



Resolution on the rights-based approach to volunteering

ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL OF MEMBERS/
EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY
BRAGA, PORTUGAL, 17-20 NOVEMBER 2011

The European Youth Forum endorses the rights-based approach on Volunteering and the Policy Agenda on Volunteering in Europe (PAVE) of the EYV2011 Alliance.

The European Youth Forum believes that volunteering and participation in youth organisations is at the heart of democracy, as dynamic forces for social inclusion and active citizenship. Volunteering and active citizenship are therefore rights and not privileges. Therefore with this Resolution the European Youth Forum commits itself to make sure that everyone has this right and is protected against any form of discrimination. The Youth Forum commits itself to work on the lasting legacy of the European Year of Volunteering 2011, with its partners of the EYV2011 Alliance and its institutional partners.

The European Youth Forum welcomes the adoption of the Policy Agenda on Volunteering in Europe (PAVE) by the European Year of Volunteering 2011 (EYV2011) 2011 Alliance¹. The PAVE includes policy recommendations for a more efficient and effective policy framework in Europe to support and promote volunteers, volunteering, volunteer-involving organisations and their partners. The European Youth Forum, as a member of the Alliance, declares its support for the PAVE and commits itself to its implementation. The Youth Forum will achieve this through the creation of support mechanisms for volunteers and their organisations by striving to advocate for a rights-based approach to volunteering.

A rights based approach to volunteering establishes volunteers and volunteering providers as active rights-holders and creates corresponding duties for responsibility-holders. The European Youth Forum's understanding of a rights-based approach to volunteering means that:

- policies affecting volunteers should be based on recognised human rights standards ensuring that volunteers are not disadvantaged, stigmatised or discriminated against on the grounds of their willingness to volunteer their time and expertise for society, and securing all volunteers' equal access to rights, as well as to lawful remedies for rights violations;
- specific documents that interpret the meaning of international human rights treaties, such as explanatory reports for Council of Europe conventions, or general comments for UN conventions, should also include references to the applicability and implementation of relevant rights for volunteers;
- volunteering providers should be given the means and the opportunity to act as awareness raisers among volunteers regarding their rights and responsibilities, as well as legal means that volunteers have at their disposal to contest the violations they might be subject to;
- All volunteers should be informed about their rights and how to address violations of their rights.

In this context the European Youth Forum commits to continue sharing its expertise on a rights-based approach to volunteering and to advocate to *“ensure that the rights and responsibilities of volunteers are recognised and respected and that volunteers themselves are aware of them. A European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers could be used as a reference for policy making and national legislation in this*

¹The EYV2011 Alliance is an open, informal and growing group of around 40 European Networks active in volunteering and driving the European Year of Volunteering through coordination of civil society on European level.

field."²

In order to implement this rights-based approach, the European Youth Forum calls upon public authorities to put in place a Charter on Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers in cooperation with volunteers and their organisations. The draft charter,³ as developed by the European Youth Forum in cooperation with its Member Organisations, external partners and institutions and which is based on a Europe-wide survey and other consultations, should be the basis for finalising the charter on the rights of the volunteer. The Declaration on the need for a rights-based approach towards volunteering, which was agreed on at the "Young Volunteers Stand Up!" II Youth Convention on Volunteering, was a clear message from all stakeholders to all authorities that a Charter needs to be adopted.

The Charter on the rights and responsibilities of volunteers should reflect the rights that match the needs and the responsibilities of all volunteers and volunteer providers, such as that:

- Providing that they want it, everyone who is doing a volunteering activity is entitled to have the recognised status of "volunteer", and should be entitled to the basic rights laid out in the Charter and protection against any kind of discrimination.
- All volunteers shall be informed about their rights and responsibilities.
- Every volunteer has the right to volunteer outside of their country of residence or birth. Therefore, if needed, a visa free of charge must be obtainable through an open, accessible and transparent procedure which favours volunteer's mobility.
- All skills that are gained through volunteer activities should be recognised by the educational system, institutions and employment market.
- Non-profit organisations and groups, that are independent, govern themselves as well as other non-profit entities or public authorities that provide volunteering opportunities, are entitled to the status of a "volunteering provider".
- Volunteering providers are entitled to a stable and sustainable support and legal framework as well as enabling environment, including adequate funding structures that provide accessible, sustainable and flexible financing.
- Volunteering providers are entitled to participate in political decision-making processes at all levels in the area of volunteering, representing the interest and needs of volunteers. Considering the expertise of volunteering providers, as actors that are the closest to the volunteer, they must be consulted on matters in decision-making processes regarding the volunteering sector at all levels.

We are convinced that the full and effective implementation of the rights-based approach to volunteering will improve the conditions for volunteers and volunteering. Therefore the European Youth Forum calls upon all relevant stakeholders in the area of volunteering in Europe to endorse and implement the EYV2011 Alliance PAVE and the rights-based approach by working on the development of the charter of the rights and responsibilities of the volunteer and strive towards its recognition. This resolution is a call for action to all institutions on European, global and local level to work beyond 2011 and to make sure all volunteers have the right to volunteer.

² Policy Agenda on Volunteering in Europe P.A.V.E , EYV2011 Alliance, November 17th 2011, Brussels Belgium (page 6).

³ 0455-11 Draft European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers