

Study on Volunteering in the European Union

Introduction

The "Study on Volunteering in the EU" was contracted by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and managed by the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission. The study is carried out by GHK Consulting, which is an employee-owned, multi-disciplinary international research and consultancy company working regularly with DG EAC, Cedefop and other EU services and institutions. The company has extensive experience in relation to pan-European evaluations and mapping studies.

The study has started in March 2009 and will end in November / December 2009. The study will cover the 27 Member States of the European Union.

Purpose

At European level there are more than 100 million Europeans engaged in a variety of volunteer tasks, such as protecting the environment, supporting marginalised groups in society, providing disaster relief and the protection of citizens. The importance of volunteering has long been acknowledged by the EU, for example through a diverse range of initiatives to promote volunteering addressing some of the issues highlighted in the Treaty of Amsterdam, such as promoting volunteering among certain groups to develop social solidarity. Programmes such as the Youth in Action programme and the European voluntary service encourage volunteering among young people.

However, there is a lack of a systematic and structured EU approach towards volunteering. In addition, no research has ever covered the full spectrum of volunteering and volunteering in sport in all 27 EU Member States. The purpose of this study is therefore to help the Commission consider ways in which the voluntary sector could be further promoted at EU level and the extent to which volunteering could help the EU in achieving its wider strategic objectives set out in for example the Social Agenda and the Lisbon Strategy.

In particular, the study should help to:

- Reach a better understanding of the volunteering landscape in all 27 Member States, in terms of facts and figures, the influence of EU policies, programmes and actions and concentrating on specific issues such as competition, procurement, taxation, job and service substitution.
- Identify trends, similarities and differences, opportunities and challenges.
- Consider ways in which the volunteering sector could contribute to the strategic objectives of the EU;
- Help determine the scope of possible future policies and actions which could be more effectively implemented at the European level rather than at national or regional/local level.
- Raise awareness of the possible benefits of supporting volunteering; and
- Serve as an information source.

Finally, the study should provide this large and detailed picture of what is ongoing in volunteering in the entire EU to inform the European Year of Volunteering (EYV) 2011.

Key outputs of the study

The study will result in the following products:

- 27 national reports on volunteering, presenting statistics, policies, regulatory and institutional frameworks, funding and impacts of volunteering activity for each Member State.

- One EU comparative report, synthesising the key findings included in the national reports and including presenting the main conclusions and recommendations.
- 27 national fiches on volunteering in sport, presenting statistics and specific policies, regulatory and institutional arrangements, funding and impacts of volunteering in sport for each Member States.
- An EU case study report on volunteering in sport, synthesising the main findings presented in the national fiches formulating conclusions and recommendations.

Approach to the study

The study consists of four main phases, which are briefly described below.

Phase 1: Inception phase

The first phase includes the further elaboration of the analytical framework and the identification of information sources and contacts. It results in the delivery of a report, which presents the method of approach and tools to be used in detail.

Phase 2: Data collection phase

The data collection phase encompasses all activities to gather the quantitative and qualitative information required for the study, by means of desk research, questionnaires, interviews and a survey.

It is a crucial phase, given that only by collecting all relevant information the study will be able to produce sufficient, reliable and comparable evidence for the national and EU reports described above.

Phase 3: Data analysis phase

All information collected will be organised and analysed during this phase, which will also include the preparation of the national reports on volunteering, the national fiches on volunteering in sport and the case study on sport. The organisation and analysis of data will be accompanied by a thorough quality assurance process.

Phase 4: Presentation of findings, recommendations and conclusions

The final phase of the study includes the comparative analysis of all national reports and the compilation of overall findings in relation to the impacts of volunteering, the opportunities and challenges, the effects of EU policies, etc. into the comparative report, including recommendations and conclusions.

Consultation with stakeholders

Over the coming months, the study team will be undertaking phone and face-to-face interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, including:

- International and European governmental actors such as the European Commission, the Council of Europe, several UN bodies, etc.
- International and European non-governmental actors such as EU umbrella organisations for volunteering and for sport, the International and European Olympic Committees, etc.
- National, regional and local governmental actors including relevant Ministries and other administrative bodies with strategic responsibilities for volunteering and for volunteering in sport, etc.
- National, regional and local non-governmental actors including national volunteering organisations, national members of EU umbrella organisations, main NGOs active in volunteering, non-profit sport organisations, etc.

Finally, an online survey will be launched on sport in particular, addressed to sport federations and associations who will also be asked to forward the survey to their member organisations.