

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Directorate-General for Education and Culture

Youth and sport
Youth policy

Brussels, 28 November 2012

Report

Subject: 8th Meeting of the **Expert Group on the Mobility of Young Volunteers**
Place: Vilnius, Lithuania
Date: 26 October 2012
Author: Karin Lopatta-Loibl

Background

This was the eight meeting of the Expert Group, which facilitates the implementation of the Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU. Lithuania kindly hosted the meeting.

Participants

Vice-Minister Dalius Bitaitis opened the meeting and attended part of it. The Cypriot Presidency was represented by Ms Fiorentina Poulli (Adult Training and Educational Centre), and for the first time Croatia took part. The other participants were members of the Expert Group and representatives of Lithuania. The Commission was represented by Karin Lopatta-Loibl (chair) and Graeme Robertson (European Youth Portal). Altogether 20 participants took part.

Aim of the meeting

The meeting informed about activities and events at EU level including a presentation of the EU Youth Report and the Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning. Lithuania presented its new Volunteering Law. The meeting also served to discuss requirements for the European Youth Portal and Volunteering Platform under construction.

Proceedings

Opening

The **vice-Minister for Social Security and Labour in Lithuania, Dalius Bitaitis**, welcomed the Expert Group and expressed satisfaction with the Lithuanian volunteering

law of 2011, which he hoped would serve as an example for other Member States. He put this volunteering law in the broader context of youth policy, of which volunteering is an integral part. He informed that Lithuania recently hosted young volunteers from other European countries at the occasion of a European Basketball Competition. The Minister concluded underlining the importance of involving youth organisations and young people in policies that concern them.

Commission Update and Presentations

The **Commission** informed about **recent developments related to volunteering**:

- Preparation of a draft Report on the European Year of Volunteering 2011; envisaged for adoption towards the end of the year;
- "We Are Europe!" Manifesto of MEP Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Ulrich Beck;
- Conclusions on "The Role of Voluntary Activities in Social Policy" of the Ministers in charge of Employment and Social Affairs in October 2012;
- Commission seminar on youth, entrepreneurship, volunteering and corporate social responsibility in September 2012 in Brussels (organised by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, with participation of colleagues from the youth units in the Directorate-General for Education and Culture);
- Announcement of a workshop on recognition of non-formal learning in volunteering on 18-22 March 2013, organised by the Commission in the framework of the Grundtvig programme;
- Invitation of Expert Group members by the German National Agency to a seminar "Volunteering and Voluntary Services in Europe, creating more opportunities for cross-border volunteering for young people" on 13-14 December 2012 in Bonn;
- Completion of a study on the impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on young people's employability commissioned by the European Youth Forum;
- Call for papers by the newly created European volunteering journal "Voluntaris", launched by the University of Cologne, Germany.

This was followed by **presentations** on the **EU Youth Report** and in particular its **volunteering chapter**, and the **Commission's Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning**.

Discussion

In the following **discussion** the *European Youth Forum*, represented by the Lithuanian Youth Council, welcomed both documents and, in the context of the latter, stressed the need to particularly recognise youth organisations' contribution to non-formal learning and to ensure free access to the validation.

The *European Volunteer Centre (CEV)* called for validation tools to be applied to volunteering experiences in all its forms, also beyond EU programmes, and to cover all age groups. CEV furthermore warned about challenges to find co-funding for EU projects due to budget cuts especially for smaller organisations. Against this backdrop,

they called for volunteering time to count as contribution to co-funding as a way to facilitate greater access to EU programmes.

CEV also informed about the following activities:

- Launch of the European Volunteering Capital competition to promote cross-border volunteering between municipalities;
- Seminar on cross-border volunteering as creator of European identity entitled "What is it for?", 3-4 October 2013, Sarajevo;
- Seminar on employee volunteering, 18-19 April 2013, Ireland.

Presentation of Lithuanian Volunteering Law

Birute Jatautaite, Chief Specialist of Communities Affairs Division of the Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour, presented the **Lithuanian Volunteering Law** of 2011. Whilst aiming at the national legal environment, formulating rights and responsibilities of volunteers and organisations, the law also relates to cross-border volunteering by defining an "International Volunteer Programme".

The following discussion showed that the Lithuanian law inspired other Member States as an example of good practice.

EU Youth Volunteering Platform

Graeme Robertson gave an **update on the development of the EU Youth Volunteering Platform**, which will be part of the future European Youth Portal. The ensuing discussions built on the results on the platform functionalities from a previous Expert Group meeting.

Participants then discussed in four **working groups** requirements needed to run the Volunteering Platform, dealing notably with:

- Accreditation of volunteering organisations,
- Information management at national level,
- Definition and criteria of volunteering opportunities,
- Recognition of cross-border volunteering.

The Commission had prepared guiding questions for the working groups, which were organised in a way that allowed each participant to contribute to all four groups. Results covered for example the development of accreditation criteria and assessment tools in cooperation with stakeholders; creation of national and regional databases where they do not yet exist; focus on community-based cross-border volunteering opportunities; need to promote volunteering certificates by employers and higher education institutions.

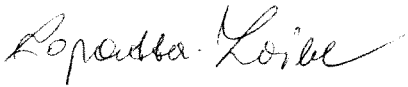
The full set of working group outcomes will be sent to members of the Expert Group together with the PowerPoint Presentations made at the meeting.

Cross-border volunteering at Olympic Games in London

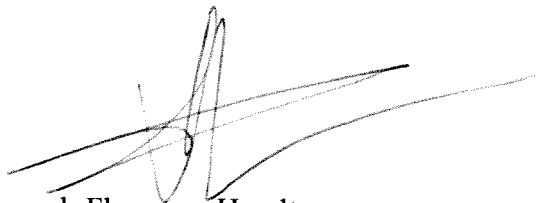
Graeme Robertson presented his experiences as a volunteer at the **Olympic and Paralympic Games in London 2012**. Among the lessons learnt for cross-border volunteering were the promotional effect for volunteering of big mediated events; efficient organisation through breaking down the big event into smaller sub-events; sufficient support of the volunteers; getting the basics such as training, good information and regular communication right from the beginning; consistent messages from all sources at all times, and motivation through early announcement of benefits. After the volunteering experience in another country there is the need to prepare for return back home.

Next steps

- Evaluation of the implementation of the Recommendation on the implementation of the Recommendation on Mobility of Young Volunteers in 2013 in which the Expert Group will be involved.
- Continuation of preparations for the launch of the Youth Volunteering Platform in 2013, to which the Commission engaged in the Recommendation. The Expert Group's involvement is thereby needed.
- Another opportunity to exchange examples of good practice on the implementation of the Recommendation (update of mapping exercise) is to be held and further needs regarding implementation by Member States are to be discussed in the next Expert Group meeting in 2013.
- The next meeting will be held on 3 May 2013 in Vienna, upon invitation from the Youth Unit in the Austrian Ministry for Economic Affairs.



Author: Karin Lopatta-Loibl



Approval: Floor van Houdt

Cc: Members of the Expert Group; Members of Youth working Party; DG EAC: Ms Gariazzo, Mr Dupont, Mr Lejeune, Messr Catoli and Nomden, Mr Guazzugli-Marini, Ms Podlasek-Ziegler, Ms Klingberg; Mr Robertson; Ms Metayer.