

From Volunteering for our Planet, local and national celebrations of volunteer effort to inspiring and outstanding individual stories: The International Volunteer Day, 5 December

On 5th December volunteers around the world once again celebrated the International Volunteer Day. There is double cause for celebration this year with the recent announcement by the EU Council of Ministers that 2011 will be designated European Year of Volunteering, after a 2-year campaign by the European Year of Volunteering (EYV) Alliance.

“[Volunteering for our Planet](#)” is the theme of the International Volunteer Day in 2009, celebrating the contribution of volunteers and voluntary organisations in the fight against climate change, in the run up to the conference in Copenhagen later this month.

The volunteers active at the members of the EYV Alliance level have also been taking action to raise awareness about climate change.

Young Colombian Red Cross volunteers tell the story of climate change



Since 2006 young [Red Cross](#) volunteers in Colombia have been raising awareness, and helping local people to think about adaptation and risk reduction in relation to climate change in five different communities in the Department of La Guajira. Aiming to reach 4,500 people in the community, the young volunteers became trainers on the topic and developed methods using songs, tales, puppet shows, books, stories to help local people understand the risks, culminating in a production called “Nature Show – History of Friends of the Earth” which was so successful it was also turned into a book, so that there would be a permanent member of the show.

Contribution by the Red Cross/EU office (contact person: Eberhard Lueder)

WCVA's climate change conference celebrates International Volunteer Day

[Wales Council Voluntary Action \(WCVA\)](#) will be celebrating International Volunteer Day at the WCVA annual conference and Network Wales awards 2009. The conference, titled ‘the first step is the hardest – climate change for non-greens’ takes place on 3 December in Llandudno. Through interventions by expert speakers and workshops, its aim is to highlight the impact of climate change on the third sector and offer advice to voluntary groups on how they can help combat it.

The green theme will be continued at WCVA's Network Wales awards that evening. The awards will honour some of Wales' finest volunteer-led organisations. Nominees include Neptune's Army

of Rubbish Cleaners of Pembroke Dock, whose volunteers dive from the coast to recover discarded waste from the ocean. Another nominee is Tools For Self Reliance Cymru, a team of volunteers who repair broken tools, which are then donated to some of the poorest communities in Africa. GTFM, a community-run radio station powered by wind and solar energy, is also in line for an award. However, all the nominees deserve recognition for the hard work and effort they put in for the benefit of their communities.

Contribution by WCVA (contact person: D. Cook)

Guides and Scouts taking action against climate change

The [World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts \(WAGGGS\)](#) are also motivating Girl

Guides and Girl Scouts around the world to raise awareness, speak out and take action to fight climate change. Young women from all over the

world will take part in Copenhagen Conference to discuss a new global agreement on how to take action against climate change. Together with other youth organisations they will convince world leaders at the conference about the need to put youth at the centre of efforts to combat climate change will contribute to the outcome statement of the conference, lobby national delegations and speak out at WAGGGS and partner events to raise awareness about the issues.

To ensure that girls and young women around the world are aware of the issue of climate change and are equipped to take action against it, WAGGGS has partnered with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and WWF to produce climate change campaigns and several education resources. One of them is the new Food Security and Climate Change Challenge Badge, which will make young people aware of the issues of environmental protection and food

security and inspire them to be an active part of solving the problems.

WAGGGS is partnering with WWF on its Earth Hour Lantern Project, where children around the world will assemble paper lanterns and send them to the Danish capital inscribed with their personal message to world leaders. Every lantern received by 10 December will be paraded in front of world leaders during the Earth Hour Copenhagen event on 16 December. None of these activities would be possible without Girl Guide and Girl Scout leaders who volunteer on a regular basis to develop and implement such programmes.

Scouts belonging to the [World Organization of the Scout Movement](#) are also taking action against climate change - read more about their activities on the special section on their [website](#).

Contribution by WAGGGS (contact person: Rosemary Hindle)

Young Europeans' Seminar 2010: Footprints. Our Responsibility as Global Citizens



Looking forward to 2010, the voluntary organisation [YFU \(Youth for Understanding\)](#) will organise a seminar in Germany in 2010 to enable almost 500 young Europeans to develop their identity as responsible global citizens. "Footprints. Our Responsibility as Global Citizens" fostering the participants' understanding of the interactions between humans and their ecological environment and empower them to share responsibility and bring changes to the world, starting from their own surroundings and the footprints they leave behind.

Contribution by YFU (contact person: Brian Arnold)

"Love of water and the energy of volunteers drive our organisation", France



In France, the widely read French women's magazine *Femme Actuelle* has been running, in partnership with [France Bénévolat](#) a yearly competition to highlight the achievements and award outstanding women volunteers. Ten such volunteers have received an award last November out of nearly 300 candidatures. Amongst these ten, Anne Rivière founder of the NGO "[Eau Vivante](#)" whose mission is to carry out research and offer trainings on the environment-friendly usage of water.

