of the government and the parliament, alongside the Cyprus Youth Board and any other stakeholder

necessary. This will also be the most effective way to ensure that the interested and directly affected parties are actually kept abreast with ongoing processes and changes, and effectively represented.

- 7 The Open Method of Coordination needs to be effectively applied and young people need to be directly consulted, through focus groups and yearly researchers of trends and modes, organised on an annual basis from the Cyprus Youth Board.
- 8 The money allocated in the yearly budget to be distributed by the Cyprus Youth Board to youth organizations needs to be increased, and the allocation processes need to be transparent. Also, during the final reporting procedures of the Board, the actual amounts allocated to each organisation should be published as well, not only the lump sums allocated per budget line.
- 9 Ministries should apply more effective methods in disseminating campaign and activity related budget lines. The red tape tends to keep most youth NGOs away and not even bother with applying for available funds.
- 10 The Administration of the European YOUTH Program, and the National Agency of Cyprus, must remain an independent office and must under no circumstances fall under the direct jurisdiction of the Cyprus Youth Board, in order to preserve the current ability of ALL NGOs, regardless of political affiliations (or lack of them), to apply and if qualified receive funding for European projects.

²This is effectively carried out concerning other lobbies eg environmental organisations, or farmer's unions.



Finland / Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi

In general, it could be stated that, among all the four priority areas of the White Paper, the development in Finland within this one (Voluntary Activities) is the most difficult to perceive and to report. Mainly this is due to the already relatively high standard of services and support of voluntary activities at the starting point of the process, but also because the results are not necessarily as easily measurable as with the other priority areas.

Consultation for the implementation

Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi is part of **national working group** following the implementation of the White Paper. We have two members in that working group. Allianssi organises every year events and hearings to member organisations and to other actors in the youth field about issues concerning the White Paper.

Allianssi has been very well involved in the implementation of the White Paper in Finland. We have taken part since the beginning to the drafting of all the national reports for White Paper, and we have had our representatives in the WP working group of the ministry. Also all the **107 member organisations of Allianssi have always been consulted** when the government has produced any national reports related to the White Paper process.

Results of the implementation

Now that the CO's on Voluntary Activities have been evaluated, it seems that there have **been many things that have improved**. **State financial support to youth work has increased by 70%** during the last 3 years. White paper is used as reference document to almost all issues concerning youth. A new Youth Law entered into force in March 1st 2006. But it is difficult to estimate how much impact the White Paper had on these developments and how much they were just a result of the national policy.

Objective 1 - Develop voluntary activities of young people with the aim of enhancing the transparency of the existing possibilities, enlarging their scope and of improving their quality

Within this objective, there has been a "Civil Participation Programme" launched by the government which has eg. reinforced the activities within teacher training programmes about how to educate and support a young person to become an active citizen. Several studies have also been made about voluntary activities during the last years.

Most of the voluntary activities in Finland channels through the NGOs and municipal youth work structures, and the funding of these NGOs and youth work in general has

been increased quite substantially at national, regional and local levels. In municipalities, there are also positive signs as the support to youth work and local youth organisations has been recognised as one of the basic services given by the municipality to its inhabitants.

Training in the field of voluntary activities has also been increased. An example of this is the training package organised by Allianssi, with the support of the Ministry of Education, to all the national youth organisations and to their regional structures in 2004-06.

The Youth Academy (co-operation organisation of our major youth and sport NGOs) started a project in 2004 to increase the opportunities for voluntary activities for young people between 13 and 16 years of age. This age group was chosen as it has been noted to be a risk age group as far as the dropping out of voluntary activities is concerned. Many other projects have also been started to support the voluntary activities of young people in different NGOs or municipal youth structures.

Obstacles in the implementation phase.

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

In spite of the increased funding, many NGOs still struggle with lack of financial resources. This lack affects the youth organisations in many ways, especially on the local level where the funding systems vary a great deal from one place to another. E.g. the promoting of their activities or the recruiting of new volunteers are major obstacles for many youth organisations.

There is a general trend in the society that a **general commitment to an NGOs ideals** is losing ground and that (young) people take part in the activities just to make a project according to their interests and are not ready to make long-term commitments. At the same time, the demands towards the activities or services of an NGO have increased. The expectations are high but the members or volunteers are not ready to invest their scarce free time to fulfil these expectations.

A **serious threat** related to the existence of the voluntary activities in Finland is related to the **position of the two state monopoly companies** (the National Lottery Company and the national Slot Machine Association). These two companies form the basis of the funding of not only youth organisations, but almost all of the third sector NGOs. The threat is twofold; there are attempts from the European Union level to abolish the national lottery monopolies, and on the other hand, on the national level, there are attempts to use these funds to other purposes. Both of these threats should be warded off to secure the position of the youth organisations and youth work in general.

Many NGOs who are working on a not-for-profit basis are producing services based on



the demands of their members. Very often the tax authorities have started to treat these NGOs the same way as if they were private companies. As an example, if the local Scouts are selling cookies to fund their activities, they have been taxed by the authorities as any private commercial company. This situation is difficult and unpredictable for an NGO and makes it difficult for them to plan their activities and finances. Therefore, there should be a **general definition and recognition of the role of the not-for-profit NGOs** on the national (and maybe even European) level which should take into account the voluntary work in the NGOs also in taxation matters.

As far as taxation is concerned, there are also problems concerning the situation of the **European Voluntary Service volunteers** coming to Finland. The taxation decisions in Finland are taken on the local level, and according to the municipality where they live, some EVS volunteers have to pay a 35 % tax of their pocket money whereas in some other municipalities they are exempted from taxes. This lack of joint practise puts the volunteers in an unequal position and increases the difficulties to get European volunteers to Finland.

In the international co-operation, there are still difficulties within all the European Union to **get visas for young people from outside the EU** to take part in youth exchanges, seminars and other activities. Therefore, we strongly support the aims of the YFJ campaign ([HYPERLINK "http://www.getvisable.org" www.getvisable.org](http://www.getvisable.org)) to facilitate the visa procedures of young people.

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

Several projects have been started during the last years to promote the volunteering of young people all over Finland. See more about these below under the Best practises section.

Objective 4 - Recognise voluntary activities of young people with the aim of enhancing the transparency of the existing possibilities, enlarging their scope and of improving their quality

There has been a lot of public discussion on volunteering, and also some studies have been made. See more about these under the Best practises section.

Best practices: examples of concrete actions taken.

The **Recreational Activity Study Book** provided by the Youth Academy (Nuorten Akatemia) gives the reader a broad view of the young person's skills and learning experiences. The Study Book serves as a CV, as participation in all forms of recreational activities can be recorded in it. The Study Book is aimed at all young people above 13 years of age who are involved in recreational and voluntary activities. In Finland, 80,000 copies of the Book have been distributed. Many educational institutions and employers appreciate active young people who are able to present a reference of what they have been involved in and learnt outside school. All entries into the Study Book can be made in Finnish, Swedish or English. This means that the young person can also have a record of international or other activities abroad.

A project (called "Mukava") was coordinated by the University of Jyväskylä to **encourage school students to take part in voluntary activities** outside schools. Several new ways and models were developed for this purpose. The basic idea was that young people are interested to take part in voluntary activities but are not always prepared to make the initiatives themselves but need the support of e.g. an ngo. Young people were satisfied when they felt that the work they are doing is needed and useful, not just to spend time. And many organisations and institutions were glad to take young people as volunteers when there was an "adult" mediator to make the agreements and when the insurance matters were taken care of by the schools.

In the internet, there are new **services to promote the voluntary activities**. An example of them is Networking Service www.verkostopalvelu.fi) which is a platform for all those who can offer voluntary work and for those who are willing to volunteer.

It could also be mentioned that Allianssi organises (together with organisations of the social sector and the sport sector) traditionally a **"Week of Voluntary Activities"** every year in December (week 49) to promote the volunteering.



Lithuania / LiJOT

Contact with governments

Lithuanian Youth Council (LiJOT) is constantly keeping close contacts with Ministry of Social Security and Labour, which is directly responsible for the implementation of the third set of common objectives on voluntary activities. These contacts are embodied in the consultative system through Council of Youth Affairs, where LiJOT has a possibility to delegate six members. The other six members are delegates from governmental institutions. The Council is situated in Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, where since August 2006 it plays a consultative role. Before that the Council had a decisional role, where youth and government representatives had a possibility to discuss and to adopt necessary decisions both together. Since August 2006 there is no such possibility for youth representatives to directly participate in decisions making procedure as the Council plays only consultative role.

Department of Youth Affairs is responsible for formulating youth policy and strengthening of youth situation, representing of youth interests, monitoring of youth situation in Lithuania and promoting of international youth cooperation. Volunteering support and promotion is included in these aims.

The Department in the beginning of 2006 initiated a working group of youth representatives, which had to describe the situation of volunteering in Lithuania and to give proposals for strengthening of the situation. LiJOT was involved as well.

In the November 2006 Department had initiated a working group of youth representatives and representatives of organizations working with youth, named working group for „children and youth citizenship, morality and voluntary activities promotion through youth organizations and organizations working with youth, traditional religious communities and communions”. This working group is aiming at analysing present situation, describing main concepts and giving proposals for creation of state funding programme for these activities. Lithuanian Youth Council is involved in the process as a group member together with other representatives of NGOs working on this topic.

There is no other consultation processes between Lithuanian Youth Council and government, concerning implementation of the voluntary activities priority.

Understanding of the process

The concept of volunteering in Lithuanian Youth Council is similar to the State concept, which is described in the Labour code and in the document describing order of making voluntary activities, adopted by Lithuanian Government. Nevertheless the perspective on the meaning and role of voluntary activities differ.

Lithuanian Youth Council is actively promoting volunteering as one of the meaningful methods of non-formal education and is seeking for its recognition. LiJOT is constantly analysing the situation for voluntary activities in the state and in 2005-2006 LiJOT has implemented a project “Lithuanian network of volunteering”. The aims of this project were to analyse present situation of volunteering in Lithuania and possibilities to release a national network of volunteering among youth organizations, to give the proposals for strengthening the situation. The results of the project showed that there is no coherent State policy on volunteering and the existing laws do not describe properly the voluntary activities. As well as present economical and social situation is not convenient for the spread of voluntary activities. The State and other social bodies, e.g. business sector, do not recognize voluntary activities as a useful experience for young persons and its role for the society and economy. As well as non-formal education is not recognized (it is supported though understood differently) at the State level and the youth NGOs are not strong enough to work with volunteers.

As mentioned already, Lithuanian Government has no coherent strategy on promotion of voluntary activities and strengthening the conditions for its spread. Voluntary activities are only partly mentioned in the programmes promoting youth citizenship and similar youth activities. Besides, Lithuanian Government does not recognize directly volunteering as valuable issue, which can further influence the development of the society and economy, as well as a useful experience for young people.

Still, it has to be mentioned, that volunteering is promoted through implementation programmes of other aims. The latest example is creation of programme „children and youth citizenship, morality and voluntary activities promotion through youth organizations and organizations working with youth, traditional religious communities and communions”, where youth organizations and organizations working with youth are consulted and involved in the programme creation process. But still this programme is not aiming at being an element of wider coherent Governmental strategy on volunteering.

Measuring implementation

Lithuanian Youth Council is coordinating the activities “Eurodesk Lietuva” - a network of the European information services, which is mainly funded by European Commission and in Lithuania it is co-funded by Ministry of Social Security and Labour. It provides national and European information for young people and for people, working with young people. The ‘Eurodesk’ works in 29 country of Europe. At present time the ‘Eurodesk Lietuva’ network also includes eight other local partners - „Round tables“ of youth non-governmental organizations in Klaipeda, Sakiai, Utena and Zarasai, Silute, Naujoji Akmene, Alytus and Panevezys. The services provided by ‘Eurodesk’ are free of charge for the young people, for people working with young people (for teachers, youth leaders etc.) and also for non-governmental organizations, involved in youth activities in all ‘Eurodesk’ partner countries. Among other information, Eurodesk Lietuva is gathering the information about volunteering activities and informing young people about its possibilities.



There are new governmental programmes aiming to create Youth information centres, which are aiming to gather and spread information for youth, based on its information needs. It is possible that the creation of youth information centres will contribute to the raising awareness about possibilities to volunteer and the use of voluntary activities. Also Department of Youth Affairs is contributing to the strengthening of youth information systems, by supporting and funding youth projects on this topic. Agency for International Youth Co-operation is a public institution founded by the State Council of Youth Affairs and the Council of Lithuanian Youth Council in February 1999. The primary task of the Agency is to ensure implementation of the EU Youth programme in Lithuania. The Agency is constantly promoting and supporting youth voluntary activities in the framework of the Youth programme in Lithuania.

Still the promotion and information about possibilities of voluntary activities on governmental level is not spread sustainable. Governmental activities in this field are incoherent and have no real strategy. The main activities are concentrated on information spread, but there is no strategy how to remove present obstacles for development of volunteering and the volunteering experience and non-formal education is still not recognised on governmental level.

Results

When analysing the present Governmental policy, it can be mentioned that there is no coherent Governmental strategy on promotion of voluntary activities and removing the obstacles for its development. The judicial regulation of voluntary activities does not reflect the present situations and there are no changes in this area for the last two years. The voluntary activities are not recognised as a valuable activity on the governmental level as well as there is no widespread awareness about its positive influence to the development of the society and economy. The governmental institutions or institutions, funded by the government, are implementing few programmes or activities in the area of promotion of volunteering; still these activities and programmes are not a part of a coherent strategy on volunteering.

After Lithuanian Youth Council (LiJOT) has implemented the project “Lithuanian network of volunteering” the main conclusions about the present situation were made. First, there is a need and interest in volunteering in Lithuania among young people, but the main actors in the promotion process are European institutions (through Youth programme in Lithuania) and the non-governmental organizations. The governmental indifference and absence of coherent policy or strategy on volunteering is one of the obstacles. Also, there are no suitable judicial, economical and social conditions for the spread of volunteering, as well as the society and young people are not aware about the significance of volunteering to the persons, society and economy. The existing governmental programmes cover only information spread about the volunteering, but they do not cover the removal of other obstacles. The weakness of NGOs working with volunteers is the other obstacle for the development of volunteering and implementation of

needed measures.

To sum up, the development of volunteering is widely connected with the more complex processes. To begin with the development of the state economy and society, which directly are affecting the social, economical conditions for volunteering and public favour to the volunteering. The present situation of economical and social conditions is not in favour for the development of volunteering. The other important factor is the ability of youth organizations and organizations working with youth to work with young volunteers. As the results of the project “Lithuanian network of volunteering” had shown, these organizations are not strong enough and able to work with volunteers.



Luxembourg / CGJL

The consultation on the implementation

The Conférence Générale de la Jeunesse Luxembourgeoise (CGJL), the National Youth Council of Luxembourg, has been involved from the very beginning of the implementation of the White Paper. After a first consultation in 1995, during which, amongst others, the CGJL has also been very active, a second consultation of young people in Luxembourg took place in 2000. The results of this consultation were published in an intermediary national report on the “situation of young people in Luxembourg”. This national report was revised and completed by a group of experts.

As a consequence of the late developments in the Youth Field, (the OMC at an EU level and the CoE report) the Ministry of Family Affairs and Integration responsible for Youth issues, decided to re-evaluate the national action plan.

The Ministry got in touch with the CGJL and other relevant organisations working in the youth sector, to ask them to collaborate in another consultation process, which aimed at re-orientating Youth Policy in Luxembourg for the future.

The CGJL organised a national forum in 2002, with the objective to define the priorities of the Youth Policy in Luxembourg and to elaborate concrete proposals for the implementation of the key ideas of this policy. During 2003-2004, the CGJL also consulted its member organisations about this project.

A first draft was proposed by the Ministry, which was discussed and amended by all the actors in this consultation process. In February 2004, the new national action guidelines “deuxième lignes directrices pour la politique jeunesse” were finally presented to the public.

Unfortunately during the consultation process, a lack of interest of young people in European topics was visible. For the presentation of the final draft, during a conclusion event in Luxembourg-city, only a few young people were present.

Those new national guidelines for Youth Policy follow the same direction as the action lines of the European Commission. Voluntary activities are stressed as one of the main issues in Youth Policy. The promotion of voluntary activities, encouraging the development of voluntary activities especially for young people at the local level, the support of volunteers through trainings and assistance and the creation of new adapted systems of recognition of voluntary activities as well as the competences acquired through non-formal education, are some of the main objectives set in the national guidelines. For the Luxembourg government collaboration with youth organisations on a local, regional and national level is essential.



