

PRESS RELEASE

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Major European civil society networks welcome decision of the European Commission to work towards the European Year of Volunteering 2011

In a meeting yesterday, 18th February 2009, it was announced that the European Commission, on instruction of President Barroso, has started preparing the European Year of Volunteering 2011.

This announcement follows an intensive two and a half year campaign led by an alliance of nineteen European networks active in volunteering and coordinated by the European Volunteer Centre (CEV).

We are delighted to see that the European Commission has taken up a civil society initiative. We believe that the decision to work towards 2011 as the European Year of Volunteering brings the Commission closer to the people of Europe and to their real concerns. It has responded to the voice of its citizens: over 100 million Europeans contribute to society as volunteers, putting into practice shared values of solidarity, social cohesion and active citizenship.

Since volunteers contribute to so many EU policies, we welcome this move to acknowledge, celebrate and promote their engagement. We want the European Year of Volunteering 2011 to make an impact at every level and we are ready to support the Commission in its efforts to organise and deliver a meaningful and successful Year.

A number of European bodies (the European Economic and Social Committee (2006); the Council of Education and Youth Ministers (2007); the Committee of the Regions (2008) and the European Parliament, with a Written Declaration adopted by 454 MEPs in 2008) have already declared their support for this Year.

Note to the press:

The meeting hosted by the European Commission's DG Education and Culture, brought together Pierre Mairesse, Director, Risto Raivio, Head of Unit, and representatives of "European Year of Volunteering 2011 alliance".

This alliance includes the European Volunteer Centre (CEV), the Social Platform, the World Organisation of the Scouts Movement, the Red Cross/European Union Office, the European Youth Forum (YFJ), the older peoples platform AGE, Caritas Europa, volonteuropa (CSV), Solidar, the Confederation of European Senior Expert Services (CESES), ENGAGE business network, EURAG, Johanniter International, the European Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO), the European Non-Governmental Sports Organizations (ENGSO and ENGSO Youth), Youth Action for Peace (YAP), the Euclid Network and Eurodiaconia.