

MANIFESTO

for volunteering in Europe



EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE

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EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE

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This manifesto has been published by the **European Volunteer Centre (Centre Européen du Volontariat, CEV)**, a European network of currently 38 volunteer development agencies and volunteer centres representing thousands of volunteers at local level. It is targeted at **European decision makers** in the different institutions **explaining why volunteering matters and proposing concrete actions** how representatives of the EU institutions can within their respective powers and competences **recognise, promote and facilitate volunteering in the EU**. Stakeholders from government, the business and the NGO sector have to work together to ensure a “**volunteer friendly society**”. **This manifesto shows the European Union’s contribution to this common effort.**



EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE

Why Volunteering Matters

Volunteering occurs in a variety of forms across Europe reflecting the diversity of approaches and traditions in the Member States of the European Union. However, common features can be identified.

Volunteering is an activity undertaken:

- ! **Out of a person's free will, choice and motivation**
- ! **Without concern for financial gain (non-remunerated)**
- ! **In an organised setting** (within NGOs, volunteer centres, more or less organised groups etc.)
- ! **With the aim to benefit to someone other than the volunteer and to society at large contributing to values of general interest** (although it is recognised that volunteering brings significant benefit equally to the volunteer).

Millions of citizens throughout Europe are actively involved in different forms of volunteering. Latest Figures¹ show:

In the UK **23 million people** volunteer each year, providing a workforce equivalent to 180,000 full-time workers - For every Euro of public funding spent to support volunteering, volunteers give EUR 30 worth of work, **the economic value** of formal volunteering in the UK has been estimated at more than **EUR 65 billion** per year, or 7.9% of GDP.

Belgians devote 5 hours per week to non-paid voluntary activities, which is equivalent to around 200.000 full time jobs.

Time devoted to volunteering within associations in **France** was equivalent to over **716,000 full time jobs** in 2002.

In **Poland**, around 5.4 million citizens volunteered in 2004, which is 18.3% of the population. The estimated economic value of volunteering, calculated by multiplying the number of full-time equivalent employees (volunteers) by the average wage in the particular sector, amounted to **EUR 124 million**.

23 Million citizens (36%) get involved in some kind of volunteering in **Germany**, **33% of the adult Irish population** (i.e. approximately 1,287,000 people) volunteer in some capacity.

¹ All figures stem from the "Fact&Figures" research documents provided by CEV. Please consult <http://www.cev.be/facts&figures.htm>

Why Volunteering Matters

In all its different forms, volunteering plays a crucial role across the European Union:

- Volunteers are engaged in a diverse range of activities, such as the **provision of education and services, mutual aid or 'self-help', advocacy, campaigning, management, community and environmental action.**
- Volunteering is a means of **social inclusion and integration. It contributes to a cohesive society creating bonds of trust and solidarity and, thus, social capital.**
- Volunteering is one of the ways in which people of all nationalities, religions, socio-economic backgrounds and ages can **contribute to positive change.**
- **Volunteers contribute to the implementation of EU policies**, such as social inclusion policies and development aid.²
- Volunteerism can be used as a tool to stimulate **active and responsible European citizenship, which is central to European ideals and values of democracy, solidarity and participation.**
- It is a powerful **source of reconciliation and reconstruction** in divided societies.
- Through volunteering people **gain and exercise skills** such as leadership, communication and organisation skills, they extend their social networks and often move on to paid jobs in the future; Volunteering provides **informal and non-formal learning opportunities** and is therefore **a crucial instrument in the life-long learning strategy** within the European Union.
- The **economic value** and the share of “economic” activity in the Gross Domestic Product of volunteering is significant and needs to be clearly identified in National Statistical Accounts.

- Volunteering and the creation of **innovative partnerships** between businesses, public authorities and volunteer centres is a way of developing the **corporate social responsibility agenda.**
- Volunteering plays an important role in finding solutions to societal issues. Volunteers help to improve the quantity and quality of services and to **creatively develop new services.** In this way volunteering can contribute to the **creation of new employment opportunities.**
- **Voluntary action is therefore an important component of the strategic objective of the European Union of becoming “...the most competitive and dynamic, knowledge-based economy in the world...”** as adopted by the Member States at the European Council in Lisbon in March 2000.