"Love of water and the energy of volunteers drive our organization" says Anne: "Eau Vivante" focuses mainly on spreading environment-friendly techniques for the usage of water: e.g. recycling rainwater, recycling used water by means of plants such as reeds and flowers, dry toilets. The association is based in Belle Ile, a beautiful island off the coast of Brittany, but it spreads its action all over France and abroad providing trainings run by volunteers also in Africa, South America, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.



Contribution by France Bénévolat and Eau Vivante (contact persons : Susana Szabo and Anne Rivière)

Assembly of Italian Volunteering and CSVnet meeting the President of the Republic, G. Napolitano

But it is not only climate change or environmental protection, which is a topic of concern for the volunteer members of the EYV Alliance. The role of volunteering, its participation in the Third Sector and the fundamental relations with the institutions: these will be the themes under discussion at the Assembly of Italian Volunteering, organised by National Coordination body of Voluntary Service Centres ([CSVnet](#)) and other national and local voluntary associations, on the 4th and 5th December 2009. The initiative aims also at reflecting about how volunteering can and must cover an active role for change,

necessary for overcoming the crisis, answer people's needs and launch the social rebuilding which will lead to the protection of citizens' and community's rights. Before the National Assembly, the President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, will meet a delegation from CSVnet, which will present to him their Manifesto on Italian Volunteering for Europe.

Contribution by CSVnet (contact person: Stefania Macchioni)

Other organisations among the EYV Alliance members choose to mark the date by organising all sorts of celebrations of the volunteer effort.

Volunteering Assembly and Special Awards in Scotland

To celebrate International Volunteers Day on 5th December, [Volunteer Development Scotland](#) (VDS) is holding a Volunteering Assembly within the Scottish Parliament. The event is sponsored by Bruce Crawford, MSP and is being held by permission of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body. With specially granted access to the debating chamber, VDS members will have the opportunity to sit within the chamber and take part in the debate; 'Modernising Volunteering'. The theme of the event will explore what needs to be done to create modernised approaches to volunteering in Scotland. Delegates will be given the opportunity to discuss how they are responding to the challenges of modernisation and share their experiences. VDS believes that they have to



initiate a debate about volunteering to keep it on the agenda of key policy and decision makers but also to encourage organisations – and volunteers - to look at where we are and where we are going. December 5th 2009 also completes the 25th Anniversary and Silver Jubilee Year of VDS as well as marking International Volunteer Day. As part of our celebrations to mark this milestone, VDS's Chair, Bill Howat, will be presenting the Chair's Silver Jubilee Award to Dr. Edgar S. Cahn, the founder of Time Banking, at the event. The Award, a silver engraved cup, is in recognition of both his international inspiration to volunteering, and his personal contribution and positive impact to Time Banking in Scotland.

Contribution by Volunteer Development Scotland (contact person: Shirley Bwyne)

The International Volunteer Day – A Chance to Award Volunteers in Slovakia

[C.A.R.D.O.](#) – an umbrella organisation for voluntary organisations in Slovakia, celebrates the contribution of volunteers in five award ceremonies taking place in eight Slovak regions between 2nd and 7th December. Volunteers have been nominated in a range of different categories, including volunteers working in social

and health care services, volunteers working with children and youth and volunteering project of the Year.

Contribution by C.A.R.D.O. (contact person: Alzbeta Mrackova)

Volunteering week: photo exhibition and seminar on “volunteering of proximity” in Algarve, Portugal

The [Local Volunteer Bank of Tavira](#) (Algarve, Portugal) organises the “Volunteering Week”, which will take place between 2nd and 5th December and celebrates the International Volunteer Day. During this week, the local

population will have the opportunity to visit a photo exhibition about the Local Volunteer Bank, to attend a seminar on “Sights of Proximity” with the aim of sharing experiences with volunteer involving entities and volunteers. This initiative

looks like an excellent opportunity to sensitise the population about volunteer and showcase the daily work of the volunteers working with the local volunteer bank and to engage more volunteers.

Contribution by Local Volunteer Bank Tavira (contact person: Élia Martins)

Celebrate volunteers by organising a photo exhibition “Volunteers in Action”, Ireland



[Volunteering Ireland](#), through its local service of the **Dublin City North Volunteer Centre**, is marking International Volunteer Day 2009 by holding a photo exhibition launch entitled “Volunteers in Action.” Photographs will highlight the assortment of people volunteering in Dublin and the

various ways people can give back to their community. Many of the photos will be of volunteers in action. This fantastic event, supported by Allianz, will be held on December 4th in Dublin Castle. The event will feature photos taken by a volunteer photographer, Maureen McDonnell, Associate of the Royal Photographic Society. Several of the photographs are of the nominees for the Ireland Involved Awards from November 5th. The Ireland Involved Awards celebrated 30 short listed nominees from across Ireland who stood out as

outstanding volunteers. Volunteering in Ireland can take many forms; from designing websites for charities to playing board games with the elderly, from teaching refugees literacy skills to releasing seals into the wild, from collecting donations to coaching soccer teams.

