

Prague, September 4, 2010

Dear Madam/Sir ,

Trans-national voluntary activities constitute a rich experience in a non-formal educational and informal learning context of a young person. This experience enhances young people's professional, social and intercultural competences, significantly contributes to their employability and sense of solidarity, encourages them to be active citizens and fosters their integration into society. Local communities hosting young foreign volunteers benefit greatly from their activities that take place in a variety of fields, such as promoting social inclusion, preserving cultural heritage, fostering intergenerational solidarity and protecting the environment, while at the same time enriching the cultural diversity of the hosting communities.

During the recent years, several youth policy initiatives have been launched to promote and foster cross-border volunteering of young people. In 2008, the Council of the European Union adopted the *Recommendations on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union*, which was followed by the *European Conference on Youth: Mobility of Young Volunteers across Europe* in March 2009, organized during the Czech Presidency in the EU Council. Within the follow-up of this event, the European Commission established an *Expert Group on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU* that meets on regular basis to take forward the appeals of the Recommendation and the key messages of the Conference. In view of the year 2011 as the *European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship*, the initiatives focusing on youth volunteering have received a strong impetus. During a meeting of the Directors General responsible for youth in Jerez, Spain, in April 2010 Germany introduced the idea of a *Multilateral Approach on Creating new Opportunities for Cross-border Voluntary Activities for Young People*. The Czech Republic with a number of Member States embraced this idea and agreed to take further practical steps towards such a multilateral approach.

In view of these developments, we are pleased to jointly invite you to the first meeting tackling the preconditions of such an initiative on behalf of the Czech Ministry of Education and Youth and the National Institute of Children and Youth – the Czech National Agency of Youth in Action Programme. For more detailed context of the proposed multilateral approach see the *Background document* in *Annex 3* of this invitation.

Aim of the Multilateral approach

The initiative aims to take a lead on a specific part of the Council Recommendation by developing a broader variety of opportunities and expand existing transnational voluntary activities for young people in Europe on the basis of jointly developed and supported projects. The multilateral setting allows for removing obstacles, increasing hosting capacities and fostering of reliable, sustained and transferable conditions in the field of young people's voluntary activities in Europe.

What can you expect of the meeting?

The meeting will serve as a forum for informal exchange of ideas seeking answers to initial questions such as: How can we further develop national cross-border volunteering opportunities? What are our needs in this regard? How can we benefit from a multilateral approach? Which actors should be involved and how it can be coordinated? For a more detailed agenda of the meeting see *Programme proposal* in *Annex 1*.

Target group

This invitation aims primarily at the members of the Expert Group on Mobility of Young Volunteers. However, since effective communication and cooperation among state administration, practitioners from the NGO sector as well as bodies implementing the Youth in Action Programme and European Year of Volunteering appear to be key elements for the success of such an initiative, the member of the Expert group are asked to forward this invitation to the representatives of the ministries and institutions of the Member States responsible for the issues of youth and youth volunteering, the National Agencies for the YOUTH IN ACTION programme, representatives of the respective bilateral youth offices (Jugendwerke) as well as other relevant NGOs and, where appropriate, the national coordination bodies for the European Year 2011. Thus, a country delegation composed of 3 participants representing different stakeholders in the field of youth volunteering is considered to be optimal.

How can you prepare for the meeting?

In order to achieve the aim of the multilateral approach, we need first to know and understand the situation in the field of cross-border volunteering in countries involved. That is why we would like to ask the participants to prepare a brief presentation of the national context in cross-border youth volunteering.

The presentation shall not exceed 15 minutes per country, focusing on definition, legal/institutional framework, existing offer of cross-border volunteering opportunities, good practices and needs and challenges in this field. For more guidance how to prepare the presentation please see *Annex 2 – Guidelines for presenting the national situation of cross-border youth volunteering*.

Registration and other practicalities

Registration can be done on-line at http://router.youth.cz/db/registration/register.php?id_registration=113. **Please register no later than by 15 September, 2010.** Since the capacity of the meeting is limited, priority will be given to participants with the most appropriate profile implying adequate transfer and follow-up of the outcomes of the Meeting at national level.

The participants are expected to arrive on September 23, 2010 by lunchtime (1 p.m.). The Meeting is going to be held to September 24, 2010 to 2:30 p.m. Please indicate your arrival and departure times in the on-line registration form.

The Meeting takes place in Residence Dlouha 17 (<http://www.rezidencedlouha17.cz>) in the Prague's city centre. Subsistence and lodging costs are covered by the Czech National Agency of YiA. There is no participation fee. Travel costs will not be reimbursed. The working language is English.

For further information about the Meeting please contact Josef Boček, josef.bocek@nidm.cz, 00420 721 228 237 or Ondřej Lochman ondrejlochman@gmail.com, 00420 777 887 320.

Looking forward to meeting you in Prague.

Yours faithfully

Jindřich Fryč, Director for International and European Affairs of the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

Michalu Urban, Head of the Czech National Agency of YiA and Deputy Director of the Czech National Institute of Children and Youth

Annexes

Annex 1 – Programme of the Meeting

Annex 2 – Guidelines for presenting the national situation of cross-border youth volunteering

Annex 3 – Background document about the proposed Multilateral Approach