However, volunteering, while freely given, is not cost free.

Recognition, facilitation and promotion of volunteering and networking are essential to deliver the above-mentioned roles. An effective volunteering infrastructure needs support from all stakeholders: Civil society, business and government at local, regional, national and EU level. The EU is undoubtedly a key actor in this regard and can in a variety of ways contribute to a more effective volunteering landscape in Europe.

²Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the Communication from the Commission on “Voluntary Organisations and Foundations in Europe” (COM(97) 241 final), para. 2.9.

CEV urges the institutions of the EU to...

1. Actively promote and recognise volunteering

Volunteering happens in all Member States of the EU, even if the national and regional traditions and forms of volunteering vary significantly. Volunteers throughout Europe do have in common an aspiration of getting actively involved and contributing to the solution of societal problems. **What is needed is a shared broad vision of the scope and importance of volunteering in the different Member States of the EU and a common understanding of the role of the different stakeholders on how to promote and recognise volunteering.** Robust empirical information will play an important role in putting volunteering on the agenda at EU level. The EU, national governments and other involved parties should build their capacity to monitor developments in volunteering and to evaluate the value that volunteering represents. In this respect, **the EU and national governments are encouraged to implement the UN Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the system of national accounts and with EUROSTAT through the establishment of a satellite account providing data on volunteering and its economic value.**

The EU needs to recognise volunteering horizontally in its different policies.

We call on the institutions to actively engage with CEV and to take on board the recommendations, that CEV channels from a grass roots level to them.

Some member states organise annual events (e.g., 'Volunteers' Day' or 'Volunteers' Week') to promote volunteering. The international year of the Volunteer in 2001 was an important catalyst for increasing attention for volunteering and provided the framework for significant achievements and measures that are contributing to strengthening the global volunteer movement. The UK year of the volunteer 2005 repeated this experience on a national level. The EU should set an example to encourage national governments to pay more attention to volunteering and shall **designate a European Year of Active Citizenship through Volunteering.**

Special attention must be paid to the **recognition of skills and competences developed through non-formal and informal learning experiences.** The role of volunteering in the life-long learning strategy needs to be actively recognised and activities that aim at developing systems for official recognition of informal and non-formal learning opportunities need to be supported.

We call on the institutions of the EU³ to...

1. Actively recognise and promote volunteer activity in EU policies acknowledging its horizontal nature and ensure that EU policies are "volunteer friendly" enabling individuals to get involved in volunteering;
2. Continue special volunteering programmes targeted at young people, and develop similar programmes for other groups (e.g. the elderly and people with disabilities). While we acknowledge the importance of the EU Youth Programme, we are convinced that the EU's volunteering programmes should be more inclusive and available for all ages;
3. Acknowledge the role that volunteering plays for a policy on "active ageing". In the light of an ageing society and a new generational balance it is crucial that tools for participation of older people in society are promoted and supported;
4. Acknowledge the role of volunteering to foster Active European Citizenship and to tailor EU programmes respectively. Volunteers at local and regional level are active citizens committed to European values, they can play a key role in promoting European values if a European dimension is added to their activities;
5. Include support for volunteering in international development aid policies, especially with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals;
6. Acknowledge the powerful effect of volunteering on the inclusion and empowerment of traditionally excluded social groups such as immigrants and investigate how to promote activities that will lead to a better understanding of the role and the impact of volunteer engagement on the integration of these groups;
7. Acknowledge the role of volunteering in fostering the development of skills and competences needed within a knowledge-based society and in contributing to employability;
8. Acknowledge the need for a better understanding of the volunteering landscape in the EU and the need for European comparative research in order to obtain data on volunteering, its scope and characteristics at European level;
9. Include alternative economic indicators into the Statistical Accounts of EUROSTAT that make the contribution of the non profit sector and especially of volunteering to national economies visible;

³Where appropriate, these actions can be supported by the Council of Europe.

CEV urges the institutions of the EU to...

10. Recognise in European programmes and projects the work of volunteers as real community investment and as a contribution to match funding with status equal to monetary support;
11. Support certification schemes for volunteers aimed at recognising the development of competencies through volunteering in the educational systems of the member states and develop a European framework for validating informal and non-formal learning building upon the common principles already adopted by the Education, Youth and Culture Council⁴ and support the creation of a European award for volunteers;
12. Support International Volunteer Day (5 December) and declare a European Year of Active Citizenship through Volunteering.