Another consultation that gathered young people from different member states of the European Union, took place on the occasion of the Youth Event, organised in the framework of the Luxembourg Presidency, by the Ministry of Family Affairs and Integration with the collaboration of the CGJL and the Youth Forum. The Declaration of Luxembourg reflects the participants' discussion on the implementation of the common objectives on voluntary activities and the newly adopted European Youth Pact.

The Ministry of Family Affairs and Integration and the CGJL have always enjoyed excellent relations and have common meetings, in a formal or an informal way, several times a year. The CGJL is consulted on a regular basis and is therefore an important partner, when it comes to Youth issues. The last consultation, for example, took place, when planning next years' campaign to promote voluntary activities.

Voluntary activities

Voluntary activities in general appear to be less developed in Luxembourg, then in other European countries, but seem diversified and intense (European Social Survey, 2003). In contrary to the general opinion about a growing indifference of young people concerning voluntary commitments in general, the latest surveys showed that young people appear to be very open to and available for voluntary activities. Moreover the surveys also stress on one hand, that the form of the voluntary commitment has changed. Young people commit themselves less to organisations, but appear to prefer working on specific projects, often on a short-term basis, linked to more or less formal groups which allow individual action.

On the other hand associations and organisations play an important role for those young people who would like to stand up for their convictions on a long-term basis. Those youth organisations are important exploration and testing environments.

The European Social Survey showed that young people in Luxembourg are mostly active in sports associations, social or environmental and peace organisations.

A surprising fact was brought up by a survey made by the CEPS/INSTEAD in 2001 about voluntary work in Luxembourg. The survey showed that native Luxembourgers are four times as often implicated in voluntary activities then foreigners living in Luxembourg, although voluntary activities are to be considered as an important factor for integration.

The frame for voluntary service of young people has been set by a law in January 1999. The objective of this law is to promote, to favour and to support voluntary commitments of young citizens. This law gives a definition of voluntary service and sets the frame and the conditions for this voluntary commitment. During the "International year for volunteers" in 2001 a charter of voluntary activities was set up and the related website offers (still today) information, links and testimonies to the general public.

The Ministry of Family Affairs and Integration is the responsible Ministry for volunteering. Attached to this Ministry, but working independently is the National Youth Service. Linked to the National Youth Service, the National Agency is in charge of the EVS and volunteers in Luxembourg. Both Services give out information about volunteering. In the near future a website from the Volunteering Agency will help people interested in voluntary activities and organisations looking for volunteers to get in touch with each other, by means of a working database.

Developments in Youth Policy in Luxembourg

In the framework of the national guidelines for Youth Policy and in order to reach the common objectives on voluntary work the government has taken several initiatives to achieve the goals set. Here some of the activities:

"Volunteering Agency and the Council for Volunteering"

As a follow up to the International Year of Volunteering, during which several activities were organized in order to promote volunteering, the government decided to implement a National Council for Volunteering in 2002. This Council, in which all major organisations, working with volunteers (of all ages), including the CGJL, are represented, meets on a regular basis to reflect the situation of volunteers and voluntary activities in Luxembourg. In addition to this Council, a Volunteering Agency has started building in 2003 and would be soon operational.

"Congé d'éducation"

In order to support volunteer activities and remove obstacles for young people under the age of 30 who have already settled in professional life, the Ministry of Family Affairs and Integration and the National Youth Service have developed the "education leave". A young person can be granted "education leave" to give, him or her, the opportunity to work on a volunteer project during the time of his or her regular working hours.

"Service volontaire d'orientation"

In 2006 the government developed a new concept for a "voluntary service for orientation". This concept addresses to all young people who quit school without having any qualification and who have not been registered as unemployed. This concept gives the youngster the opportunity to acquire specific competences, to benefit from a strengthened quality frame support and to think about his own professional goals through a voluntary service in a specific organisation.



Furthermore

The government is supporting an initiative that aims at certifying the competences acquired in the framework of voluntary activities in non-formal education. This initiative was launched in 2005 and leads to an official certification signed by the responsible Minister.

The Ministry of Family Affairs and Integration is planning to launch a campaign next year, in order to promote volunteering and to encourage young people to commit themselves to a voluntary activity. The CGJL was present in the working group for this campaign and will help the Ministry to promote it.

In addition to this, the law on volunteering will be revised in 2007, in order to simplify procedures and remove further obstacles to voluntary activities.

Concrete examples from the CGJL

“Volunteering is a precondition for every working democracy and for a strong society.[...] Volunteering does not only offer the chance to acquire social values, it also helps to strengthen the individual skills of young people, to gain experience as well as to learn about the principles of life.” (Declaration of Luxembourg - written during the Presidency Youth Event in April 2005).

Volunteering is one of the crucial subjects the National Youth Council is working on, knowing by its own example, how important volunteers are for the development and the continuity of the civil society. Especially initiatives of young people participating on a voluntary level, helping to shape part of their world, their surroundings and their future must be supported. Volunteers constitute a big creativity pool for any organisation or association, which should be used and supported to bring in new ideas, new approaches and perspectives.

Voluntary activities in political processes, in the local community or youth organisations give young volunteers the chance to learn by doing, acquire social values, strengthen their individual skills and gain experiences and competences that cannot all be acquired in the regular school system. Voluntary experiences help young people to be independent and “thinking” human beings, with interpersonal skills and management and leadership capacities. In order to promote and support this gain the CGJL has tried to increase its activity in this field.

“Guide du jeune citoyen” - Guide for the young citizen

The young citizens’ guide an initiative of the National Youth Council with the financial support of the government, meant to create an information basis for the young people in Luxembourg. Besides an informational part on the functioning of Europe, the European constitution and citizenship in general, the booklet is mainly dedicated to

volunteering. It regroups all the necessary information about volunteering in Luxembourg and gives a practical overview on existing national youth organisations. The booklet is supposed to make the young people aware of their possibilities and provides them with the information they need, to participate in society. The guide was first published in 2005 and distributed in schools, youth houses, to the local authorities and to young people at fairs and information stands. The guide turned out to be a great success, but due to logistical and financial problems it proved difficult for the CGJL to get the guide to the young people in Luxembourg.

Action-Teams

In cooperation with several NGOs in Luxembourg and in close partnership with one of its member organisations (LIFE asbl), the CGJL works on a project named “Action Teams”. The Action Teams project, which relates to the new national guidelines for Youth Policy, tries to make the link between formal and non-formal education. In a new approach this project tries to initiate and to motivate young people to be active citizens, by giving the youngsters the necessary know-how to carry out their own projects. The basic idea is to give the youngsters the possibility to make their own choice on what area they want to concentrate their activity. After this decision the partner organisations provide the youngsters with the necessary information, support and trainings, in order to help the participants to achieve their goal. The main objective of the project is to make the groups of young people work as independent as possible and make them experience how their commitment can actually provoke changes. This experience will hopefully lead to future commitments of the youngsters.

Since the official start in 2005, the Action-Teams project has been present at several schools in Luxembourg, trying to initiate Action-Teams.

European Volunteers for the Luxembourg National Youth Council

The “All different - All equal” campaign, a campaign initiated by the CoE and on national level mainly coordinated by the NYC in close partnership with the National Youth Service, gave the CGJL the opportunity to set a good example for all member organisations by giving two European volunteers the possibility to work on the campaign in Luxembourg. This is the first experience with European volunteers for the CGJL. Unfortunately one of the two volunteers couldn’t find her way into the campaign, so that she left the project in September 2006.

The volunteer house

One of the main obstacles and difficulties for organisations who are interested in hosting one or more EVS is to find appropriate housing for these volunteers. Over the last couple of years housing costs have dramatically increased in Luxembourg, so that organisations face major problems in finding accommodation for the costs foreseen in the budget. In order to remove part of this obstacle the Luxembourg National Youth Council



decided to rent a house in the south of the country and to offer the rooms to organisations hosting volunteers, with a priority for member organisations of the CGJL. This initiative was welcomed and fully supported by the Ministry of Family Affairs and Integration. The house offers five rooms for volunteers and gives them the opportunity to live together. Each volunteer has a own room, but shares the living room, the kitchen and the bathroom.

Up to now, the EVS-house has been a big success. The demand is high and today volunteers coming from four different organisations live in the house.

Conclusions

It appears difficult to measure the impact of the actions taken regarding the common objectives on voluntary work. Unfortunately there are no statistics or recent national surveys about voluntary work in Luxembourg, so that a measurement by numbers is impossible. Furthermore a lot of those presented measures have just started recently or will be launched during the next year, so that it is impossible to foresee the impact they will have once they have settled.

What definitely can be said is, that a lot of actions were taken in order to reach the common objectives on voluntary activities. For many of these activities the CGJL has been consulted by the Ministry of Family Affairs and Integration, so that the NYC always had a chance to represent the young peoples' opinion in Luxembourg.

Promotion of voluntary activities

By means of the "young citizens' guide", published in 2005, the CGJL managed to get the information about voluntary activities and the different youth organisations working with volunteers to a lot of young people throughout of Luxembourg. The Campaign, that will be launched in 2007, by the Minsitry of Familiy Affairs and Integration, will pick up the subject and bring it back to the young peoples' minds.

The Action Teams project directly addresses the young people in schools and tries to show the youngsters what a voluntary commitment can bring themselves and others and makes them aware that they can make a change. This is definitely the message that has to be sent out to the young people. They often seem to resign, thinking that they will not make a difference anyway. The CGJL really wants the young people to realise, that it is only through participation that young people can help to shape the world of tomorrow.

Unfortunately the CGJL itself is also experiencing a lack of young motivated volunteers. Therefore it is most important to keep the information flowing.

Removing obstacles and barriers for voluntary activities

The creation of a "Volunteering Agency" appears to be an important step in the right direction of removing communication barriers, from both, the young person interested in voluntary activities and the organisation desperately looking for motivated volunteers. The education leave simplifies voluntary activities especially for those young people who are already settled in professional life, giving them the opportunity to get special leave, when working on specific volunteer projects. Both initiatives will contribute to facilitating the individual choice to be a volunteer.

Considering the voluntary service, the CGJL has tried to take one major difficulty of the shoulders of the organisations intending to host a European Volunteer: finding housing. This should make it easier for organisations to choose to have a volunteer for their project.

Maybe more initiatives should now go in the direction of concrete trainings for both, hosting and sending organisations, in order to give the tutors and the organisation the necessary know-how to make the volunteer-experience a success.

Recognition of voluntary activities

The recognition of voluntary activities is one of the major requests of the CGJL. The importance of voluntary activities and non-formal education should finally be recognised, not only by the civil society, but also by the employers. The new certification system, supported by the government, will finally create new structures and will help the young people who have been involved in voluntary activities, so that their acquired competences will be officially recognised as professional experience.

However the CGJL will continue working on these important questions and hopes that the collaboration with the responsible Ministry will stay as fertile as it has been up to now.



The Netherlands / DNYC

Foreword

In this shadow report the Dutch National Youth Council (DNYC) wants to analyse the implementation process of the common objectives on youth volunteering in the Netherlands from the perspective of youth and youth organisations. The accent lies on the role of the Dutch government, since the national government assumed responsibility for the implementation of the objectives. As part of the process of shadow reporting within the European Youth Forum, this analysis is also a reaction to the report as written by the central Dutch government.

It is important to notice that at the time of writing only the first draft of the official governmental report was available. This draft report was discussed with actors in the field at a consultation meeting on November 16th. Several of the issues that are mentioned in this shadow report were discussed during that meeting and might therefore be included in the final version of the Dutch report.

In the consultation process preceding the writing of the governmental report, a compendium of best practices and successful projects in the field of youth volunteering was created. The compendium illustrates the vitality and diversity of voluntary activities of youth in the Netherlands. By writing this shadow report, the DNYC hopes to contribute to the process of improving policy on this valuable priority of the White Paper.

The context

In order to evaluate the progress in this field of implementing the common objectives on voluntary activities of youth, it is important to outline the allocation of competences between the different governmental levels in the Netherlands. In the past few years the Dutch government has strongly reinforced the decentralisation process of governmental responsibilities. For the areas of youth policy and policy on voluntary activities, this development has had far-reaching consequences. On the 1st of January 2007, a significant new law will take effect. In this law on Social Support (called “WMO”), local competences are expanded in a large number of major policy areas, including youth policy, public health care and voluntary activities.

By further decentralisation of competences, the government aims at improving the quality of existing and future policy, as well as its implementation. The goal is to bring decision-making nearer to the people it concerns. By doing so, and by allowing the persons concerned to participate in the process, policy can be better adjusted to the groups or individuals that it affects.

The Dutch National Youth Council strongly supports this aim and effort, and wants to



underline that the DNYC is not in principle opposed to the decentralisation process. In fact, it can create important chances to enhance policy. In several areas, including certain areas of preventive youth policy, positive results have come out.

Nevertheless, the DNYC emphasizes that decentralisation as carried out at this moment, at the same time leads to a number of **negative consequences for other areas of (youth) policy**. The shift of responsibility for youth policy to the local level now forms an obstacle in the implementation of the common objectives³.

What is even more alarming is that the already existing framework for youth policy is seriously undermined. Especially in the field of *positive* youth policy, including voluntary activities by youth, the already limited central policy is fully cancelled before replacing policy has been formed at the local level. In fact, there is no guarantee that local policy will be developed at all.

In understanding why this potentially positive decentralisation process has such negative side-effects, a few factors can be identified:

- The speed of the process does not allow all municipalities to prepare adequately for the newly obtained responsibilities.
- Moreover, the scope of the new competences is so broad, that many local authorities are forced to make choices in which areas to deal with first.
- Since the new responsibilities include a number of health care related policy fields that are of literally vital importance to the people that depend on it, local decision-makers naturally prioritize these fields over e.g. youth volunteering or other positive youth policy.
- In the past years the central government has not informed local authorities on the content, objectives, or even on the mere existence of the White Paper, even though relevant competences have been structurally decentralised.

NB. Fortunately, there has been some progress in the past few months. In the light of this 2006 consultation on voluntary activities of youth, the department of Youth finally began to integrate information on the European dimension of youth policy in communications to other government levels. The compendium of best practices that resulted from the open consultation, provides essential information on the White Paper. In the new call for proposals for the 2007-2009 programme on voluntary activities of youth, the European process is also mentioned. Both are very recent publications. The DNYC warmly welcomes this initiative, and hopes that it will be the beginning of a structural effort to bring knowledge on the common objectives to the decision-makers who have to implement them in the Netherlands. The Dutch draft report states that “the Netherlands aim at a better visibility for the (positive) effects of European cooperation in the field of youth policy”. The DNYC strongly supports this ambition, and will of course contribute wherever possible to this process.

- Guidelines for local youth policy (other than youth care and preventive policy) are absent: local authorities in fact are not even obliged to develop policy on youth volunteering.

N.B If they choose to do so, it is however mandatory to inform local people’s representatives on which policy is being developed. Involvement of the people it concerns is also mandatory. This offers new possibilities for (youth) participation. In the absence of basic guidelines however, the obligation to involve youth when developing youth volunteering policy, can also be a reason (or at least leaves the possibility open) not to create such policy when the responsible local officials are not inclined to work with youth.

In its draft report the Dutch government indicates that this democratic local process of policy development is a given situation, in which the other governmental levels cannot intervene. It must be clear that this is simply a political choice.

The before mentioned “WMO” law contains several so-called “achievement-fields”; they include e.g. health- and social care for (drug) addicts, or public mental health care. On these policy areas local authorities need to present plans and expected outcomes of policy in advance. Although the municipalities are free to create their own policy, they must report regularly on their efforts and results. Basic quality standards are prescribed, and benchmarking is used to guarantee a minimum level of policy for citizens, but local authorities enjoy a significant amount of liberty in policy development.

Youth volunteering (like all other non-preventive youth policy) has unfortunately not been identified in these “achievement-fields”. Volunteering in general however is acknowledged. The DNYC wants to underline the need for the central government to specifically recognize youth and youth organisations as an important target group in local policy on volunteering. Making youth part of (the development of) policy on volunteering should not be a local possibility or choice, but a norm.

Involvement of youth

The Dutch National Youth Council was fully involved in the consultation process on the implementation of the common objectives in the field of voluntary activities, as recognized in the White Paper on Youth. Over the past few years the cooperation with the responsible ministry (Health, Welfare and Sports) on the consultation rounds concerning the White Paper has evolved considerably. The Dutch National Youth Council was recognized as one of the main stakeholders and was included in both the development and the carrying out of the consultation.

