

Press Release – For immediate release

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22 European civil society networks welcome the European Commission's proposal for the European Year of Volunteering 2011

The European Commission has adopted today the official proposal for a decision on the European Year of Volunteering (EYV) 2011. This decision is the result of a civil society initiative led by European networks of organisations active in volunteering. This "European Year of Volunteering 2011 Alliance", welcome this decision as a further step towards a better recognition of the contribution that more than 100 million European volunteers make to our societies day after day. We now call on the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament to adopt the decision and to ensure an appropriate budget for the Year.

The objectives of the Year have been carefully chosen and reflect our ambition for the volunteering landscape in Europe: Rewarding and recognising voluntary activities; Empowering volunteer organisations; and Raising awareness about the value of volunteering in our societies. We see these as the main elements to ensure an enabling environment for volunteering in the EU.

We are concerned that the European Commission has proposed a budget for the Year's preparatory and implementation activities of merely 8 million EUR. Based on the experience of other European Years, this amount may not be sufficient to achieve the above-mentioned ambitious objectives, especially because for the Year to be successful it needs to reach out to the local level where voluntary activities take place. We therefore urge the European Parliament and the Council of the EU to increase adequately the budget in order to fulfil the expectations raised by the Year.

For EYV 2011 to be a lasting success, we need a common effort by EU institutions, national governments, local authorities, voluntary organisations, the private sector and the media. As European civil society organisations, we are ready to collaborate as partners with the institutions of the EU to prepare and implement the Year. The campaign for the European Year of Volunteering 2011 over the last months has already mobilised thousands of voluntary organisations in Europe through our networks. We will keep up the momentum and expect that this Year will bring exceptional involvement of Europeans in the celebrations and activities of the Year.

As a part of the preparatory actions, the European networks involved in Alliance will launch soon a website devoted to European Year of Volunteering 2011 (www.eyv2011.eu) which will be the major source of information and a point of reference for the Year.

We call on all relevant parties at national level to mobilise all their resources to ensure that the European Year of Volunteering 2011 will be successful and will have a sustainable outcome.

Dr. Marijke Steenbergen, CEV President and CEO of MOVISIE (Netherlands), said:

'We are delighted that the European Commission has responded to the voice of its citizens, over 100 million of whom contribute to society as volunteers. The decision to designate 2011 as the European Year of Volunteering brings the Commission closer to the people of Europe and to their real concerns.'

Markus Held, CEV Director, said:

'Work will start now –CEV and all the partners of the "European Year of Volunteering 2011 Alliance" are ready to support the Commission in its efforts to organise and deliver a meaningful and successful Year'.

Note to the press:

This alliance includes the European Volunteer Centre (CEV), the Social Platform, the World Organisation of the Scouts Movement WOSM, the Red Cross/European Union Office, the European Youth Forum (YFJ), AGE - the European Older People's Platform, Caritas Europa, Volonteuropa / CSV, SOLIDAR, the Confederation of European Senior Expert Services (CESES), the ENGAGE business network, Johanniter International, the European Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO), European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation (ENGSO and ENGSO Youth), EURAG, the Euclid Network of Third Sector Leaders, Eurodiaconia, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts WAGGGS, CEDAG, the Conservation Volunteers Alliance (CVA) and the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA).

For further information, see www.eyv2011.eu.