2. Support and facilitate volunteering

In many countries, the public and private sectors are cooperatively exploring ways to facilitate and support volunteer work through the development of policies and the implementation of legislation. These efforts involve identifying the necessary legal provisions, clarifying the respective roles of various parties and allocating the necessary financial support. In recent years, the corporate sector has become more active in the field of volunteering enabling the participation of employees and removing obstacles to their participation.

The need for an infrastructure to support volunteers, volunteering and volunteerism is widely recognised. Such an infrastructure should include a recognised legal framework for volunteering, which could be fostered by the EU developing broad common standards. Research shows a big diversity amongst EU Member States as to definitions, legal provisions and the understanding of

“voluntary action”. And not all Member States have national volunteer centres or entities that perform supporting and facilitating functions for volunteering in general. Even fewer countries have the infrastructure necessary to provide local-level support for volunteering.

At European level, there is currently no targeted funding for a European support infrastructure for volunteering. A European structure is needed to exchange information and ‘good practices’, to build capacity, to contribute to a common understanding of the volunteering landscape in Europe, to channel information between national and grass roots level and the European Union and to give volunteers a ‘voice’ within the EU, and to add a European dimension to the innumerable activities of volunteers throughout Europe.

We call on the institutions of the EU⁵ to...

13. Publish a White Paper on Voluntary Action and Active Citizenship to stress their links and review scale and importance of volunteering in Europe. This would contribute to the development of a community action strategy to encourage cooperation between Member States and associated countries to promote and enable volunteering and shall build on the Commission Communication COM (1997) 241;
14. Stimulate national governments to formulate national volunteering policies, to create the volunteering infrastructure necessary for their implementation and to provide a legal framework for volunteering⁶, for example by proposing European standards;
15. Put a specific focus on the development of volunteering in the Central and Eastern European States, both in new Member States and candidate countries to support their work to consolidate their new-found democracies;
16. Allocate resources for a European Volunteer Centre Development Fund (including matching funds for national governments) aimed at developing infrastructure to support and facilitate volunteering;
17. Actively promote the further expansion of corporate community involvement and corporate volunteering in the framework of the European debate on Corporate Social Responsibility. EU Member States can be encouraged to grant tax benefits for companies promoting employee volunteering.

⁵Where appropriate, these actions can be supported by the Council of Europe.

⁶These actions follow the recommendations made within the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on support for volunteering (2991) and the United Nations General Assembly Follow-up Resolution to the International Year A/57/L.8 of November 2002.

⁴Education, Youth and Culture Council, 27-28 May 2004

3. Actively foster networking

Much work remains to be done to further strengthen the base of volunteering at all levels (local, national and European), particularly with regard to the 'voice' of volunteer-involving organisations in Europe. The

institutions of the EU need to recognise the crucial role that networks such as CEV play to link the EU agenda to the grass roots level.

We call on the institutions of the EU⁷ to...

18. Establish working groups and single access points in the European Commission and the European Parliament that deal with the horizontal nature of volunteering in the framework of EU policies;
19. Promote the exchange of ideas and knowledge about volunteering among all EU member states in order to promote a shared vision and a common strategy;
20. Promote a special focus on the role of volunteering in the Open Methods of Coordination in the fields of Employment, Social Affairs and Education;
21. Facilitate a European exchange of information on good (and bad) practices through networks such as CEV and actively engage with these networks in the context of consultation mechanisms concerning active citizenship;
22. Actively continue to encourage and support relationships between corporations and volunteer involving organisations at EU level;
23. MEPs should engage with their national member organisations that represent volunteers in their constituencies and provide expertise about the volunteering landscape in their country.

CEV urges Members of the European Parliament, officials of the European Commission, the Council, representatives of the European Economic and Social Committee and other institutions, as well as CEV member organisations and all those interested in supporting the further development of volunteering in Europe to:

...

Make the recognition, promotion, support and facilitation of volunteering a priority of their work

...

Forward the CEV Manifesto for Volunteering in Europe to relevant stakeholders, especially national government ministers

...