A clear distinction however must be made between participation in the consultation (which has become well-established), and participation in the implementation process itself. Unfortunately, youth has so far not really become a participant in the develop-

³ This conclusion will be elaborated in the chapters to come.



ment of strategies and tools for the implementation of the common objectives.

Understanding the process

Definition of youth policy and youth volunteering

The Dutch central government seems to be developing an ever more limited perspective on voluntary activities. The subject is treated in line with the general hands-off approach to youth policy in the Netherlands. Recent government proposals in the light of the stimulation of voluntary work suggest an emphasis on so-called “problem-youth”, which is characteristic for the youth policy area in the Netherlands. The perception of voluntary activities of youth as merely a means within the broader spectrum of preventive youth policy seems to have become the prevailing definition on which all government policy is based.

The Dutch National Youth Council is strongly in favour of an ambition to include youth with lesser opportunities in policy on voluntary activities. However, current developments in this field seem to arise from the overall preventive government approach to youth policy, rather than from an aim to provide additional opportunities to disadvantaged youth. Policy initiatives (on volunteering as well as on other fields) for “non-problem youth” are being pushed aside by a focus on preventive and curative projects aiming at a small group of youth that is unable to function in society in the governmentally desired way. This situation results in an impoverishment instead of an improvement of policy on youth volunteering.

Both the apparent background as the consequences of the definition chosen by the Dutch government, offer very limited room for a positive perspective on voluntary activities. The government approach displays little recognition of the value of volunteering for citizenship development. Or at least, citizenship aspects and the reinforcement of young people's solidarity - the basic values underlying the third common objective -, seem to be of little consequence in the relevant Dutch policy.

Calling for a more positive approach

The DNYC considers voluntary activities to be a valuable aspect of the development of active citizenship, and an important opportunity for youth to explore and develop personal talents and competences. By limiting the scope of central policy on volunteering of young people, the government ignores an important opportunity to reach out to all youth in the promotion of active citizenship and solidarity. The Dutch Youth Council therefore strongly calls upon its central government to more explicitly acknowledge the broader significance of youth volunteering. More importantly, we ask the central government to actively propagate this perspective through positive central policy aiming at a real strengthening of the infrastructure for youth volunteering. Youth organisations should be recognized as a major and natural actor in this field, and should not be disregarded in supporting policy on a central level. Decentralisation can not be

accepted as an excuse for the denial of central support for youth organisations. We underline the need for central authorities to make a convincing effort to promote a more positive perspective on youth volunteering, with attention for the value of youth-led organisations, in order to inspire an improvement of policy on all levels.

Development of policy

In recent years the DNYC and several other actors in the field of youth policy have tried to raise attention and awareness for the negative effects of the Dutch shift to preventive youth policy.

Already in 1998, also the Council of Europe (CoE), in its report on Dutch Youth Policy, found that “Despite the focus on youth participation, it seems that in many cases youth policy in the Netherlands is addressing only the 15% youth at risk.”⁴

However, despite explicit concerns of the CoE about residual paternalism and a too negative (problem-oriented) approach in government standpoints at the time, in 1998 Dutch Youth Policy at least seemed to be developing in the right direction. The CoE report suggested that the political will to change the direction of the yet too paternalistic policy appeared obvious in the declared focus on youth participation in central policy.

Now, eight years and several governments later, this progress not only stagnated, but the achievements have even partly been annihilated. Youth policy, in general, did not shift away from paternalism and the overly preventive approach. In fact, the preventive character of youth policy has in recent years been reinforced and expanded. Youth participation -especially in voluntary youth organisations- has almost fully been erased from the responsibilities officially assumed by the central administration.

Nevertheless, new optimism has been inspired by recent indications that the national government is slowly turning towards a more positive approach. There appears to be a particular interest in renewing and reinforcing the dialogue with the (young) people that are affected by policy measures. The exchange of knowledge on a European level seems to play a role in this matter: best practices in the field of youth policy from other countries are regularly referred to.⁵

Although it is too early to know where this development will lead, the DNYC is hoping that this positive trend will continue in the coming months.

Efforts to remove existing obstacles

Practical obstacles

A number of positive measures have been taken by the Dutch government in order to remove existing practical obstacles in the field of volunteering. Regulations on allowan-

⁴ C. Nissen, A. Scerri a.o., “Youth policy in the Netherlands – a report by an international expert group appointed by the Council of Europe”, 1998, p. 43.

⁵ Initiatives in the United Kingdom are for example regularly mentioned



ces for volunteers have been broadened. These revised, broader regulations enable e.g. non-governmental organisations to provide the financial compensation that is required to allow (also young) people to be active in voluntary functions that imply a large time investment. Fiscal restrictions on financial rewards for voluntary activities have been relaxed considerably. There where also helpful changes in regulations on working conditions. Government taxations on so-called “good initiatives” have furthermore been reduced. Since these initiatives are often activities of non-governmental organisations, run by volunteers, the measures have a positive impact of voluntary work.

The Dutch National Youth Council warmly welcomes these initiatives of the national government. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the common objectives on voluntary activities do not seem to have been a consideration in the development of the regulations. This is in principle again not an objection. However, in order to make such positive measures accessible and useful for active youth (especially youth-led initiatives on a local level), some extra effort is needed. Youth initiatives, particularly the ones that are organised on a small and/or local scale, are often less involved in knowledge providing government institutions. Young people often have a different understanding of the concept of voluntary work. They do not always think of their activities as being “voluntary work”, or are not organised in a common way. Besides, they often require a somewhat different type of communication, starting for example with clear language. For these and other reasons many feel less addressed by institutional support/knowledge programmes for voluntary organisations, and information on positive measures might not reach them.

The DNYC would therefore like to encourage the government to specifically consider the needs of youth and youth initiatives in future processes of removing obstacles in the voluntary activities sector. Of course the DNYC can contribute to this process, and to the promotion of relevant measures to youth and youth organisations. The DNYC invites its government to work together in a joint effort to let young volunteers enjoy the benefits of positive governmental measures better.

Visa issuing and residence permits

In its draft report the Dutch ministry states that there are no indications of problems with visa issuing and residence permits. The DNYC has been an active European Voluntary Service send-organisation in the past years. Several actors in the EVS field have indicated that visa obstacles do incidentally lead to serious problems with international youth volunteering in the Netherlands. This matter has also been mentioned at the November 2006 White Paper consultation meeting, and therefore might be included in the final government report. The DNYC encourages the ministry to map existing visa and residence permit problems for youth volunteering, and to work with other responsible departments to overcome these obstacles.

Cooperation between departments

Improving cooperation between departments active in the field of youth policy has been a general priority of the Dutch government in the past years. Operatie Jong (“Operation Young”) was launched to bring about greater cohesion in the youth policies pursued by the various ministries. Operation Young has resulted in significant improvements of preventive youth policy. The DNYC warmly welcomes the progress made for example in youth- and child care.

Unfortunately, voluntary activities and participation of youth were not included in the work of Operation Young. As mentioned before, a lack of knowledge about the common objectives (also among authorities other than the youth department) is one of the main obstacles in the way of their implementation. An integral approach, involving all relevant departments and all governmental levels in the White Paper process, would therefore be very helpful in promoting the implementation of the common objectives. Operation Young runs until the end of 2006. The DNYC sincerely hopes that future initiatives in the field of inter-departmental co-operation will include youth volunteering and other aspects of the common objectives.

The position of youth-led initiatives and organisations

As mentioned before, the great progress that has been made in involving youth in the reporting process is yet very limited in policy development. There is little room for serious and active participation of youth in the implementation process of the common objectives on voluntary activities. This unfortunately results in the development of new regulations that do not allow for young people to contribute to the realization of the common objectives.

Moreover, existing infrastructure for voluntary activities within youth NGOs was damaged severely by 2004 economy measures. A large number of youth organisations through which thousands of young volunteers were active in youth initiated projects and activities, where seriously affected. Several large youth organisations were fully denied government support from 2004 onwards. These sudden and drastic cuts in support for youth NGOs had an enormous negative impact on the functioning of youth-led organisations in the existing infrastructure for youth volunteering. This partial breakdown of the framework for youth run projects directly and enduringly affected many young volunteers.

In its White Paper report (or at least in the draft version available at the time of writing), the Dutch government mentions the full cancellation of subsidies for youth organisations in recent years. The reason behind this decision was an effort to avoid inefficient fragmentation of resources.

The report underlines that support was maintained for the National Youth Council, as well as for organisations for and by young people with disabilities. Despite serious cuts,

⁶ For 2007-2009 the &JOY programme will be continued under the new Kennisinstituut voor Maatschappelijke Inzet (“Knowledge Institute for Social Activities”). This Knowledge Institute will be the result of a clustering of several existing institutes, including Civiq and the Netherlands Institute for Care and Welfare / NIZW. The future of &JOY after 2009 is unknown.



the government at that time indeed made an exception for these organisations. Unfortunately however, youth organisations for disabled youth were recently informed that their financial support will be decreased with large percentages in the next two years, leading to a full cancellation after 2009. These (largely voluntary) youth organisations indicate that this will inevitably result in the end of most of their activities.

The DNYC finds this decision impossible to understand, and a shocking illustration of the rejection of positive youth policy in the Netherlands.

Initiatives to enhance knowledge on youth volunteering

The responsible Dutch ministry identifies the so-called “knowledge-function” as its core responsibility in the field of voluntary work, besides system-responsibility. Whereas the DNYC cannot confirm that the central authorities sufficiently assume this system-responsibility, there have been clear efforts to fulfil the knowledge-function. By supporting the enhancement of (local) competences, the government hopes to improve the quality of local infrastructures for voluntary work. In several of the initiatives taken in this light, youth is identified as a specific target group.

The national government provides the organisational budget for Civiq, the Dutch Centre for voluntary work. Providing advice and gathering knowledge on voluntary activities are among the core competences of Civiq. Within the structure of Civiq, a specific programme - &JOY - is supported. &JOY aims at helping organisations to involve young volunteers in their work. It provides knowledge on how to reach young people and how to connect to their fields of interest. It also tries to raise awareness among youth of the possibilities for voluntary activities. &JOY has furthermore worked on comparative research, e.g. on young volunteers’ motivations. The Dutch National Youth Council welcomes and endorses the &JOY programme and its aims.⁶

In 2007 the Youth Monitor, one of the twelve themes of Operation Young, will be available. The Youth Monitor will bring together various kinds of information on youth. This initiative aims at informing policy developers on all governmental levels on the situation of youth and the effects of pursued policy. The question to what extent young people are active in voluntary work, will be included in the national Youth Monitor. Unfortunately however, not all local and regional youth monitors include youth volunteering in their working field. In the light of the decentralisation process, it is of course specifically important that youth volunteering is included in those local and regional monitoring processes.

General initiatives to promote voluntary activities

The DNYC sincerely supports the government decision to prolong the “Stimuleringsregeling vrijwilligerswerk voor en door jeugd” for the period 2007 - 2009.

This subsidy programme for the promotion of voluntary activities by and for youth was initiated by Parliament for the period 2004 -2006 and made a range of projects possible. The DNYC carries out one of the projects that are financed.

The subsidy programme has had a very positive effect on youth volunteering. The DNYC therefore regrets the announcement that the budget of this important national initiative will be decentralized under the new WMO-law after 2009.

Another positive impuls for voluntary work was the “Tijdelijke Stimuleringsregeling Vrijwilligerswerk” (TSV), available for municipalities and provinces in 2001-2005. This “temporary programme for promotion of voluntary activities” was not specifically focused on youth, but a significant part of the projects had some relation to youth policy. In the same period a special commission was installed to encourage local authorities to invest in voluntary activities. Youth was a specific target group in the work of the commission. Both initiatives were temporary, and unfortunately ended well before local authorities have to assume much more responsibility in the field of volunteering (under the WMO-law). Both initiatives however had a very positive effect, and resulted in the development of policy on voluntary activities in a large percentage of municipalities.

The social internships

The introduction of so-called “Maatschappelijke Stages” (social internships) as part of the high school curricula has been a much discussed issue in recent years. The idea of voluntary social internships was launched by participants of the annual National Youth Debate⁷. The DNYC of course welcomed the implementation of the idea. Through the social internships, if implemented in the way the young debaters suggested at the time, students are given the opportunity to experience the benefits of voluntary activities within their school programme.

The social internships offer great opportunities to overcome initial hesitation of young people who are not yet involved in the voluntary field. The internships have of course also been a great step in the acknowledgement of non formal learning and the value of voluntary work.

The DNYC is however concerned that current developments in the implementation of the social internships are undermining their value for the promotion of voluntary activities of youth.

The ministry of Education finances the internships for the greater part, and implementation is mainly a matter of the educational system. A large majority of the schools has now made the internships a compulsory element of the curriculum, and a number of politicians are pushing to make the internships mandatory on a national base. This of course seriously undermines the concept of “voluntary” work.

What is perhaps worse is the fact that the rapid implementation of compulsory internships has in some cases significantly compromised the quality of the experience. The

⁷ The National Youth Debate is an annual project, organized by the DNYC. During the debate over a hundred well-prepared young people (12-18) discuss their proposals with ministers and other decision-makers in the Parliament building.

⁸ “BOS” stands for Buurt (Neighborhood), Onderwijs (Education) and Sport.

⁹ Since this issue was raised at the White Paper consultation meeting on November 16th 2006, the BOS impulse might well be mentioned in the final report on voluntary activities.



institutions and organisations where the students are doing their internships, are still encountering various organizational problems. On the other side, arranging the internships is becoming a matter of mass production for many schools; there is a need for the responsible counselors to place as many students as possible, and to ensure that they fulfill well-defined educational goals.

Allowing for the internships to offer the broad learning opportunities under these circumstances requires a very open-minded mentality of the schools. Although there are ample examples of where this works well, the DNYC and other actors in the youth field are observing that there are schools where too narrowly defined educational goals are becoming an unnecessary obstacle in the way of real promotion of voluntary work.

The DNYC calls upon the government to guard the broad opportunities that the social internships are supposed to offer to youth, and to ensure a proper balance between the educational approach and the values of volunteering.

Besides, the DNYC urges the responsible departments to have eye for the opportunities of youth organisations as hosts of the student trainees. The internships are largely organized in cooperation with the traditional institutions for voluntary work. As mentioned before though, youth organisations are less involved in these traditional networks.

BOS - impuls

Several indirectly relevant subsidy programmes have been developed or revised. An important example is the “BOS impuls” programme. The central government has invested 80 million euros in this decentralised regulation, which focuses on local authorities, sport organisations and educational institutes. In line with the far-reaching decentralisation of Dutch youth policy, the BOS regulation provides the means for shaping important aspects of youth policy on a local level. Since sport organisations traditionally play a crucial role in the infrastructure for volunteering (especially for youth), the BOS is of great importance for the promotion of voluntary activities and the creation of opportunities for volunteering of (young) people. Unfortunately however, the common objectives are not in any way referred to in the BOS arrangement; neither implicitly nor explicitly. The Dutch government not even seems to consider the BOS programme as an opportunity or even as relevant: it was not mentioned in its EU White Paper draft report on voluntary activities.

An essential shortcoming of the BOS is furthermore, that the regulation offers practically no opportunities for youth organisations to benefit from the available budgets or contribute to the programmes' goals. The bureaucracy surrounding the BOS is an obstacle that is almost impossible to overcome for youth run organisations. This observation is of course not surprising, when the fact is taken into account that the regulation was developed on the basis of the preventive and problem-oriented perspective on youth policy as chosen by the Dutch government.

The Dutch Youth Council is well aware of the goals of the BOS impulse, and the fact that it has a much broader focus than youth alone. Nevertheless, the DNYC regrets the fact that an integral approach to the implementation of the White Paper objectives is lacking, and opportunities to foster their implementation through broader initiatives (like the BOS) are often foregone.

Training opportunities

Another existing national regulation that was of great significance for the infrastructure of youth volunteering through youth-run activities, the VTA, has been abolished recently. Under the VTA, a number of renowned training institutes received government subsidies to train volunteers at very low cost. The VTA-institutes supported training facilities for tens of thousands of volunteers, in order to improve the quality of their activities and enhance their personal skills.

