

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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17 major volunteering networks support the European Parliament call for 2011 to be the European Year of Volunteering

On 15 July the European Parliament adopted, with the signatures of 454 MEPs, a declaration calling upon the European Commission to announce 2011 as the European Year of Volunteering, a call that is endorsed by the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the Council of Youth Ministers. European civil society welcomes this declaration and calls on the European Commission and the Council to act.

We strongly appreciate that the 5 MEPs sponsoring the declaration and all the MEPs who have signed it are taking the voice of European citizens seriously: The call for the Year is supported by 17 major European networks active in volunteering, representing hundreds of thousands of volunteer organisations at local, regional, national and international level involving millions of volunteers. We are all committed to make this Year a lasting success.

The declaration of the European Parliament is the right statement issued at the right time: Whereas 3 Europeans in 10 engage in volunteering and 80% of Europeans declare that active engagement in society is crucial for our democracy, the EU institutions and large number of Member States do not have a strategic and comprehensive policy on the support, the promotion, the recognition and the facilitation of voluntary engagement, for all ages and in all walks of life.

Only two other declarations of the European Parliament over the past four years have received a higher score. This is a clear sign of the importance the representatives of the only directly elected European institution give to the contribution of more than 100 million Europeans to our society. We expect, therefore, the European Commission to respond to this demand in order to recognize the contribution of volunteers and their organisations to social and economic cohesion in Europe.

We call on the European Commission and Member States to act now. The EU Youth ministers called in November last year for a European Year of Volunteering to be organised but the European Commission was largely unresponsive referring to an upcoming study on volunteering to be the basis for taking its decision. This study has been announced in both 2007 and 2008 and is still not published. Given the European political agenda, volunteer organisations all over Europe are convinced that we should not wait until the launch of the study, but that the publication of the results would meaningfully complement the European Year's activities.

Moreover, 2011 will see the 10th anniversary of the International Year of the Volunteer (IYV) 2001. IYV has proven that high-level political attention to volunteering can boost the interest in and the infrastructure for volunteering. The UN will organize events throughout 2011 to mark and celebrate this anniversary and to take stock of the development in volunteering policies over the last 10

years. The European Year of Volunteering 2011 will perfectly fit to be the Europe region's contribution to this effort.

The EU cannot afford not to care about its active citizens; theirs are the hands that put our European values of solidarity and social cohesion into practice day after day.

This press release is supported by the 17 networks of the European Year of Volunteering alliance, the European Volunteer Centre (CEV), the Social Platform, the World Scouts Movement, the European Youth Forum (YFJ), the Confederation of European Senior Expert Services (CESES), the Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO), the Red Cross/European Union Office, Caritas Europa, volonteuropa, AGE, Solidar, ENGAGE, Johanniter International, the European Non-Governmental Sports Organization (ENGSO and ENGSO Youth) and Youth Action for Peace (YAP) and the Euclid network of third sector leaders.

> 100 Million Europeans = 100% Volunteers => 2011 European Year of Volunteering