Forward the CEV Manifesto for Volunteering in Europe to the local Delegations of the European Commission

...

Forward the CEV Manifesto for Volunteering in Europe to other organisations and businesses that may be interested in supporting and promoting voluntary activity in Europe

...

Become actively involved in information and awareness-raising campaigns on the invaluable contribution volunteers make to the lives of individuals, communities and society, as well as emphasise the need for partnerships between volunteers and professionals

⁷Where appropriate, these actions can be supported by the Council of Europe.

CEV welcomes the following documents and governmental activities at EU and International level

■ “Resolution on volunteering” of the European Parliament, 1983, which

- Recognised the general interest nature of volunteering and that the development of an adequate infrastructure is central to effective policies on volunteering;
- Invited the European Commission to pay systematic attention to volunteering;
- Called for a European “statute for voluntary work” covering the reimbursement of expenses and social insurance for volunteers.

■ Declaration 38 on voluntary service activities, attached to the final act of the Treaty of Amsterdam, 1999, which:

- Recognised the important contribution made by voluntary service activities to developing social solidarity;
- Stated that the Community will encourage the European dimension of voluntary organisations with particular emphasis on the exchange of information and experience as well as on the participation of the young and the elderly in voluntary work.

■ Communication of the EU Commission on ‘Promoting the Role of Voluntary Organisations and Foundations’ 1997, COM (1997) 241, which

- Recognised the political, economic and social significance of voluntary action “in developing a cohesive and inclusive European society based on active citizenship.”

■ The International Year of the Volunteer IYV 2001

- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 56/38 of 5 December 2001 and United Nations General Assembly Follow-up Resolution to the International Year A/57/L.8 of 26 November 2002 where it is recognised that
 - Voluntary action enables citizens to play a part in the democratic process;
 - Volunteering benefits the individual volunteer, those outside the immediate family, communities and society;
 - Volunteering contributes to social inclusion;
 - Volunteering is a means of lifelong learning and greater employability;
 - Volunteering is a unifying theme, generating cross-sectoral partnerships;
 - The economic value of volunteer effort is huge.

■ Eurofestation, Maastricht 2004: European ROADMAP

- This conference organised by the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) and CIVIQ, Dutch National Volunteer Centre, launched a shared European Roadmap to 2010 for the EU, national member states, (multi)national corporations, national volunteer centres, (national) volunteer-involving organisations and supporting infrastructure. This Roadmap to 2010 is intended to be an influential tool for further policy developments, events and activities in Europe around the theme of volunteering.

■ The Year of the Volunteer 2005 in the United Kingdom, aimed at

- Increasing the number of volunteers, particularly individuals from marginalized groups and young people, raising the profile of the work volunteers are doing nationwide and awarding volunteers for their contribution to society.

The European Volunteer Centre, CEV

The European Volunteer Centre (CEV) is a European umbrella association of currently 38 national and regional Volunteer Centres across Europe, that together work to support and promote voluntary activity.

CEV channels the collective priorities and concerns of its member organisations to the institutions of the European Union. It also acts as a central forum for the exchange of policy, practice and information on volunteerism. It supports networking among its members and organises conferences, seminars, workshops and other activities such as research.

The members of CEV represent thousands of volunteer organisations, associations and other voluntary and community groups at local, regional and national level. Together we work to:

- ! Be an effective voice for volunteering in Europe
- ! Strengthen the infrastructure for volunteering in the countries of Europe
- ! Promote volunteering and make it more effective

CEV's activities include:

- ! Promoting volunteering to the general public, the media, businesses and policy-makers
- ! Policy development and research
- ! Advocacy towards the institutions of the EU
- ! Supporting existing national, regional and local Volunteer Centres throughout Europe
- ! Supporting the development of new Volunteer Centres
- ! Strengthening networking between Volunteer Centres and other voluntary bodies throughout Europe
- ! Supporting organisations promoting innovation and wishing to implement good practice in their involvement of volunteers
- ! Build capacity amongst organisations in CEV membership



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European Volunteer Centre | Centre Européen du Volontariat | CEV

Rue de la Science 10 | B-1000 Brussels | Tel: (+32) 2 511 75 01 | Fax: (+32) 2 514 59 89 | cev@cev.be | <http://www.cev.be/>

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