Youth participation constituted one of the thematic pillars of the VTA, allowing for the training of young volunteers in multiplier positions within youth organisations.

The facilitation of training for volunteers, including young volunteers, has now become a competence within the responsibility of local authorities. Framework policy on a national level is practically absent. As a result of this shift of competences, the DNYC foresees an extensive overall impairment of the quality of training possibilities for young volunteers. The general preventive foundation of Dutch youth policy (including youth participation policy) suggests that enhancement of youth volunteering through personal development training will focus on prevention of nuisances caused by youngsters. There is a real risk of deployment of training possibilities as another curative method in the strive to put problem-youth on the right social path again.

That is, if local authorities choose to include youth as a target group in competence enlarging programmes in the first place. The lack of central guidelines implies that government funding for local programmes is not labelled, and inclusion of youth is not guaranteed.

The absence of central quality standards or benchmarks for youth policy will inevitably result in an increasing divergence between policies in different regions and municipalities. The opportunities for voluntary activities and training possibilities, as all other youth policy related facilities, will ever more depend on where a specific young person lives. The differences are substantial. In large cities resources are more extensive and a specific youth department or officer is often in place. A young person born in a less developed region or in a region with a relative large amount of so-called “problem-youth” are likely to be confronted with a situation in which youth policy is not a major priority, and/or in which all recourses are used in preventive and curative projects and policy. A young person with the fortune to be born a wealthier region where the percentage of “problem-youth” and the financial and personal means needed to address them, is smaller, is likely to find a more positive approach to youth and more facilities.

¹⁰ “VTA” stand for Vorming (Education, in a broad sense), Training, and Advies (Advise)

¹¹ The regional Scouts group in the province of Gelderland has been particularly active on this issue



Acknowledgement of voluntary activities and acquired competences

Not much attention has been given so far to the acknowledgement of skills, knowledge and competences acquired through voluntary activities of youth. Some (youth) organisations have been working on this issue in the past years, but governmental efforts to promote or support recognition of voluntary activities have been very limited. Existing procedures for certification of skills and competences are rarely used in the field of volunteering, due to high costs and simply a lack of information on the possibilities.

The DNYC highly values the acknowledgement of competences acquired through volunteering. The DNYC therefore invites the responsible ministry to start working on this issue with the DNYC and youth organisations active in this field.

The influence of the common objectives

The common objectives seem to have been of marginal consequence on Dutch youth policy in recent years, specifically in the field of youth volunteering. A large number of changes in relevant government policy have been implemented and new tools have been developed in recent years, but in practically none the common objectives are mentioned. An exception is the new “Temporary regulation for voluntary activities for and by youth 2007-2009”. In this regulation, which was published only in November 2006, the European dimension of youth policy is referred to. It is probable that this exceptional attention was inspired by the current consultation process. This indicates that the consultation rounds and the general Open Method of Coordination, despite its problems and flaws, can provide a helpful tool in the promotion of the common objectives.

Again, it must be stressed that the almost total lack of information on the common objectives on the local level as well as among most governmental departments is one of the main problems.

In many cases the spirit of new policies has brought youth in the Netherlands further away from the common objectives as interpreted by the DNYC. Only recently a new impulse for positive youth policy seems to be developing. It appears that this new, more positive approach is inspired by the initiatives in other European states, particularly the United Kingdom. The exchange of best practices and the development of common objectives on youth policy on a European level therefore obviously have a positive effect on youth policy in the Netherlands.

Portugal / CNJ

Contact with governments

CNJ regrets that government failed to engage young people and youth organisations in the consultation process of the implementation of the third set of common objectives - voluntary activities. The consultation has not been made within the existing nor new consultative structures. Despite our contact with the Portuguese government proposing cooperation in the preparation of the National Report, till now the NYC has not been invited to participate.

The contacts with government were slightly enhanced by the recall in 2005 of the Youth Consultative Council, a governmental structure composed by representatives of youth organisations, including the NYC, which is responsible for the analysis of global youth policy, young people's civic participation and social integration and for the evaluation of youth-related legislative proposals.

Understanding of the process

From the CNJ perspective participation in youth organisations is the most relevant scope of voluntary activities among young people, taking into consideration the important role they play in promoting young people participation and active citizenship.

We recognize the efforts done by the government to promote voluntary activities. We note that a larger number of volunteering projects were developed in the last two years and volunteering is now more visible. However, government initiatives, mainly addressing problems of health care, environment and sports events, despite of its value, bring limited benefits to the reinforcement of youth associativism.

CNJ is not informed about the development of a strategy or policy on voluntary activities among young people. Nevertheless, promoting voluntary activities is a government objective regarding youth policy. To this end the government has implemented two instruments: the Youth Volunteering Information System and the European Voluntary Service. The Information System provides an online database for volunteers, promoters and sponsors and gathers information on the available projects and on the rights and responsibilities of volunteers, including their legal status.

Measuring implementation

Promoting voluntary activities among young people is now a major objective of government youth policy but we have no information that new tools have been developed.

The number of projects run and supported by the government increased 200% in the last



two years (estimated data from the Portuguese Youth Institute - governmental body)). Nevertheless, there is no evidence that there is a widespread interest in volunteering among young people nor that the rates of volunteering and membership in voluntary organisations are increasing, since such data is not available.

Moreover, the scope of voluntary activities of young people is still limited as well as the recognition of participation in youth organisations on a voluntary basis as a significant contribution to society.

The development of an enhanced information service for young people by the Portuguese government increased the awareness of the existing possibilities of volunteering but much work remains to be done. Although information exists, access to information by young people is still inconsistent, mainly at local level.

Our work on the OMC shows that young people understanding on the process and awareness of the available opportunities is low. To fill this gap and to get feedback on the implementation process, CNJ distributed among its member organisations information on the OMC in the youth field.

Results

As mentioned above, a few things improved in the last two years. However, since no reference is made to the OMC common objectives on the government youth policy documents, we find difficult to attribute this improvement to the process.

- The most important obstacles to the implementation of the third set of common objectives are related to the lack of:
- information on the OMC process among young people and youth organisations;
- a formal structure where youth organisations can be consulted and stakeholders can work in partnership;
- recognition, namely at professional and school level, of the value and significance of the young people engagement in voluntary activities, including their participation in youth organisations;
- support to youth organisations and youth-led projects;
- studies to provide a much more clear information on voluntary activities among young people and a better understanding of its value and impact.

Another problem arises from mobility obstacles that prevent young people from volunteering. These can be overcome with the removal of visa requirements for young volunteers.

Therefore CNJ supports the development of a coherent and inclusive national policy on voluntary activities for young people, with all stakeholders working together on a coordinated strategy. Thus we propose the creation of a formal structure of evaluation of

the OMC implementation process that fully engages young people and youth organisations, ensuring a sense of ownership.

This policy must result in the recognition of voluntary activities and of the value of volunteering in youth organisations at all levels - European, national, regional and local, by different stakeholders - decision-makers, employers, social partners and young people.

It is also expected to ensure an adequate financial and political support to youth organisations and youth-led projects, in order to enable their meaningful participation in the OMC implementation process.

As noted above the implementation of the third set of common objectives can only be effective if information is efficiently disseminated at all levels - European, national, regional and local. To this end, government must improve its information strategy in coordination with youth organisations and local authorities. A public awareness campaign is also seen to be important, targeting students, education institutions and employers.

Furthermore, we emphasise the need to facilitate the exchange of good practices on volunteering in order to enhance their quality, to support the research and to promote an open debate on the voluntary activities issue.



United Kingdom / BYC

About the British Youth Council

The British Youth Council (BYC) is the national youth council for young people under the age of 26 in the UK. BYC brings young people together to agree on issues of common concern and encourage them to bring about change through taking collective action.

BYC's vision is that every young person in the UK is able to have a voice in public decision-making. Our aims are to:

- Provide a voice for young people;
- Promote equality for young people;
- Help young people be more involved in decisions that affect their lives;
- Advance young people's participation in society and civic life.

BYC is run by young people for young people. Young people shape BYC's work at all levels within the organisation through participation in projects and consultations; they can also become involved as a member of BYC's board of 13 annually elected trustees or through its committees.

Overview

During the last two years (2004-2006) the UK Government has implemented and overseen a comprehensive review of youth voluntary action across the UK. The government's activity in this area has brought together different sections of society. Along with young people engaging more with the youth sector, volunteering is being employed to enhance communities and support them in working together to build a better more cohesive society.

Volunteering has been high on the political agenda, with champions in local and central government from policy officials and advisers to senior cabinet members, most notably the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown. This has caused a shift in focus amongst all major political parties in the UK and how they address the issue of youth participation in voluntary action.

As the UK's national youth council, BYC is pleased to see this step change in attitude and recognition by the government and society that young people have a valuable contribution to make in society and, more importantly, that young people should be supported and encouraged to develop personally in a constructive and safe manner on their terms.

The prominent and most intensive piece of work undertaken during this period was the Russell Commission's consultation on Youth Action and Engagement. The Commission,

chaired by Ian Russell, then Chief Executive of Scottish Power, established by the then Home Secretary, David Blunkett MP, and Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown MP in May 2004, was charged with developing a national framework for youth action and engagement. The creation of the Commission highlighted the UK Government's commitment to youth volunteering.

Other highlights included a national campaign during 2005 to promote volunteering, raise awareness and encourage employee volunteering - Year of the Volunteer 2005 (YV05). This was funded by central government; the Home Office was the lead department and it was run in partnership with a number of key voluntary sector organisations. The year long campaign was launched by the then Home Secretary, Charles Clarke MP, and Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown MP.

The year consisted of twelve major themes, one per month, to highlight different areas of volunteering with major activities organised and co-ordinated by a lead partner that worked alongside the staff from campaigns steering group of organisations. February was Youth and Children month; BYC was the lead partner, organising the delivery of four high profile, highly attended activities that included the production of a DVD showcasing young people's volunteering and bringing young volunteers aged 12-24 together with politicians and representatives from industry and the media to discuss how volunteering has impacted on their community, employability and personal development.

It has not all been good news, however, changes made to the Millennium Volunteers scheme, an initiative launched at the start of the decade to encourage young people aged 16-18 to volunteer for up to 200 hours, have negatively impacted on its effectiveness. Central government has regularly changed the goal posts as to which agency is responsible for its management and delivery at all levels (local, regional and national). This has devalued the scheme in the eyes of the public and practitioners and left many sceptical of the government's true commitment to youth volunteering.

Towards the end of the two year period covered in this report, the government internally restructured, changing the department responsible for volunteering - including youth volunteering. The government has created a new office - the Office of the Third Sector, housed in the Cabinet Office. It is responsible for driving and championing the UK Government's role in supporting the sector and brings together two units/directorates that were previously located in other government departments; Active Communities Directorate (formerly in the Home Office) and the Social Enterprise Unit (formerly in the Department for Trade and Industry). In advance of these changes, the Active Communities Directorate reviewed the process of developing strategic partnerships with voluntary organisations, this resulted in BYC being appointed the status of youth volunteering strategic partner along with three other organisations. In total there are over 40 strategic partners covering a range of interests and expertise in the world of volunteering and charitable giving.



Consultation for the implementation

As mentioned in the overview, May 2004 saw the launch of the Russell Commission charged with developing a new framework for youth action and engagement. The Commission conducted research into the current state of volunteering both nationally and internationally; this served as the basis for the focus of a nation wider consultation that was launched in October 2004. The consultation's main areas of focus was,

- 1 Engaging interest
- 2 Access to information
- 3 Barriers to participation
- 4 The range of volunteering opportunities
- 5 The quality of volunteering opportunities
- 6 Building capacity
- 7 Accreditation and employability
- 8 Incentives, recognition and reward
- 9 Measuring outcomes

The Russell Commission created two advisory groups to assist them in its work, one of young people and non-volunteers - its Youth Advisory Board, and an Independent Advisory Group that included representatives from the voluntary sector, business and the media.

In addition to the full consultation document, alternative forms, including the use of postcards, were issued to obtain responses from young people - based on designed from the Youth Advisory Board; twelve regional events were also held to obtain views and responses.

At the time of the consultations' launch, BYC welcomed the Russell Commissions' consultation on youth volunteering and the opportunity to respond. BYC fundamentally believes that young people, as empowered citizens, can make an enormous contribution to our society. We expressed the need to help engage young people so that they can stand up and be counted as well as show the real difference they can make. Only by engaging and actively involving young people in society can we start to build safer, more cohesive communities.

In response to this consultation, BYC issued what we believed to be a key challenge not only for government but all sections of society to ensure an effective, youth-focused and influence framework of volunteering: that ...'all young people are able to volunteer by giving them the confidence, the opportunities, the information and where necessary the resources they need to enable their participation.'

This challenge was supported by our vision of youth volunteering: 'youth-led volunteering will help create wider opportunities, which are more desirable for young people

and meet their needs.' This vision was based on the belief that volunteering will be strengthened if young people themselves are able to develop and initiate volunteering opportunities. This was supported by our call to enable and encourage young people to get involved in local decision-making and recognise this as a vital and worthwhile volunteering mechanism.

BYC's involvement with the consultation took many forms including,

- Promotion of the Youth Advisory Board opportunity
- Development of an independent consultation with young people
- Submission to the Commission's consultation document based on responses to our independent consultation
- Dialogue via meetings, correspondence etc with Russell Commission staff

Over 6,000 responses were received from young people in addition to over 700 responses from organisations within the voluntary and community sector.



Results of the implementation

Following the extensive consultation, the Russell Commission released the key findings at the end of January 2005; see the table below.

Engaging young people

- Address the “image factor” by re-branding volunteering as fun, interesting and normal in order to encourage a wider range of young people to participate;
- Focus marketing on the benefits of volunteering to personal development, personal interest and relevance to the lives of young people rather than attracting interest through tangible (and potentially shorter-term) incentives;
- Improve access to information about volunteering opportunities by creating a National Hub;
- Ensure the Hub is properly managed and well maintained so that it is up-to date and easy to navigate;
- Establish dedicated volunteering advisors, available to give advice and support to young people locally, perhaps at youth-friendly drop-in centres;
- Establish volunteer development officers in schools, universities, clubs etc - particularly accessible for hard to reach groups;
- Raise the profile of youth volunteering by encouraging the media and celebrities to focus on the work of local charities and young volunteers in local communities;

- Raise the profile of volunteering among teachers, parents, and public sector employers;
- Target advertising very specifically at the different groups of young people in appropriate places, e.g. clubs or schools for disabled young people;
- Target current non-volunteers.

Volunteering activity

- Change the climate of the public sector to promote volunteering within organisations;
- Better promote UK-based volunteer placements;
- Build on existing best practice within the statutory, public and volunteering sectors across the nation and the wealth of expertise and experience that already exists;
- Create a neutral body that operates outside the government, to provide infrastructure at a national, regional and sub-regional level to build capacity;
- Ensure that voluntary organisations have secure funding to put in place youth centred proposals, as well as ongoing training to meet the needs of voluntary organisations to accommodate the needs of young volunteers;

- Give young people more autonomy in their volunteering experiences and the opportunity to decide their own volunteering priorities;
- Put in place procedures to make young volunteers feel more valued and the voluntary organisations more aware of the quality of the opportunity they are offering;
- Provide opportunities for young people to be involved at every stage of developing volunteering placements so they become more youth-led;
- Identify and enable peer champions and ambassadors to spread the word and provide advice and mentoring.

Maximising results

- Provide optional accreditation for all volunteers;
- Ensure that voluntary organisations are not hijacked as a means of training young people;
- Maximise opportunities and information for young people with disabilities and young people from diverse backgrounds;
- Consult hard to reach groups on how they can be actively engaged;
- Provide a more varied and flexible range of volunteering opportunities;

- Reimburse all expenses at the earliest opportunity so that there are no financial disincentives to young people (although this is not the same as financial rewards);

- Encourage voluntary organisations to offer flexible working hours to young people in education, with young families or other commitments;

- Create more volunteering opportunities for people out of work or on incapacity benefit to address current under-representation of young people from these groups;

- Ensure that Job Centre staff are properly informed about how volunteering impacts on benefit allowance.



The Russell Commission's final report was released in March 2005; it contained 16 recommendations on the actions and steps needed to create a national framework for youth action and engagement.

