

# Pathway to Active Citizenship in Europe

## Youth Volunteering Policy Recommendations

From 16–17 November 2005, more than 60 policy-makers, volunteering organisation leaders and youth volunteers from 14 European countries met at HM Treasury, London, to discuss the link between youth volunteering and active citizenship.

Through volunteering, young people can contribute to building strong and cohesive communities – benefiting the individual, the local community, society at large and democracy.

### The conference generated eight policy recommendations:

1. European level institutions should create more opportunities for young citizens to participate in European level policy development – the gap between European citizens and European level policy-making needs to be bridged through participation rather than consultation, particularly in relation to the involvement of young people in the formulation of policies related to youth volunteering.
2. In reviewing the EVS programme, the European Commission and the Council should take account of trends and developments in national programmes – EVS objectives and shape should be consistent with what is happening at a national level (e.g. need for shorter-term EVS volunteering opportunities).
3. The European Commission should develop a comprehensive research agenda on youth volunteering in EU member and accession states, through consultation with young people and other key stakeholders, and provide funding to contract for independent research to be conducted and a subsequent report published and disseminated widely – basic and comparative research is required, especially on the link between young people's civic participation and volunteering.
4. The EC should increase existing funds available to member countries for the expansion and improvement in quality of existing youth volunteer programmes. A special fund should be created for which member countries and international organisations in Europe could apply to assist with policy development and/or the development of new and innovative youth volunteering programmes – dissemination mechanisms for EC funding should be reviewed to identify ways in which civil society partners could have greater involvement in the delivery of such funds.
5. A dialogue should be facilitated between key stakeholders (including young people) at a European level (through the European Commission) and national level (through national governments) to contribute to future European Youth Policy – young people, civil society representatives and policy-makers need more opportunities to meet (e.g. a series of conferences) and exchange information.
6. European institutions and national governments should ensure greater coordination between governments on youth volunteering policy and practice (and participation of young people in the development of such policy and practice), and that national volunteering programmes should incorporate an international element – e.g. volunteers from other member states and third countries should have the opportunity to participate in national programmes.
7. The European Commission should ensure that all member states, in particular new members and pre-accession states, implement youth policies conducive to increasing active citizenship oriented youth volunteering.
8. Future programmes at a European level should be designed to ensure every young person across Europe should have the opportunity to volunteer, regardless of socio-economic background, ethnicity, disability or home country.

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