



## Youth and European Social Work Forum

### **DECLARATION**

Millions of people in the EU make positive contributions by working in different fields of society during their free time without being paid. They invest their time for example in their communities, in schools, hospitals, sports clubs, non-profit organisations etc. Voluntary activities make an impact on society as a whole by contributing to the well-being of individuals and the development of communities and local networks. Volunteering does not replace professional paid work but adds value to society.

Voluntary activities have also potential for the individual volunteer. With regard to young people, volunteering provides important learning opportunities:

- Volunteering helps to increase the young person's self-respect and self-esteem. It also increases the respect they receive from third parties, i.e. adults and peer group.
- Volunteering can help young people learn how to present themselves in both workplace and social environments. As a result, volunteering can represent the value of young people to adults who may have previously not recognised their potential. Volunteering can also provide the opportunity to learn how to communicate effectively, work in a team and develop leadership skills.
- Through voluntary activities young people may explore different vocations and talents to discover what they truly want to do. Through the involvement in voluntary activities young people acquire new skills and competences that can even have a positive impact on their working life.
- Volunteering can encourage young people to reflect on their lives and assist them in making informed decisions regarding which path to take. Volunteering also contributes to lifelong learning and provides young people with opportunities that otherwise they may not have had.

The current European Year of Volunteering was launched with the aim of promoting volunteering, to raise greater awareness of its added value to European societies and to create an enabling environment for volunteering in the EU as well as to improve the quality of volunteering.

The Y.E.S. Forum, as the European network of organisations that work with and for young people, clearly supports the European Year of Volunteering. Based on the rich experience in youth and social work the Y.E.S. Forum calls upon the European and national stakeholders.

### **To support legislation, that makes it easy for young people to volunteer:**

1. Make access to volunteering easy and transparent – including clear communication in the language of the young people.

2. Make it compulsory for every volunteer to receive insurance (health, damage, etc.) and third party liability insurance.
3. Ensure that every volunteer has a declaration of good behaviour.
4. Ensure that all volunteers receive a certificate after a defined period – upgrade the youth pass to the Europass (don't create a new pass).
5. Make sure that for young people with fewer opportunities there is a mentor to offer vocational and also personal coaching.

**To support structures and an enabling environment for volunteering for young people:**

1. Organisations who welcome disadvantaged young people to volunteer should have coordinators, tools and means to assess volunteering opportunities and young peoples' abilities – particularly when considering vulnerable beneficiaries.
2. Organisations need tools to encourage and enable young people to volunteer; the image of volunteering amongst young people needs to be changed by making it fun and cool.
3. Give visibility to the wide variety of services that volunteers can provide. Communicate the benefits of volunteering by using young peoples' language.
4. There is a need for clarity of the status of volunteers that enables young disadvantaged people in their process of social inclusion.

Y.E.S. Forum specifically recommends to the European Commission:

1. That development of volunteering should be disassociated from debates about financial crisis.
2. That the economic value of volunteering should be counted as part of co-financing in European projects.
3. That the development of a European Agenda for volunteering is taken forward – taking into account the definition and principles of the ILO and the outcomes and results of the European Year of Volunteering.
4. To consider the variety of volunteering concepts across Europe based on historical developments. Different concepts are demanding different solutions.
5. To review the concept of the European Voluntary Service with the aim of increasing social justice since access for disadvantaged young people is getting more and more difficult and restrictive.

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