A separate body as created to oversee the Russell Commission's recommendations implementation, v an independent charity was established to oversee the recruitment of 1 million young people, aged 16-25, as volunteers in England.

v was launched on 8 May 2006; it is an independent charity to champion youth volunteering in England. Its main tasks are,

- To fund organisations to create new opportunities for young people
- To develop tools and infrastructure improvements, working with the voluntary sector
- To promote greater awareness and understanding of volunteering amongst young people

One of the ways it achieves this is through a grants programme. They also have a number of partners from business and the media as well as a group of young advocates/champions - v20. More information is available on their website at www.wea-rev.com.

In addition to the v's creation, a number of government officials (now housed in the Office of the Third Sector) were brought together to form the Russell Implementation Team. The team is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the following Russell Commission recommendations (see annex),

Recommendation 4: Volunteering in schools, colleges and universities

Recommendation 9: Opportunities for public sector volunteering

Recommendation 12: Removing financial barriers to volunteering

Recommendation 13: Increasing access to volunteering for disabled people

A number of the key findings presented in January 2005 informed the ongoing developments and activities during the Year of the Volunteer 2005 campaign. As stated in the overview, the campaign covered twelve different themed and aimed to encourage more employee and youth volunteering as well as raise awareness and the profile of volunteering and improve its image.

The twelve themes were,

1. Health (January)
2. Youth and Children (February)
3. Older People (March)
4. Justice (April)
5. Environment (May)
6. Local Heroes (June)
7. Veterans (July)

8. Sport (August)
9. Disability (September)
10. Citizenship (October)
11. Europe (November)
12. Animals (December)

Obstacles met during the implementation phase

v has been operative for just a few months, therefore, we can draw few conclusions about the implementation of the Russell Commissions' recommendations. The same applies with the work of the Russell Implementation Team.

BYC were initially unaware of the Russell Implementation Team's existence, it was only brought to our attention following a meeting with government officials as part of our regular course of business as a youth volunteering strategic partner.

Early notification of the Russell Implementation Team's existence to BYC would have ensured that our initial engagement with them was more structured. BYC is doing work on two of the recommendations (12 and 13) that they are looking at, therefore, it would have been beneficial to have discussions with them at the planning stage of BYC's work in the area rather than after it had been initiated.

During the Year of Volunteer the timescales for planning were very short. For example, final agreements on the level of campaign funding, logos etc were not agreed until December. Equally some themed groups such as Youth and Children were only brought together towards the later end of 2004.

Evaluation of the Year of the Volunteer 2005 campaign highlighted a concern on wider awareness of the campaign outside of the voluntary sector and those involved or with an interest in volunteering. One possible reason for this was the finding that whilst many events took place during the year, not every event contained generic YV05 branding.

Best and worse practices

BYC believe that the political impetus, drive and passion displayed by senior cabinet members of the UK Government, serve as an excellent example on how governments can be an effective agent of change to influence public perception of young people and the merits of ensuring a framework for volunteering.

YV05 brought numerous organisations, and more importantly their volunteers, together in recognition of the contribution to civic society and the strengthening of local communities. As part of the year-long campaign, organisations were encouraged to nominate volunteers as part of the YV05 awards. A number of young people, including the then BYC Vice-Chair (Participation & Development) was a recipient of a regional award.



The state of affairs concerning the Common Objectives voluntary activities

With respect to the Council resolution adopted on 16 November 2004, the UK Government can be seen to have actioned all four headline areas. Earlier sections of our report indicate the work to date in each of these; the key area of activity conducted since 2004 was the establishment and work of the Russell Commission.

The Russell Commission's Recommendations, coupled with other developments initiated by central government and the way in which other major UK political parties have reviewed and reissued their positions on youth volunteering, lead BYC to believe that the next few years could bring about increased recognition and acceptance of the merits of voluntary activities and give many more young people the opportunity to participate.

The Russell Commission Recommendation's will take time to embed across society; as stated earlier it was only launched in May of this year. Since its launch it has announced the award of over £10 million in grants to 63 organisations to support over 300 young people to volunteer.

BYC is pleased to see that young people have been placed at the centre, through their involvement in all levels of it, including through being given support in shaping their own activities rather than being presented with a set menu of possible activities.

Concern must also be given that both this and future UK Governments do not see voluntary activities as a way to ensure that young people conform to their prescribed views of citizenship and identity. The reverse must be the case, with voluntary activities being portrayed as a way for young people to become active citizens on their own terms.

Annex: Russell Commission Recommendations overseen by the Russell Implementation Team

RECOMMENDATION 4

It should be commonplace for young people to volunteer whilst they are at school, college or in higher education. All education institutions should have a volunteering ethos. This will require:

- Better information on volunteering opportunities through access to the "portal" and targeted awareness campaigns;
- a stronger emphasis on volunteering within the citizenship curriculum and Training for citizenship teachers;
- Making the most of the opportunities for volunteers within extended schools, community schools, and their equivalents, providing leadership on new volunteering roles for the schools sector as a whole;
- A new role for young volunteers working with local advisors to link schools, sixth-forms, further education colleges and higher education institutions with volunteer centres and local opportunity providers.

RECOMMENDATION 9

There is untapped potential for young volunteers to give additional help within the public sector, for example in hospitals, schools, parks and sports, leisure and arts centres, to gain valuable experience and deliver tangible community benefit. There are particular opportunities to involve young people in shaping local services and as active citizens in local democracy.

- Government should develop and implement strategies to encourage greater levels of volunteering within public services taking account of the need for additionality and quality opportunities that are attractive to young people;
- Government should involve young people at the highest level to help establish the types of roles that would appeal to them;
- Government should consider the possibility of establishing a series of pilot projects in 2006-07 to examine the most appropriate ways to involve young volunteers, and set targets for their involvement.

RECOMMENDATION 12

Young people on benefits, and their families, should not suffer a financial barrier when they volunteer. To make it easier for young people on benefits to volunteer:

- A rulebook should be published by the Department of Work and Pensions to communicate existing rules more effectively to staff in Jobcentre Plus, and for interested parties such as volunteer involving organisations and local authorities, with a short summary guide to be widely distributed for volunteer involving organisations and young volunteers;
- The implementation body should make available a discretionary fund that providers of full-time opportunities in the framework could access for individual cases of hardship due to housing costs, loss of family benefits or childcare costs;
- Government should consider looking at the general Housing Benefit inter actions for volunteers within its current review of Housing Benefit as a whole;
- Within its wider Review of Financial Support for 16-19 year olds, government should extend the same entitlements received by those in education or training to those who engage in full-time volunteering opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION 13

In order to build the capacity of organisations to engage groups which historically have found it difficult to access volunteering, specifically disabled volunteers, the Commission recommends that government explore the case for the establishment of a cross-departmental initiative to facilitate:

- Disability audits, to identify barriers to volunteering and enable organisations to develop appropriate action plans;
- Disability awareness and equality training for staff and volunteers; and
- Structural renovations to make buildings more accessible.

Source: Russell, I, A National Framework for Youth Action and Engagement: Report of the Russell Commission, March 2005.



Romania / CTR

Introduction

First of all we must underline that the OMC coming from the White Paper has never been presented by the National Authority for Youth.

There has never been a consultation process regarding the implementation of the White Paper.

The Youth National Action Plan, adopted by the Romanian Government in June 2001 is not implemented anymore since 2003.

Generally speaking, the consultation process regarding youth legislation and youth related issues between the National Authority for Youth and CTR/other NGYO does not exist on a permanent basis.

Contacts with the government

There has been some consultation process between the Government and the volunteering specialized NGOs during the process of elaboration and adoption of the Law regarding volunteering (in 2004-2005)

The contacts with the Government didn't evolve since 2005.

Understanding of the process

There is a difference between the Romanian Government and the NGOs dealing with voluntary service, especially regarding the facilities given to the volunteers from the fiscal point of view (deductibility).

We have no document regarding the development of a national strategy or policy regarding voluntary activities of young people.

Measuring the implementation

As we presented above, we have nothing to compare according to the fact that the Common Objectives are not implemented in Romania and the worst thing that not even a preparation process has not been done.

Results

Things have not changed radically in the past 2 years. We can still say that there is an improvement regarding the perception of the public authorities and of people generally

regarding voluntary activities. (In Romania, after the Revolution, there has been a kind of phobia regarding voluntary activities, because during the communist regime all the young people were forced to do all kind of voluntary activities, not all of them too convenient for a person).

The main obstacles are the lack of understanding and interest coming from the national public authorities dealing with youth issues for the process and the lack of enough financing for the implementation of a well founded youth policy.

These obstacles can be overcome by a more aggressive approach coming from the civil society in order to put pressure on the public authorities for a real open and positive approach on youth issues.



Slovakia / RMS

The National Youth Council of Slovakia has issued the Shadow Report on implementation of common objectives on voluntary activities. The main impetus was guidelines from the European Youth Forum (YFJ) as recommendation to National Youth Councils to develop their shadow reports independent from official national reports on voluntary activities. The Shadow Report is structured to thematic circles:

- Contact with government
- Understanding of the process
- The best and worse practices
- The Conclusion - State of affairs

Contact with Government

The Youth Council of Slovakia (RMS) is an umbrella organization associating children and youth organizations. The state competence for „Youth“ field is mainly in the hands of the ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. In 2001 the ministry of Education has recognized RMS as its official partner for area of youth policy. In that way RMS has become a partner which should be counted at making, realizing and implementing decisions from public sector.

The year of 2001 also means a big change for youth policy in Slovakia. The Concept of State Policy related to children and youth expresses that change exactly. The Concept has been based on principles of White Paper of European Commission - New Impetus for European Youth. RMS has fundamentally participated on making and commenting of the document and many of our comments and views were accepted and adopted.

Ministry of Education is responsible for doing youth policy in Slovakia and therefore it has been authorized to develop National report on volunteering. For this purpose, Iuventa, organisation founded and funded by the ministry of Education¹², has worked on the concrete tasks of collecting data and preparing the text of the national report. Developing of National report was based on interviews with experts on volunteering, questionnaire surveying. Then the text of the national report was made accessible and presented to the public for consultations and comments.

RMS perceives the consultation process especially with young people as a way of involvement of youth in public life and decision-making. Therefore, RMS watches whether government (ministry of Education) only talks on youth or directly deal with young people. Not only as an object of interest but also as an active subject in discussion.

On a long-term view, we can note that things become better and Slovakia is on a good

path. Various experts in voluntary institutions and organizations, young voluntary workers and youth organizations were included in the process of national report preparation. According to national report data, 23 interviews with experts were done. The interviews were based on 30 questions on voluntary activities of young people and their legal and social background.

Young people have participated in the process through questionnaire survey. About 220 youngsters responded, almost all of them are involved in voluntary work.

From this point we can evaluate the process of the development of the national report and in which extent youth involvement improved. Our experience is that there is no other similar document with so great participation of young volunteers. We can make also some comments. More young people could have been involved in questionnaire survey, especially young people who are not volunteers but who are in contact with voluntary activities or clients of such activities. A space for other ways of communication with young people to get their opinions should be also created. For example, school discussions, Internet forum, fieldwork. Unfortunately, knowing the work of government offices and institutions, there are not still human resources capacities for this kind of communication with young people.

RMS as a national youth council was also involved in the preparation process of national report; especially in the stage of interviews and of final discussions and comments. We have also to be self-critical. We didn't always manage to communicate to our members and to youth an importance of involvement in the preparation processes of the national report.

Understanding of the process

If we consider volunteering, it is important to know the context of its understanding by the whole society. In Slovak society, voluntary activities are dealt with if they are linked to activities with great campaign in media. We just have some examples: activities related to eliminations of damages after calamity in High Tatras Mountains, eliminations of floods and so on. In these cases volunteering is considered as a valuable contribution to the activity. It is going on with volunteers of all ages. Volunteering of young people is less talked about. Young people are visible if their volunteering actions are linked to well-known organized activities.

Therefore, for the society, volunteering is significantly mirrored regarding its “mediatisation” and visibility. Recent research (see Annex for details) has showed that employers are not recognizing volunteering as obvious issue and in many cases they have no clear idea what volunteering is. This clearly also highlights the place of volunteering within the society.

As correctly asserted in the proposal of the national report, Slovak republic has not developed any official document devoted to planning and achievement of common

¹² The purpose of Iuventa is to provide various services to youth organisations, leisure time centres and the public. The organisation is often managing discussions and preparing report, such as the national report on the implementation of the common objectives on voluntary activities



objectives of volunteering activities regarding the realities of the country. On the other hand the report states that particular activities and formal steps for bettering of the condition of the volunteering from governmental as from non-governmental bodies has been realized. As example it present grant programs, education, new financial resources, new forms of volunteering. However in reality we have to distinguish, and that is missing in the proposal of the national report, on which part of improvement and development of youth volunteering is the State taking part and where is third sector active.

The State has not, in the last two years, developed any relevant document, that would consistently fulfil the common objectives. In the year 2004 the government worked on legislation, embracing as well legal amendment on volunteering. A year after the work has been stopped. The concept of volunteering has not currently a clear form, and so the responsibility and coordination from the side of the respective ministries is missing. It is not clear now, which ministry or other State body is in charge of the concept of volunteering. This could be considered as cause that there is no a clear and visible picture of voluntary activities especially available for young people from the governmental side.

On the other hand it needs to be acknowledged, that governmental tools exist as well as mechanisms through which volunteering gets support in many ways. The national report proposal introduces (however doesn't specify) grant mechanisms and diverse programs of financial support. It is necessary to mention the fact, receiver of these are in most cases legal entity - non-governmental organization (associations, foundations). In this regard the most important supporter of youth volunteering is the ministry of Education (annually set aside approx. 1,5 million EUR), then ministry of labour, social affairs and family (annually approx. 0,8 million EUR). Ministry of Culture and ministry of finance provide also programs supporting volunteering (grants are nevertheless smaller).

The system of 2% assignation of income tax is without any doubt the most important resource for supporting volunteering. Similar systems are also known in Hungary and Lithuania. Slovakia is specific in the sense that besides individuals, this opportunity is also open to legal entities (companies). The total amount of money from assignation is 25 millions EUR and is divided among around 6500 non-governmental organizations. The assignation mechanism has undergone serious discussions about its continuation or its possible change. In these days the discussion about its future continuity is going on.

High number of children and youth organizations active at national, regional and local level is gaining their financial resources from these support programs. As well, diverse service providing organisations and umbrella organizations are getting the support, in order to raise awareness and knowledge about volunteering.

The YOUTH programme is also a significant resource of volunteering. Financial support mechanisms for local youth and children work and local forms of volunteering are finding their receivers in some villages, cities and regional govern-

ments.

In order to secure sustainability of voluntary activities development in Slovakia, ministry of Education (through Juventa and Institute of lifelong learning) has tried to organize educational activities for youth workers active on voluntary basis. Its impact is however currently not clear.

Besides grant and financial support mechanisms, diverse activities aiming at improvement of voluntary activities exist as for example different educational programs for volunteers. Currently, trainings for youth volunteers in the framework of youth organizations are developed. Findings from national report are proving that in Slovakia the community type of volunteering prevails. Second, managerial type occurs until now less. There is a tendency of volunteering based organizations in some community to start to use the managerial type. Open trainings for volunteers, not bounded to some organization, exist in a small extent. Lately educational activities leading to successfully handling of supervision and management of volunteers emerged.

It needs to be said, that many of these activities are financially supported not only from governmental resources (subsidy and assignation), but also from the resources of various foundations, sponsors and support products of philanthropy.

Research is an important part in the field of volunteering. Several surveys on this topic, which were realized by non-governmental organizations and agencies, exist. Some of these have been used as basis for national report. Deficiency is that among the surveys none of them specifically targets young volunteers. In this regard none of the surveys was realized and there are no national statistics on it.

Best and worse practices

Many of good examples are stated as well in the national report proposal. There is a broad range of activities, such as activities of children and youth organizations and initiatives, but as well activities in non-governmental organizations that are not dealing directly with children and youth.

Volunteering of young people is spread almost in all spheres of non-governmental non profit sector. But there is a difference how volunteering is perceived within the non profit sector. Various organizations have diverse idea on what a volunteer is. It is a consequence of not having any clear definition of, which offers the space for different interpretations.

We are concerned by the current situation of legislation on the volunteering. Besides the missing definition of a volunteer, there is not definition of the volunteer legal position and her social and legal protection. Efforts to create such a legislative framework were stopped and until now no initiative was set up for its renewal or replacement. The adoption of a law on illegal work, which is making more difficult for a foreigner to come



as a volunteer in a Slovak organisation is also of great concern.

