



## POLICY STATEMENT

### European Status for Volunteers in Voluntary Service Programmes\* - Approved GA 17 May 2024

\*(At least 20 hours per week and for a sustained period of at least three months and no longer than 12 months without a break)

#### CEV notes that:

1. There are many public and private programmes and systems that facilitate and encourage “long term” Voluntary Service placements in Europe. This policy specifically relates to volunteers in Voluntary Service programmes of this type that involves volunteering for at least 20 hours a week and for a period of time that lasts at least three months and no longer than twelve months without a break. A distinctive feature of these programmes is often their residential nature, meaning that volunteers may relocate to engage in their placements, engaging themselves in new communities and environments.
2. Whilst there are some good examples of suitable legal frameworks that serve to protect the rights of volunteers under these circumstances, in many instances volunteers are left in limbo without proper recognition of their status leading to a reduction or elimination of other rights such as social security, personal assistance and other welfare payments.
3. The lack of a legal status acts as a barrier to take up full time Voluntary Service placements, especially for those located in countries other than the residence of the potential volunteer, and in particular those from harder to reach groups experiencing fewer opportunities.
4. The [Council Recommendation on mobility of young volunteers across the EU](#) recommends that the European Commission and the Member States should promote

transnational volunteering including as part of public and private Voluntary Service Programmes in the EU and beyond through EU youth programmes, as part of the [EU Youth Strategy](#).

5. The 2023 document "[Better Conditions for Youth Volunteering](#)" calls for an "EU Volunteer Status"
6. The [European Commission is working on a legislative initiative on cross-border activities of associations](#) to overcome administrative and registration barriers that non-profit organisations face and that negatively affect EU democratic space.

**CEV believes that:**

1. Volunteers play a critical role in EU democracy, as they embody and spread EU values through their activities. Volunteering is based on recognised and essential principles and the legal status should serve to protect and defend those principles.
2. A specific legal status on the European Level for Volunteers of all ages in Voluntary Service programmes is needed in order to fully realise the potential of the role volunteers play in European society Europe. It would formally recognize and protect volunteers, distinguishing them from paid workers and ensuring they receive proper protections like health and social security coverage as well as insurance. This legal framework would significantly facilitate mobility for volunteers, not just within Europe but also for those coming from outside Europe, by removing administrative and legal barriers that currently hinder international volunteering efforts.
3. A specific legal status on the European Level for Volunteers of all ages in Voluntary Service would standardise the rights and obligations of volunteers and organisations involved in providing voluntary service opportunities, including the coverage of costs (out of pocket expenses) associated to undertaking the voluntary service, leading to more consistent and fair volunteering experience across Europe, promoting organisational accountability, ensuring that hosts adhere to best practices in volunteer management and support including the necessary training.
4. The new EU legal status should bring added value and complement already existing ones at Member State level.
5. The status should only be granted to volunteers meeting the time commitment outlined above and engaging in the volunteering activity in the context of a properly accredited and/ or recognised organisation that meets the required quality and legal standards for volunteering opportunities in their jurisdiction and takes account of European norms.
6. Volunteers should complement and supplement the activities and impact of an organisation, they should not be used as a substitute for paid employment and their full time commitment should not be exploited in any way. Suitable mechanisms to report such abuse should be established alongside processes for corrective measures e.g removing an organisation from an accredited list.

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**CEV asks that:**

1. European Union Institutions and the Member States should not exploit volunteering or instrumentalise it; the establishment of this new status should serve to help maintain the ethical and values base for volunteering by taking quality standards into account when granting the status.
2. The legislative process towards the new legal status for volunteers in Voluntary Service programmes in Europe, including the processes for accreditation of organisations, should include a strong and central civil dialogue component involving all the interested parties according to the intended implementation of article 11 TEU regarding regular and transparent open dialogue with civil society.
3. The status for volunteers in Voluntary Service programmes should be fully compatible with other status' that a person may enjoy such as student, family carer, disabled person, and should not prejudice any rights with regard to any status and should be able to be benefited from in parallel according to the specific situation.
4. The European Commission legislative initiative on cross-border activities of associations includes suitable and appropriate references to the status of cross-border volunteers, in particular those involved in Voluntary Service programmes placements.
5. The European Union Institutions and the Member States recognise the importance of volunteer actions in the protection of EU values and acknowledge the role volunteers have played, currently play and will play for EU society resilience and at the same time ensure good and clear communication about the rights of volunteers including rights and opportunities for validation learning outcomes acquired whilst volunteering.
6. The European Union Institutions and the Member States make more of an effort to support all volunteering, including and beyond voluntary service programmes, taking the [Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030](#) as their main guidance and developing a clear and coordinated European Civic Engagement and Volunteering Strategy.

Annex:

**Examples of “Voluntary Service Programmes” in Europe.**

[European Solidarity Corps](#)

[Austrian Voluntary Social Year](#)

[Italian Civic Service](#)

[German Federal Voluntary Service](#)

[French Civic Service](#)

[Belgian Civic Service](#)