

Estonian National Youth Council (ENL)´s positions on volunteering

ENL defines the concept of volunteering as:

- an activity which is beneficial for the volunteer and the organisation;
- an activity done outside formal education system, employment and family life;
- work done without financial payment;
- crosspoint of the interests of volunteer and organisation;
- the relationship between a volunteer and an organisation is based on trust.

ENL believes that volunteering is an intersectoral principle and is not only relevant for young people and youth organisations.

ENL is very pleased with the opportunities European Voluntary Service offers to young people, but in order to promote volunteering even more widely, it is necessary to draw attention to the aspects explained below.

Volunteering gives a person skills and knowledge. Youth work is largely based on volunteering in Estonia. Therefore it is very important to value volunteers and recognise their contribution to the society on every level (European, member state, municipality etc). Experiences gained from volunteering should be recognised equally with working experiences by employers.

In order to support and promote volunteering it is necessary for member states to support the centers of volunteers. The centers educate and train the coordinators of volunteers in the organisations and also act as a contactpoint in between volunteers and organisations.

There should be special legislation for regulating voluntary work and defining the rights of volunteers on state level.

Europe wide campaign for the recognition of volunteers would be useful in order to emphasize the importance and necessity of volunteers e.g. celebrating volunteers week every year throughout Europe. A handbook of volunteering which explains how to involve volunteers to the organisations would be useful in order to get more organisations to use volunteers.

Volunteering as a principle should be also promoted in schools and integrated into school programmes.