On the other hand, adoption of relevant legislative arise concerns of non-governmental organizations regarding the formalization of relations between organization and volunteers in activities.

The second biggest challenge for volunteering is its low social or public recognition. The value of volunteering is not fully appreciated. In the case of young volunteers, society has to cope with prejudice that young people are not experienced. This situation follows from the non-awareness and lack of information about volunteering and missing national campaign on volunteering as itself, and not only on the voluntary activity.

The Conclusion - State of affairs

The voluntary activities of young people are slightly improving in context of common objectives over the last two years. We can see that many organisations have managed their conditions of existence. They use various tools for sustainability of their voluntary work. Now, we are approaching to the comparison of the situation stated in the common objectives. We will evaluate whether and how the common objectives have been integrated in youth policy and implemented regarding the conditions in Slovakia

Relevant research is needed in order to create a clear and visible picture of voluntary activities in Slovakia. As it was mentioned above, no mapping of youth volunteering in Slovakia exists. It is needed to add that there are many opportunities of young people engagement in voluntary activities. The main problem is to be aware of those opportunities. A project of a national database or a virtual network of volunteers would be useful.

The main support to enhance existing voluntary activities of young people is mainly financial and provided by the government, third sector and European or international funds. On the other side we can see the lack of coordination of youth volunteering and activities, and the deficiency of data. So that in the case of broaden the scope of voluntary activities many organizations helped themselves with their own means and ways.

The quality of voluntary work also depends on expertise and good management attitude in these activities. The government declared many times its willingness to foster training opportunities for young volunteers but nothing happened. The government fulfilled the function of support for actors working with volunteers directly, i.e. voluntary organizations. They created their own system of learning and educational activities. The government partially contributed to their financing and the process of certification was also helpful (certificates are issued by Ministry of education, Ministry of labour, social affairs and family, Ministry of health).

On European matters, Slovakia experienced the support provided by the European Voluntary Service. This program is used by some organizations and it helped them in their development.

If we consider removing the legal and administrative obstacles to the mobility of persons undertaking a voluntary activity, after accession to the EU in 2004 organizations and young people feel many open possibilities, especially regarding within the EU. On the other side, some administrative obstacles still remain, such as the already mentioned law of illegal labour. The relationship to non-EU countries is still not solved. The responsible institutions for foreigners have promised to improve the possibilities for granting visas and staying permissions for youngsters participating on voluntary activities.

In the area of informing and spreading of knowledge on youth volunteering we expect better situation. It was mentioned above that coordination is missing. The objective is not to motivate all youngsters in Slovakia to be a volunteer, but give to all of them an opportunity and chance to be informed on these activities. This is the role of institutions that are in contact with young people, e.g. schools with the help of local authorities or organizations working with young volunteers, in cooperation with the media.

The meaning of youth volunteering has to be underlined in their future active and professional life. We often face the lack of knowledge on volunteering, especially in case of the employers. Volunteers as potential applicants for job have various abilities and skills that are an advantage for seeking a job. In spite of that, the employers don't consider linking of these advantages and volunteering in CVs (see appendix). Organizations and government have another challenge: the effort of improving knowledge ability of employers. It will be helpful to continue building private-public partnership project and linking between business and non-governmental sector with the support of government.

Appendix: Summary of survey “Volunteering as an advantage for job applicants”

In December 2004 the YMCA Slovakia organisation realized a survey on volunteering and its relation to employers (title is above). The survey was aimed on human resources managers in Slovakia because they are the first contact persons for applicants and they decide whether applicant with voluntary experience should be accepted. The surveyors have tested human resources managers on their understanding and perception the concept of volunteering and what is the influence of volunteering on job applications.

The first task was **concept of volunteering** - what they imagine if they hear the word „volunteering“. The first result was optimistic: human resources managers perceive volunteering in very positive way. None of them expressed neutral or negative reaction. Human resources managers perceive volunteering as being help in poverty, charity, free service, help to children, environmental protection, work in health organizations. Despite of that, managers do not know to define the concept of volunteering.



More than one third of respondents do not know any voluntary organization. Spontaneously, about one third of them mention the organization of Red Cross. About 15 per cent of them mention Unicef, Greenpeace, voluntary fireman corps. The most known youth organization was AIESEC¹³ (often cooperating with different human resources managers).

Volunteers define volunteering through five dimensions: work without financial motivation, personal engagement, values and ideas, useful for society, solution of concrete problems. Former and “veteran” volunteers with developed skills provided the most coherent definition. According to them, volunteering is a non-profit activity without forcing, fulfilling volunteer’s values, meaningful, giving good impression and having usefulness for society.

None of human resources managers has been able to formulate his/her definition of volunteering.

The second task was **ideal applicant** - which characteristics and abilities of applicant are the most desired among human resources managers.

The following „soft criteria“ have occurred among answers : knowledge of English language, ability of team work, spirit of enterprise, ability of organizing, flexibility, PC skills, ability of further learning, expertise, international skills, self-activity, communication skills, proactivity, creativity, motivation, leadership skills. Besides of these criteria, employers have their own „hard criteria“, such as university education or driving license.

Unfortunately, about 95 per cent of human resources managers do not mention volunteering among soft criteria. The survey shows they prefer references of former employers, study outcomes, participation on school competitions, activities in sport. Voluntary activity is interesting only for 18 per cent of managers on direct question (without the question on volunteering, they would not have mentioned volunteering).

On the other side, human resources managers could consider volunteering attractive if it is presented in attractive way. For example, applicant should introduce his/her voluntary activities like working skill, not like hobby. Concrete content of voluntary work and its contribution to applicant’s skills should be also mentioned in application.

Reflection on the previous problem is also interesting. Human resources managers answered on the question “What was the suitable position for volunteers?” About 40 per cent did not know the answer. They don’t know about abilities of volunteers. Other possibilities of volunteer placement are administration (11%), professions without communication with people (6%), managing positions (6%), business (5%). About 9% consider volunteers as good for any position and 17% do not consider volunteering as an advantage for any position.

¹³ “Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales”. Today, AIESEC no longer use this acronym as membership has grown to encompass a much wider range of disciplines than only economics and commerce.

Another question aimed at disadvantages of volunteering and perception by human resources managers. Volunteering is considered as disadvantage if applicant says that s/he wants to spend too much time with these activities, if voluntary activities would be restricting in job, if applicant will not have any motivation, if applicant will not be able to manage work in some business company or if applicant is member of some sect or political organization.

Experience of volunteering could help to gain skills, abilities and characteristics important for employment and strong of volunteers: communication, responsibility, empathy, humanity, a openness to other people, organizing and managing, team work, time management. If we compare expectations of human resources managers and review of volunteer abilities by themselves, we see that applicant with voluntary experience can fulfil criteria of human resources managers in great extent.

Two main outputs resulted from the survey. First, it is necessary to give more exact definition of volunteering to improve its marketability and to meet needs of commercial and non-profit sector. In general it is necessary to differ between volunteering and other activities (charity, philanthropy, sponsorship) and to emphasize that it is not spontaneous activity of individuals but organized activity. Second, it is necessary to ensure human resources managers that applicants-volunteers are not a threat for employers.



AEGEE

Contact with governments

AEGEE and other International Non Governmental Youth Organisations do not have many possibilities to contribute but we have a strong will to be more involved and we believe that thanks to our overview on situation in different countries all across Europe we can give a very useful contribution. Thanks to the work of the European Youth Forum we were at least well informed about the process.

There should be more opportunities for consultations at European Level not only at national level. Overview on situation in different countries helps to realise specific mechanisms and inspires for progress.

AEGEE participated in **several Information and Networking Days about the OMC organised by the YFJ** and we also sent representatives to EU presidencies youth events in Rotterdam, Luxembourg, Cardiff and Helsinki. We see the EU presidency youth events as an opportunity which should be explored more effectively as a tool of fostering the common objectives and not as visibility events.

Regarding the consultations that are taking place, AEGEE sees room for improvement:

There should be **more equity for INGOs in the structured dialogue**. There is not enough space for input from INGYOs in the consultation process in EU. A structure for this should be provided. This includes in practice for example ensuring places for INGYOs at EU presidencies Youth events, as well as enabling again applications at European level for convenient training courses (YOUTH, Council of Europe) The current mechanism for structured dialogue gives space mainly to national level consultation.

If major consultations and selections are done at national level, than young people working with more European dimension are disadvantaged.

Consultations should be structured taking into account reasonable timing. We see big benefit of consultations done on regular basis, as those allow better preparation and deliver more content results. Volunteers organised in Youth INGOs can have valuable input to policies development, but only if there is rational time given to discuss thoroughly and collect opinions among those volunteers.

Understanding of the process

There is a difference in the perception of voluntary activities by the institutions and by young people active as volunteers in youth NGOs. We see **that the role of participatory youth NGOs is underestimated**. Via youth NGOs young people take responsibilities to organise voluntary activities themselves and it is done on the basis of peer interaction

International Youth Organisations



with enthusiasm and dedication, often in a spontaneous way with very inclusive approach.

Therefore volunteering via youth NGOs is usually easier, has extra values of self development and creates more accessible opportunities for active involvement than other forms of volunteerism. Volunteerism of young people is much more than EVS and therefore **volunteerism via involvement in youth NGOs should be always promoted next to EVS.**

Youth NGOs should be natural partners for institutions at all levels to reach young people.

It is difficult to see the implementation of OMC because the process is rather not transparent neither inclusive for young people. AEGEE is involved in the White Paper Process since the beginning and we welcome the progress in the field of youth policy in Europe. It is great that young people become more and more important topic considered by politicians and institutions. It is also great to see the will of EU member states to exchange experience and cooperate on common objectives.

However, we see a decrease in the access of young people and youth organisations to possibilities to be involved in the process. As youth NGO we are eager to be a partner for the European and national institutions in achieving the OMC objectives. We should not lose our ambition to improve the situation of young people in Europe and start developing more precise Action Plans with measurable objectives. **This process can be a success only if youth NGOs will be more involved and more precise action plans with measurable objectives will be set.**

Implementation and measures for improvement:

Enhancing awareness of the existing opportunities, enlarging their scope and improving their quality

[Supporting civil society organisations active in voluntary engagement of young people, 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]¹⁴

- We see further development of the European Voluntary Service (EVS) as very positive, however we need to emphasise that **EVS is not the only** and not necessary the best **way of volunteering**. There should be more focus on volunteering in youth projects and youth associations. These opportunities should be promoted equally to EVS, giving much broader range of activities for young volunteers

- YOUTH Programme is a great support for voluntary engagement of young people, however we see the need for bigger importance being given to **cooperation with partner countries**. We see it very inspiring and effective, as it has more impact on participants than projects organised just within EU. Cooperating with partner countries helps to see our EU achievements from a different perspective, and therefore increases learning outcomes for participants from programme countries, giving a chance to develop also to partners. Therefore we think there should be more budget within YOUTH programme for this cooperation.

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

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.¹⁵ Reinforce cooperation between the relevant authorities in order to facilitate the issuing of visas and residence permits to young volunteers when and where appropriate.]¹⁶

- **Visa obstacles** decrease scope of international projects and demotivate volunteers. They exclude from voluntary work **young people** who cannot afford to **pay visa fees**. That closes the door to cross-border cooperation and building European civil society, especially for people from disadvantaged backgrounds. We see visa fees are a serious problem for European volunteerism, dividing youth volunteers into privileged and unprivileged groups. Therefore we strongly suggest **100% discount on visa fees** for people involved in civil society activities, in particular young people and students.

Complicated and not transparent procedures seriously reduce flexibility of volunteers, which negatively influences their involvement and contribution in international activities. We see the need for a concerted centralized system offering user-friendly access to all relevant data concerning visa applications in European countries. We welcome the direction taken by the European Commission towards facilitation of Schengen visa procedures and developments on Common Consular Instructions.

- **Registration** of short and long term volunteers in EU remains a big problem (especially for volunteers coming from outside EU) and we do not see progress. The procedure should be more simple than for employees. Special focus should be put on Belgium where many international NGOs have their Head Offices and face terrible bureaucratic obstacles

Our international volunteers usually are forced to work illegally because

¹⁴ Extract from the Annex of the Council Resolution adopted 16 November 2004, point 1b) and c)

¹⁵ OJ L 215 of 9.08.2001, p. 30.

¹⁶ Extract from the Annex of the Council Resolution adopted 16 November 2004, point 2a) and b)



procedures to register they short-term stay in another country (especially Belgium!) are too complicated and, if at all successful, take very long time. Therefore, apart from many inconveniences and possible problems, volunteers also do **not have access to medical care**.

National and local authorities should **revise** their **procedures for residence** permits and introduce more friendly regulations for volunteers staying for short- and long-term, adjusted to their needs and situation. These procedures need to be understandable for foreigners, who are not speaking fluently the language of the country.

- **Finances** are a barrier for many motivated people.

In the youth sector many of active volunteers do not have yet a secured source of income, and are not able to get involved in many of civil society activities without financial support. More **administrative funding** would help us to provide more opportunities for motivated volunteers. We have an impression that this funding is seen as financing bureaucracy, while it is a great way to maintain long-term activities of young volunteers, as well as to **develop** and assure their **quality**. It gives much more opportunities for active involvement than only project-based funding. Administrative funding is cost effective and fosters development of organised voluntary work.

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

[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.]¹⁷

There is huge gap of understanding of volunteerism between the ones already involved in it, and the ones who were never involved in voluntary activities. AEGEE members see danger in misunderstanding of the role of volunteerism by society. Voluntary work can't be treated as alternative to unemployment (e.g. it cannot replace paid internships). This leads to abuse of volunteers, which should be fought against. Volunteerism should be seen as a value for society and not a free labour.

At European level

[Launch appropriate information actions with a view to promoting voluntary activities of young people as well as the values of voluntarism.]¹⁸

¹⁷ Extract from the Annex of the Council Resolution adopted 16 November 2004, point 3a)

¹⁸ Idem, point 3d)

International NGOs need finally the **Statutes for European Association**.

This administrative progress would increase the visibility of their activities at European level, promoting the **role of volunteers in Europe**.

AEGEE, as platform for truly European activities, from the beginning actively supports the campaign of Forum Civique Européen for the Statutes of a European Association. Our members are European volunteers, doing European projects in European teams, and want to be seen as such also from administrative side (currently volunteers representing European NGO at any occasion are assigned to the country where the NGO is registered). We believe that introducing this statute will greatly serve creating European civil society and will be a major step towards European citizenship.

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.

- The **Bologna Process** reforms make it more difficult for students to get involved in voluntary activities because **university schedules become tighter**. It affects especially student NGOs because students have less possibility to get involved with long-term commitments. Special effort is needed to ensure space for civil society activities during formal education time (e.g. do not punish financially the students who have to prolong their courses because of engagement in civil society activities, or: develop ways to compensate absence at lessons which is caused by engagement in NFE or projects instead of punishing for it just like if it was caused by laziness)
- Youth NGOs role in fostering volunteerism is underestimated. Involvement in NGO projects, which is connected to membership in that NGO, is treated as hobby and leisure time activity not as a contribution to society development
- The role of volunteering is underestimated or ignored by many stakeholders (parents and community of volunteers, schools and universities, employers), skills gained via voluntary engagement are considered as less valuable than experience from internships and part time jobs.



Main suggestions

- Promoting EVS should be done in parallel with **promoting involvement in Youth NGOs**
- Budget of YOUTH programme for **cooperation with partner countries** should be increased
- There should be **no fee for issuing visas** for young people involved in voluntary work and students
- Procedures for obtaining **residence permit** by youth volunteers should be simplified
- There should be more support for volunteers' work through **administrative funding**
- The **statute for a European** association should be created
- Voluntary work should be given **recognition within formal education system** and educational reforms deriving e.g. from Bologna process
- **Public dialogue** should be established with society and various stakeholders about the role of volunteerism and importance of building civil society

World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM)

Introduction

Scouting exists for the benefit of young people. It is a movement for young people in which volunteers provide guidance and support. The development and delivery of the Scout educational model requires the active involvement of volunteers who need to be recruited, equipped with the competencies required to fulfil their tasks, continuously supported and their contribution recognised and evaluated. As volunteers they are facilitating the adventure, the learning, the fun that is the Scout educational model; they are the stewards of the active participation that is Scouting. Furthermore, as local volunteers they are championing active citizenship, building greater social cohesion, reaching out to the marginalised while adding to their own skills enhancement and their increased employability. The challenge for European Scouting is ensuring the delivery of quality opportunities for young people while making the benefits of volunteering in that delivery a stark reality. This means overcoming the barriers of recruitment, restricted mobility and recognition which stunt and hamper greater volunteerism.

There are 28million Scouts in the world, 1.5million in Europe (the European Scout Region), supporting, motivating and nurturing these young people is a team (of approximately 4million worldwide) of volunteers. Without this team, there would be no Scouting, no learning by doing, no fun with a purpose - no unique non-formal educational model. The recruitment, retention and management of this team is a priority for the European Scout Region.

The Promotion Of Voluntary Activities, Information And Citizenship

Scouting in Europe attracts volunteers who have an interest in facilitating the delivery of the Scout educational model: learning by doing, fun with a purpose. Although this is a strong motivating factor volunteers are also, or should be, attracted to Scouting because they believe they will benefit from the experience - Scouting is a strong proponent of life-long learning - life-long learning through skills learnt as a Scout and/or life-long learning through involvement as a volunteer. Volunteers in Scouting are given opportunities for their continuous development, they are supported and given ongoing training, this system of support and the skills acquired through it should be recognised in society at large.

The recognition of non-formal education and the recognition of the quality training systems in place for volunteers in European Scouting is more than just a moral issue, but one that is a serious motivating factor in the recruitment and retention of volunteers. When approximately 19% of under 25 year olds in the EU are unemployed, recognition of the skills acquired as a volunteer can contribute to an individuals employability;



practical considerations which undoubtedly should and does motivate volunteers to Scouting. Furthermore, Scouting is primarily a community activity: young people participating in their community, individuals volunteering to facilitate this participation are themselves contributing to the community by demonstrating and fostering responsibility and active citizenship. Supporting volunteers requires the provision of flexible and responsive training, and clearly defined roles. Likewise, much new legislation designed to provide greater care for young people (Health and Safety, Child Protection) while welcomed by Scouting, must be designed in such a way that it enhances safety and care while not hindering the recruitment and retention of volunteers - in France registering with local authorities six months in advance stating the *project educatif* does not encourage volunteerism nor having one volunteer in five having to have a university degree, *animation pour les jeunes*.

This life cycle of a volunteer in Scouting includes a number of stages, such as:

- Recruitment, based on a matching of the specific Scout needs and the interests and competencies of the volunteer;
- Mutual agreement (a clarification and definition of mutual expectations including the setting and negotiation of clear objectives and time limits);
- Ongoing training to acquire or, support to, develop the necessary competencies;
- Performance appraisal and recognition on the basis of the pre-set objectives and to acknowledge the commitment of personal resources (time and money);
- Re-definition of the task, identification of a new task, or moving on.

The life cycle of a volunteer requires a consistent approach to how the experience is managed. There is a need to co-ordinate between all those involved at the different steps, which in a voluntary movement requires careful and sensitive management of all those involved at all stages - no one volunteer is more voluntary. Those providing training need to work closely with those involved in recruitment, support, appraisal and task allocation. In Scouting those involved in managing, supporting and training volunteers need to be, despite being volunteers themselves, managers of human resources and be able to look beyond the boundaries of their traditional areas of responsibilities. We encourage national Scout organisations to employ a 'team approach' to the management of human resources, being as flexible as possible, recognising and accommodating the often competing needs of volunteer and organisation. Likewise, those responsible for the management of volunteers should be as flexible as possible, employing innovative methods of recruitment and training while maintaining a close relationship with those responsible for the development and implementation of the Scout Programme (the Scout educational model).

The European Scout Region is acutely aware of the importance of providing effective and relevant training in order to recruit, retain and support volunteers in delivering quality responses to the needs of young people in Europe. But just as the needs of young people are ever changing so too are the needs of those volunteers charged with facilitat-

ing them: what are the steps that need to be taken when designing a responsive volunteer training scheme?

- Monitor trends in society, especially those influencing volunteers;
- Analyse current situation in training;
- Understand the Scout educational model;
- Who are our volunteers? (why do they volunteer, what do they want, how long do they stay, what roles do they take, etc.) how do we recognise and evaluate their contribution;
- What skills and knowledge are required to deliver the Scout educational model? What skills and knowledge are required to be a manager in Scouting;
- What are the core skills and knowledge required?
- What sort of system do we need to design: how flexible, the content, the methods, the levels, how accessible, including the recognition of prior learning, etc.
- Explore new methods of volunteer training to complement traditional ones;
- Pilot schemes including evaluation tools;
- Adaptability and the ability to implement new schemes while conducting ongoing evaluation.

While we have these systems in place in Europe they are in themselves not enough to attract sufficient volunteers. We estimate that there are approximately 100,000 young people on waiting lists to join Scouting in Europe due to a deficit in the number of available volunteers. We are anxious to eliminate these waiting lists, and even to reverse the situation (have a waiting list of volunteers) in the meantime other obstacles exist for volunteers.

The Removal Of Obstacles And Barriers To Voluntary Activities (Mobility And Visa Restrictions)

The European Scout Region includes 40 countries in Europe, including South Eastern Europe (SEE). European Scouting has a long history in SEE with a number of organisations being founding members of the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM). Despite the trauma of recent years European Scouting has succeeded in providing relevant and meaningful interventions for young people in SEE i.e. in the wake of conflict in Bosnia Croatian Scouting provided camps for orphans and children traumatised by the effects of war.

Many of the Scout organisations were re-admitted as members of WOSM in the early 1990s. In response to the apparent need for tailored support the European Scout Region, with the support of the French Foreign Ministry and in consultations with the World Bank, UNESCO, European Youth Forum, CARE International and different other partners in France and countries of South East Europe designed and implemented a specialist project for young people and Scouting in SEE, the MOBA project. The MOBA Project ran from 2002 -2004.



“The MOBA Project gave an impetus to the mobility of young people in the region. This is of immeasurable value, especially in view of the period of sanctions and isolation which struck the harshest blow to young people.” Nenad Belcevic, MOBA participant

The aim of MOBA was to facilitate the active participation of young people through the provision of a programme of non-formal education activities for them in Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia. The activities were facilitated by, and based on the unique Scouting educational model of non-formal education, by national Scout organisations working at local level with a wide network of volunteers.

The experience and evaluation of MOBA highlighted the need for a similar project to be delivered to a greater number of countries in the Region. The need of young people in the countries of the ex-Yugoslavia, Albania, Romania and Bulgaria is for support in their active participation and to support them in developing youth policy reflective of their needs. Key to the sustainability of this is the existence of a network of trained and peer supported local youth leaders and workers, volunteers.

The European Scouting's response to this is the Hajde Project. Based on the success of MOBA, the Hajde Project adapts the Scout educational model of non-formal education, fun with a purpose, to reach-out to young people (organised and non-organised) in SEE.

Both these projects, MOBA and Hajde have benefited from the involvement of volunteers from SEE participating in training and activities by Scout organisations within the EU. However, throughout the course of both projects visa restrictions have been a considerable barrier to the flow of young people. The EU and the Youth Programme profess to be promoting stability in SEE by supporting the development of youth work and promoting the development of multicultural awareness, tolerance and solidarity among young people. One of the key instruments being the fostering of civil society and active citizenship; Scouting through its experience of the design of implementation of locally lead initiatives is in a unique position to support young people in SEE.

An important way of delivering this support is through exchange, training and exposure of programme development and design throughout the Europe for Scout volunteers from SEE. Yet the experience of European Scouting is often visa requirements pose a prohibitive obstacle to the valuable movement and exchange of best practice between volunteers in Europe. So while on the one hand there is a stated need for civil society and the active participation of young people in SEE on the other hand there are real and frustrating obstacles to the mobility of youth leaders and volunteers, obstructing their exposure and learning of how to facilitate greater active participation.

However, the proposed Visa Information Sheet (VIS) and Schengen arrangements could serve as a facilitation tool for young people involved in youth work. They could increase the transparency of the procedures and requirements in the visa procedures, enabling volunteers involved in Scouting and youth work to receive more consistent, and predictable, treatment by embassies and avoid ad hoc obstacles to visa applications. The VIS

is an opportunity to develop a system that compliments the recognition of non-forming learning and facilitates greater active participation, more volunteers; as long as special consideration is given to young people involved in youth work.

With regard to the experience of Scouting and SEE, the VIS could be a good and useful tool if it is consistent with the expressed EU youth and mobility policy and if it is applied in a coherent, concise and fully transparent manner - how are tighter restrictions on mobility reconciled with the second aim of the Youth Pact, to facility the employability of young people through enhanced skills acquisition? Could the VIS and the system of linking different applications prove to be a further obstacle to civil society development? This is particularly worrying as the countries in which the EU professes to want to develop civil society most are outside its borders, such as SEE. So as to be coherent with the EU's neighbourhood policy and accession negotiations the VIS must support and encourage civil society actors rather than discourage and de-motivate them.

Developing resilient economies, likewise, relies on an engaged and enthused workforce. Young people are the motor of economic growth throughout Europe and especially in EU applicant states. Fuelling this motor means encouraging young people - encouraging their skills acquisition through mobility just as investment is encouraged through the free flow of capital. For the VIS to work properly with respect to young people, it must keep up, and be in line with, the enlargement process and the changing nature of civil society and the needs of young people. While mobility is an important factor in motivating and supporting volunteers perhaps an issue of greater importance for Scouting is recognition of their contribution and the skills they acquire.

The European Scout Region encourages the exchange of trainers between Scout organisations across Europe (the Eurotrain Programme). It is believed that the exchange of trainers provides many valuable opportunities to share ideas and current practices in training. It is an opportunity for trainers to benefit from peer support and expertise related to a specific course or project. It is an opportunity to exchange ideas, knowledge, skills and techniques; it is an opportunity to experience training in another country fuelling active citizenship. Here, again, we have experienced problems realising the full potential of these encounters due to visas restrictions and cost.

The Recognition Of Voluntary Activities (The State Of European And Member State Mechanisms)

The European Scout Region welcomed the recognition of non-formal learning by the EU Council of Ministers in April 2006 and sees it as a vindication of the value and importance of volunteerism. Furthermore it hints at the possibility of the Lisbon Strategy and the Youth pact being taken seriously. In light of this recognition, European Scouting is anxious to further the process through the development of concrete standards and criteria for the practical recognition of its unique educational model, including training systems. If the EU is genuine in its desire, as outlined in the Youth Pact, to see enhanced:



1. Employment, integration and social advancement.
2. Education, training and mobility.
3. Reconciliation of working life and family life (e.g. child friendly policies, work-life balance policies and expanding childcare).

Then there must be a renewed engagement with youth organisations in supporting and recognising volunteerism. This cannot exclusively be done by the EU, but must ultimately be done locally through member states. But the EU does have considerable influence, directly and indirectly: directly through resolution and communication; indirectly through best practice (as proposed in the structured dialogue and the Open Method of Co-ordination) and through support (moral and financial) of local deliverers of quality interventions in support of young people (National Youth Councils, Scouts, Guides).

For Scouting, ensuring basic standards in quality non-formal educational models, including training systems, does not necessarily require external assessment but ensuring the delivery of quality activities. So the fixing of any criteria for the recognition of these activities needs to be flexible and adaptable to specific situations while valuing diversity.

Several attempts are being made to develop these criteria, these tools. While this is to be encouraged European Scouting would like to see these tools being integrated into one robust tool, the EU and the CoE working in harmony to build on competencies and exploit expertise and avoiding confusion in the recognition of non-formal education: the Council of Europe is developing the Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers (http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Cooperation/Youth/1._News/News/055_European_portfolio_NFE.asp) the EU Commission employs the Youth Pass and is developing the Europass (europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/europass/index_en.htm). While the idea of the CoE Portfolio for youth leaders is good tool for peer and self assessment, the experience of European Scouting is that it is difficult to work with and does not carry the benefit of outside recognition?

Scouting in Europe has several positive experiences of the recognition of training systems by government and the private sector:

- In Luxembourg young people that undergo the leader training receive a certificate from the Minister of Employment recognising the training they have received and stating the skills they have developed. This system of certification was developed in co-operation by the government, Scouting and the employers representative body.
- In Belgium leaders that attain a one of four levels of training (animator to head instructor) level of training receive a Youth Worker permit certifying them as recognised youth workers with stated skills. The government and national Scout organisation issue the permit jointly.
- In Ireland Scouting continues to successfully recruit adult volunteers, however, more support for training and retention would assist in extending the

average time commitment. Each volunteer reviews their involvement annually, assessing their commitment, role and responsibilities. Scouting Ireland is currently in discussions with the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the National College of Ireland (NCI) with regard to accreditation of their volunteer training system.

- In France Scouts are one of providers of training for youth work, *Brevet d'aptitude aux fonctions d'animateur* (BAFA).
- To ensure credibility and support youth organisations must be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the Youth Pact at an EU and member state level - the challenge of this is providing support to youth organisations so they have the capacity to perform this task.

The European Scout Region is poised to work on greater recognition of experiences gained in youth work. Our intention is to contact universities around Europe and design specific curricula incorporating Scouting's expertise and educational model. The intention is for volunteers to undergo a yearlong programme of self-guided validation while developing practical and theoretical knowledge gaining a university diploma.

Summary

The European Scout Region would like to see measures to:

- Promote the value of volunteering and support the recruitment (attractiveness) of volunteering;
- Reconcile visa requirements (and cost) with the benefits of mobility for volunteers from accession and neighbourhood countries;
- Recognise the importance and value of volunteerism, as described in the Lisbon Strategy and Youth Pact.
- Identify and develop mechanisms for greater recognition training systems for volunteers.



Partner organisations

Bulgaria -

contribution by Youth Society for Peace and Development of the Balkans (YSPDB) (YFJ partner in Bulgaria)

Volunteering in Bulgaria is still in the process of being developed, especially regarding the government actions. Few organizations have developed volunteering as an important part of the process of civil society development and youth participation for the last 15 years.

Government Policy on Volunteering

The term “volunteer” is not defined in the Bulgarian legislation. This is one of the main reasons for the lack of government policies for volunteering development. In 2003 the Bulgarian government created a strategy for National Youth Policy for the period 2003-2007. The document acknowledges the fact that in Bulgaria, there are organizations working with volunteers and that these organisations try to develop volunteering in the country. Despite this, there is no legal document defining what is volunteering, what is a volunteer, and therefore no legal status. As it will be also said later, volunteering is still perceived in Bulgaria as a former communist constrain, therefore the first need is more to spread another understanding of volunteering, as practised in other European countries. This fact impedes the implementation of the good European practice. One of the priorities of the strategy is to promote voluntary activities as an alternative form of youth social activity. According to the same strategy there should be legislative regulations on the volunteers’ and youth workers’ statute. One of the strategy’s guidelines is about increasing the number of volunteers in the civic and youth organizations. At the end of year 2006 these results are not achieved. In the report on youth in 2005, volunteering is mentioned only regarding the Action 2 of the YOUTH Programme - “European Voluntary Service”. On the other hand, volunteer services are part of the existing State programme for youth activities. This programme is actually based on the State report on youth and is the only governmental source for funds for national or local youth organisations and their activities in Bulgaria

If we have to sum up, the government didn’t really develop volunteering in the country and it is not priority for the government regarding the national youth policy. It is a fact that there is not a department in the Bulgarian administration, which is working and developing strategies for voluntary activities. In the same trend, there are not concrete State initiative for developing any kind of voluntary service.

EVS - European Voluntary Service - is in Bulgaria the only instrument providing voluntary service opportunities. Unfortunately, the training and capacity building activities (under Action 5) of the YOUTH programme, which are of great importance to develop the youth field and motivate young people, are hardly and slowly developed. The number of the projects under this Action is extremely small (in 2005, 13 hosting projects and 28 sen-



ding were developed and implemented in the whole country). The rate of fund assimilation is also considerably low (40 000 Euro on the 240 000 Euro available for the Action). The money which is not spent is sent back to the European Commission. On the other hand, there aren't any projects or actions aiming at raising the motivation for voluntary service, trainings or tutorial programmes. The only participation of Bulgarian young people in training programmes is their sending by the programme SOHO ("Sending organizations, hosting organizations"). This programme is an initiative of the National agencies of YOUTH Programme in cooperation with SALTO Youth. Its objective is to train NGOs, working with volunteers. The National Agency of the YOUTH programme has published Action 2 promotional materials. Other informational channels are the EURO-DESK network, articles in Bulgarian newspapers, magazines and other printed documents. In spite of that, the activeness is not sufficient.

