Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1778 (2010)[1]
Final version

Promoting volunteering in Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The United Nations proclaimed an "International Year of Volunteers" in 2001 and the activities implemented spotlighted voluntary service. In 2001, voluntary service received major support in terms of resources, communications and research.

2. In 2001, the Parliamentary Assembly associated itself with the United Nations initiative in Recommendation 1496 (2001) on improving the status and role of volunteers in society: a contribution by the Parliamentary Assembly to the International Year of Volunteers 2001. The Assembly has observed that, after 2001, the benefits rapidly faded and that practices in Council of Europe member states and the various authorities organising these modes of citizen involvement have progressed little, or have even regressed.

3. The Assembly welcomes the European Union's decision to declare 2011 the "European Year of Volunteers". It recalls that the Memorandum of Understanding concluded in May 2007 between the Council of Europe and the European Union stipulated that the contribution of civil society to achieving the common goals of the Council of Europe and the European Union should be encouraged.

4. The Assembly also recalls the European Convention on the Promotion of a Transnational Long-term Voluntary Service for Young People (ETS No. 175) of 2000, signed by eight member states and ratified by one single member state.

5. With an eye to 2011, the Assembly wishes to send out a positive message to the Council of Europe member states and to initiate practical schemes in order to highlight the importance of active citizenship through participation in public life. The Assembly therefore invites member states to:

5.1. promote an energetic policy in favour of voluntary service and be involved during the European Year of Volunteers in 2011 in campaigns to raise awareness about voluntary service, in close co-operation with the European Union;

5.2. sign and ratify the European Convention on the Promotion of a Transnational Long-term Voluntary Service for Young People;

5.3. create an instrument for assessing the value of voluntary service in order to enhance its recognition by the political authorities and incorporate it into all budgetary considerations at national, regional and local levels;

5.4. consider introducing, if they have not yet done so, tax-deductibility of donations made to voluntary service associations;

5.5. introduce a volunteer status to facilitate access to voluntary work;

5.6. recognise the impact of voluntary service on local development and encourage the introduction of official policies agreed between local authorities and voluntary organisations;

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee,* acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 12 November 2010 (see Doc. 12430, report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Volontè). See also Recommendation 1948 (2010).

5.7. develop systems for official recognition of informal learning and skills developed through experiences with voluntary service;

5.8. set up a social protection system for long-term volunteers and those who work more than a specified number of hours and credit voluntary action for the acquisition of pension rights;

5.9. encourage the development of voluntary activities for all age groups by strengthening inter-generational solidarity and removing the possible legal and administrative obstacles to the active involvement of older people;

5.10. promote “food banks” ensuring voluntary collection of foodstuffs from private individuals or companies and distributing them free of charge to needy families and individuals;

5.11. create a legal framework for voluntary work tailored to the multi-ethnic realities of a number of Council of Europe member states and develop targeted programmes for enhancing diversity in voluntary associations through the recruitment of migrant volunteers;

5.12. recognise that voluntary work is one of the few areas where there exists a balanced participation of women and men in terms of responsibilities and decision making and that ways should be found to build bridges between this experience in voluntary service and other sectors, including the political sector.