Problem of the National Agency is also the lack of independence. As a part of the State Agency for Youth and Sports, it faces a number of bureaucratic and political obstacles in implementing its work. This is one of the reasons for the lack of trainings under the Action 3. In the beginning of 2005, the European Commission clearly stated the necessity of full independence of the National Agency, in order to avoid such obstacles and any political influence. Until now, these recommendations are not fulfilled.

The only good practice that the State provides is the exemption of fees for visa and permits for staying. This practice is actually applied only in the framework of activities of the YOUTH programme. However, there have been some cases that show that this decision has not been taken into consideration by the Regional representative offices of the Ministry of the Interior. For the other existing programmes, such as Peace Corps, these exemptions do not apply. Therefore, we would recommend in order to better develop volunteering activities to extend these exemptions to all volunteers coming in Bulgaria

State of volunteering and youth organisations that are working with volunteers in Bulgaria

Volunteering in Bulgaria is very underdeveloped. The interest of young people in participating in voluntary activities is also very low. The main reason for that is the ignorance of the meaning of the volunteering for the development of the society. Young people do not see the voluntary initiatives as valuable. On the other hand, a majority of young people is not attracted by the volunteering idea, because it doesn't bring them any direct advantages and concrete material benefits. According to research conducted by the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, hardly 1.7% of Bulgarian young people would have become volunteers in any circumstances. In most cases the reason for participation in such initiatives is the conviction that they have to lead to concrete results (6.8%), and that the cause must be trustful (6.6%). Another reason for participating is the existence of extraordinary situations and natural disasters; for children or big group of people; charity; cleaning; landscape gardening and decoration; building something such as a street, a club, a church; care for the environment, for elderly people; anti-corruption campaigns; fight against drugs, etc. Last but not least, some people still

believe, that volunteering is a part of the communist past and an archaic method.

The existence of organizations working only with volunteers is a fact, but the lack of national policy and support is a major obstacle in their work. There are also national organizations working with volunteers - YMCA-Bulgaria, National alliance for Volunteer Action, Green Balkans, Red Cross youth, and „For the Earth” foundation. Their activeness is related with organizing different programmes and trainings for voluntary work. The lack of state support puts these organizations on in a very difficult administrative situation. As no administrative grant or funds does exist, youth organisations can't set up proper office, requiring minimum standards in terms of human resources or offices supplies. Therefore, not having the primary requirement for working, youth organisations are in a way on an unequal footing with the administrations and cannot always comply with all the bureaucracy.

It is a fact that a majority of youth organizations works with volunteers, but the main problem is the motivation of the young volunteers. The problem has both a cultural and an economic aspect. Most of the high schools' graduates prefer to start working instead of participating in voluntary activities. The lack of specific rights and recognition for their voluntary work is another reason for lack of motivation. In order to improve the situation, the youth organizations have developed the First VOLUNTEER RECORD BOOK, which now is in its pilot implementation phase in Gabrovo region. NGOs are still waiting the State agency for Youth and Sports to recognize the Volunteer Record book and to promote it nationally. It helps young people to prove their work and experience in the youth field. The Youth sector lobbies for the State recognition of the VOLUNTEER RECORD BOOK. The organizations believe that it will allow them to attract more young people in their activities. However, the communication with the government often is only a subject of conversations, without any concrete commitments or actions.

The Bulgarian youth NGOs developed a system for promoting the recognition of experiences of the volunteers. The system includes both a nomination process for "Volunteers of the year" and an Awarding ceremony at regional level, as well as special award for the organization which best co-ordinated volunteers during the year.

A great part of the volunteers is school students. Therefore youth organizations promote their activities in the schools. Here they are facing another obstacle, which could be easily solved by an efficient State policy. There are many cases when the pupils are not supported by their teachers. So, this means, they are not allowed to take part in trainings, because of their everyday curriculum and the fact that they would have to miss classes.



Recommendations by youth organizations for development of volunteering in Bulgaria, in connection with the OMC in the youth field

From January 2007, Bulgaria will be a full member of the European Union and the implementation of the priorities of Open method of Coordination, as part of the necessary legislation to implement entering the EU, will assist the process of putting into practice an active state policy for developing voluntary work. Even if welcoming the fact that a political mechanism to promote volunteering will be then available after the accession to EU, number of organizations are concerned regarding the only policy that the Bulgarian State put in place for volunteering, namely the exemption of visa and permits for staying fees.

An important next step for the government should defined the term and concept of volunteering, followed by clear and effective state policy for recognition of the voluntary service as an educational experience and a period of non-formal education, as well as juridical and social protection of volunteers according to the White paper on Youth. Therefore, being experts and practioners, youth organizations offer legislative initiative, which is going to solve a good deal of the problems and will give the State a chance to work actively on the development of the voluntary activities as an important instrument for the civil society building and participation of young people in the society as a full members of the European family. Youth organisations are convinced that once a legal definition and status for volunteering and volunteer will exist, NGOs and government will be able to work on the development of volunteering activities and spread the concept across the country.

Czech Republic -

Czech Council of Children and Youth (CRDM)

Contact with Czech government

Czech Council of Children and Youth (CRDM) keeps good contacts with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, namely its youth department, and is usually consulted in case of majority of the EU materials concerning youth policy. It was already asked by the Ministry to take part in evaluation of the “voluntary activities” priority.

However we regret to say that there was no plan of the implementation of the voluntary activities priority prepared by the ministry. CRDM initiated at least a review of the currently existing “Act on voluntary work”, which, due to the non-activity of the Governmental council of NGOs (a coordinating body in the Office of the government), which started the review independently some two years ago), and lack of further activity from the side responsible Ministry of Interior, could not take place so far.

CRDM also suggested establishment of a working group on voluntary activities by the Governmental “Chamber of Youth” (lead formally by the minister of education, youth and sports and administered at its ministry), consisting of representatives of NGOs and representatives of various ministries. However because of lack of interest from the side of representatives of the ministries, such working group was not created yet.

Understanding of the process

The government itself didn’t develop any strategy or policy on voluntary activities of young people. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports continues in support of voluntary youth organisations and is more willing to understand the problems and challenges of youth sector, however this is mainly based on persons than on a policy.

Until 2005 the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports was preparing a “law on work with children”. The process was taking several years and CRDM and youth NGOs were involved in drafting process. They were mainly opposing to the original restrictive approach to the volunteers and reached the situation where demands for the volunteer’s qualification where balanced with some benefits to those organisations (and their volunteers), who would accept the conditions and became a kind of “certified NGO”. However other ministries opposed to this “liberal” concept and demanded more repressive approach, which led to the “freezing” of the drafting process. Now it seems that the law proposal will be frozen forever.

There is also a difference between the Governmental perspective in case of “Act on voluntary work”, and majority of youth membership based NGOs. The act defines volun-



tary work in a very limited way, reaching just a small part of “professional volunteers”. To become a volunteer according to this act, one must undergo a similar process as in case of EVS - find a sending organisation, through which he/she becomes a volunteer in hosting organisation (where he/she can't be a member). There are many other obstacles, which make the act unusable in majority of membership based youth NGOs. The Hestia organisation has made an external evaluation in 2004, which names the problems, and together with the responsible Ministry of Interior it suggested some kind of re-drafting process of the act, however according to our information the changes shouldn't be big and solve the crucial problems. This process is now stopped by the non-activity of the Governmental Council of NGOs, which should come up with the final proposal. The Ministry of Interior responsible for the application of the Act doesn't plan to suggest its own novelisation.

Measuring implementation

If we have to compare the Common Objectives agreed by the Member States with the actions taken in the Czech Republic to implement them, we must say that:

- the Czech government didn't coordinate any new activities leading to the implementation (except of the support to enhancing better visibility of EVS during Youth Week 2005),
- it didn't develop neither a strategy nor a new tool, which would help to implement the Common Objectives,
- it never referred to the Common Objectives during their activities.

Without link to the OMC process, the social democratic government introduced a pilot project in the end of 2005, which was encouraging people in regions with higher unemployment to change their full time job to a partial time and devote the other part to the “voluntary work” in an NGO (while the government would pay them for this “voluntary work” for one year).

Results

In general we must say that nothing much has changed over the past 2 years. The area of voluntary activities of young people is mainly supported through the grant system of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (the amount of money granted to youth NGOs remains stable, but is not rising as needed), Czech National Agency of “Youth” Programme of the EU and by regional governments and municipalities (with varied input). There are no effective financial possibilities to enable voluntary NGOs to become less dependent on governmental grants. However, at least a chance to get funding from the Structural funds of the EU seems to be promising.

The conditions for volunteering are suitable in general, but not excellent. Public perception of voluntary work didn't improved, recognition of non-formal education and its voluntary providers is a big task for the future years.

It needs quite a lot of efforts of our NYC and its member organisations to guard non-harmful legislative environment, which is more and more demanding to the NGOs.

Obstacles for the implementation, according to our experience, are the following:

- Lack of implementation plan from the side of Government;
- Existence of the “Act on voluntary activities” with restricted view on volunteering and unwillingness to change it;
- Low public knowledge and appreciation of the voluntary work and therefore low interest in changing of the situation;
- On the level of international cooperation the main problem is visa.

What we would suggest for the future:

- To prepare a proper implementation plan on governmental level with measurable targets



Annex I:

Guidelines for the Shadow Report on Voluntary Activities

Following the commitment taken in the November 2004 Council Resolution, the Member States will produce a national report on the implementation of the third set of common objectives. They are expected by December 2006.

As in 2005, on the two first sets on Common Objectives, Information and Participation, the European Youth Forum, in close cooperation with its member National Youth Councils and its International Youth Organisations, and based on their input, will produce its own report in order to balance the official results which will be released by the European Commission as a synthesis of the national reports at the beginning of 2007. This synthesis report by the European Commission will form basis for future EU policy on youth volunteering.

“Shadow reporting” is crucial for the European Youth Forum and its Member Organisations as it provides the opportunity to express concerns about the implementation of the common objectives to which Member States have committed themselves, and more generally **the situation of volunteering across Europe**. It is also important to demonstrate the involvement of National Youth Councils and the International Youth Organisations in the political process on youth policy and specifically on a core issue such as volunteering. The experience from YFJ Shadow report on Participation and Information shows that the process also gave the **opportunity to demonstrate** to our institutional partners **the possibilities and the analysis of youth organisations themselves**. The results have also been used by the European Commission as background document for their Communication of active citizenship, in July 2006.

Members States will be given guidelines for their national reports by the European Commission, and have been asked to produce a report on the implementation of each common objective (CO);

In order to facilitate the process of “shadow reporting”, the European Youth Forum is proposing that its Member Organisations produce a report either at the National or European level on the state of affairs regarding voluntary activities, and its evolution during the past years, specifically regarding the three following strands:

- promotion of voluntary activities: information and citizenship aspects
- removing obstacles and barriers for voluntary activities
- recognition of voluntary activities

The European Youth Forum encourages that all Member Organisations, and not only EU NYCs, contribute to the process in order to produce a shadow report to be used more

generally and which shows the realities across Europe. Even if the OMC is an EU process, the policies tackled are concerning all European States, and all Organisations, as they are crucial and core issues.

Proposed Guidelines for Member Organisations on the compilation of the Shadow Report

How to set up the process?

- All European Youth Forum member organisations are invited to start to work on their own shadow reports on implementation of the OMC Common Objectives. This work should involve those responsible for youth policy development as well as contributions from their own member organisations.
- Regarding the issue of volunteering it would be crucial that both International Youth NGOs and National Youth Councils contribute to the evaluation of the implementation of this specific priority of the Open Method of Coordination in the youth field as it concerns all their members. It is important to show to decision-makers the reality of the implementation of their political commitment. For the non EU countries and the IYGO, you can report on the situation and the gap that you noted but also on the campaign and strategy that you had put in place, linked to your institutional partners.
- European Youth Forum encourages the Member Organisations to provide spaces for their members to debate their experiences on using the White Paper results in youth policy development and use the conclusions from these debates when preparing their evaluations. Such debates could also serve as means to bring European youth policy closer to youth organisations that have not following the process so far and to draw a better picture of the status and policies around volunteering across Europe

How to compile the report?

- The European Youth Forum has produced framework and guideline questions for production of the evaluations. The format can be adapted freely regarding the nature of the Member Organisations contributing (see attachment).
- The entire report should not be shorter than 5 pages and not exceed 15 pages
- The deadline has been chosen so that we can produce the final



report for the 5th of December, the International Volunteer Day and then react in advance of the Member States whose deadline is the end of December. This timeline would allow National Youth Councils to use their evaluations to influence the content of the official reports. The deadline is indeed tight but for the quality of the process, it would be essential that Member Organisations respect it.

National Youth Councils' role in the official member states' reports

- The European Commission has invited Member States to involve youth organisations fully in the preparation of Member States' national reports on how they have implemented the OMC COs.
- The European Youth Forum suggests that these reports should be based on contributions from youth organisations and all other relevant stakeholders and should be compiled through strong cooperation between youth organisations and the national ministries responsible for youth. **The National Youth Councils should contact ministries in their countries and propose such a methodology.** The evaluation produced by the NYCs in the framework of the YFJ shadow report may well be used as the basis for the official Member State report.
- Even if the National Youth Councils are fully involved in producing the official national report, it would still be very valuable for all NYCs to provide the YFJ with their input. Our shadow report needs to reflect the realities of all Member States and moreover, the point of view of our shadow report can be different from the official Member States' reports. It should be also noted that the official Member States' reports will not become public (unless a ministry decides so), therefore for a good exchange of information among Member Organisations, it will be fair to publish your own.

The role of European Youth Forum

- The European Youth Forum will support all member organisations involved in evaluation by providing guidelines and information, organising Information and Networking Days and, if needed, providing political support and participating in different events organised by member organisations.
- The European Youth Forum will also produce an evaluation on the implementation of the OMC that will concentrate on the implementation of the Common Objectives at the European level. This evaluation will be based on the contributions from member organisations and the expertise of the EU Affairs Commission.
- The European Youth Forum Shadow Report on the implementation of

this priority will be released the 5th December 2006. The Shadow Report will be a key tool for our advocacy work for effective, cross-sectoral youth policy in Europe that will be based on the knowledge of youth organisations and the reality of European young people.

Proposed structure for the Shadow reports

- The **consultation for the implementation**: how the National Youth Councils/youth organisations were able to be involved in the implementation process; at the national level and also at the local level.
- **Results of the implementation**: did the implementation of the Common Objectives lead to any developments in youth policy? Comparison of the action lines adopted by the Council to the actual actions taken.
- The **obstacles** met during the implementation phase.
- **Best and worse practices**: examples of concrete actions taken.
- The **state of affairs** concerning the COs voluntary activities

Support material for the Shadow Reporting

The European Youth Forum Guideline Questions (document 0428-06), produced in order to help MOs work on the shadow report. This document also contains the points of the Council resolution.

For additional information and support, please contact Alix Masson, Policy Officer, at the European Youth Forum Secretariat (alix.masson@youthforum.org / + 32 2 294 86 22).



Annex II: Guiding Questions

for the shadow report on the implementation of the third set of common objectives on voluntary activities

Contact with governments

How involved was your organisation in the consultation process of the implementation of the voluntary activities priority?

Since 2005, did the contacts with the government evolve?

Understanding of the process

- Is there a difference between the government perspective and the NYC perspective on voluntary activities?
- Did the government develop a strategy or policy on voluntary activities of young people?
- If any strategy has been developed, what are the different aspects covered by the policies regarding voluntary activities?

Measuring implementation

- Please compare the Common Objectives agreed by the Member States with the actions taken in your country/at the European level to implement them:
 - Did the governments develop new tools?
 - It may be a local competence, but national governments should assume the responsibilities that they have agreed on guidelines. There should be a basic strategy at the national level to ensure that every body has information on youth issues.
 - If the government took action, did governments refer to the Guidelines and Common Objectives?
 - Did your organisation see other policies set up, and link to voluntary activities, and which were not part of the OMC Common Objectives?

Results

- Do you know if things have changed over the past 2 years?
 - If yes, is it because of the implementation of the Common Objectives?
- What do you think are the obstacles for the implementation?
 - Do you have ideas on how these obstacles could have been overcome? (N.B. this is very important.)

Annex of the Council Resolution adopted 16 November 2004

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.¹⁹
- (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.
- (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.
- (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...

¹⁹ OJ L 215 of 9.08.2001, p. 30.