The purpose of the exhibition will be to display this variety of volunteer roles and the diversity of people involved in volunteering. The photographs will show how there is neither a stereotypical volunteer nor a stereotypical volunteer role. By breaking these boundaries we will encourage numerous people to volunteer who may never before have thought themselves to be the volunteer type. After the launch, the exhibition will travel around libraries in the Dublin City Centre and Dublin City North area for the following months to encourage individuals to take action in their local community and volunteer with their time and skills for the benefit of the wider society.

Contribution by Volunteering Ireland (contact person: William O’Shaughnessy)

In Northern Ireland, nine organisations have successfully achieved the Investing in Volunteers national award



The Investing in Volunteers national award recognises their commitment to good practice in volunteer

management. These latest recipients of the Award, delivered by the [Volunteer Development Agency in Northern Ireland](#), means 22 Northern Ireland groups have now been successful in achieving the standard. The Awards were presented by, Minister for Social Development, Margaret Ritchie MLA, at a special reception to mark International Volunteer Day. The successful groups Colin Glen Trust, Home-Start Antrim, Lisburn Citizens Advice Bureau, NIACRO, North Down Citizens Advice Bureau, North Down YMCA, Off the Street Initiative, RNID and Strabane Citizens Advice Bureau will each retain the Award for three years, having demonstrated

policies and procedures which value volunteers and support positive volunteering experiences. Sandra Adair, Assistant Director with the Volunteer Development Agency said, “Achieving Investing in Volunteers demonstrates a real commitment to volunteering, proving the organisations volunteer management policies and procedures meet nationally recognised standards. The Award gives these organisations a competitive advantage in the sector in terms of illustrating to funders their professional approach to engaging and managing volunteers in their work.” Margaret O’Kane, Millennium Volunteers Co-ordinator with Off The Streets Initiative, based in L’Derry said; “Investing in Volunteers has been a very worthwhile process and I would have no hesitation in recommending it to any organisation that involves and values volunteers.”

Contribution by Volunteer Development Agency in Northern Ireland (contact persons: Fidelma Glass and Maria McBride)

Volunteerism Week and a competition “Youth and Volunteerism” in Cyprus

At the occasion of the International Volunteering Day, the [Pan Cyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council](#) has organised the Volunteerism Week 2009 from 1 to 5 December to honour volunteers and encourage new volunteering initiatives and projects. This week was launched at a press conference on 1 December and comprised a celebration ceremony for the International Volunteer Day, a reception for volunteers at the Presidential

Palace, a targeted awareness raising media campaign, a programme and competition entitled ‘Youth & Volunteerism’, an essay competition on volunteerism and participation in the European Trophy of Voluntary Work in Strasbourg, on 5 December.

Contribution by Pan Cyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council (contact person: Alexandra Kyriacou)

Businesses reiterate their support to volunteering on the occasion of the International volunteer day

“The celebration of the international volunteer day is the occasion for organisations such as [ENGAGE](#) to acknowledge volunteers’ work and involvement as well as reiterate their commitment to developing and supporting volunteering programmes. Since 2002 ENGAGE has been bringing together businesses and community organisations around the globe to increase the quality and scale of employees’ involvement in their local communities. ENGAGE has facilitated the development of [employee volunteering collaborative programmes in key cities](#) in Europe such as Belgrade, Bratislava, Zilina, Frankfurt, Istanbul, Madrid, Barcelona, Milan, Ostrava, Paris, and Valencia but also beyond European frontiers, in Dubai, Hong Kong and Santiago de Chile. In 2009 the Valencian branch of ENGAGE, run by FUNDAR, brought together 14 companies

to collaborate with the Ministry of Education in developing a programme focused on school absenteeism and professional orientation of youngsters. The programme counted with 170 volunteers from companies based in Valencia, working in 27 schools with a total of 1329 students. The evaluation of the programme showed that 85% of the teachers who participated would like to repeat the experience because of the impact the project had on students. We hope to be replicating this successful model in Valencia and elsewhere in Europe in order to increase awareness about volunteering within businesses.”

Contribution by ENGAGE (contact person: Claire Darmon)

Member of Parliament is learning life through voluntary work in Finland



An innovative initiative was launched by the voluntary support group in the **Finnish Parliament**, which decided to challenge their fellow Members of Parliament to work as a volunteer for one day in 2010 as an example and as an encouragement to the people who already engage in volunteering. The Chair of the voluntary support group, Member of Parliament Sanna Lauslahti is a volunteer herself. She wants to understand how the decisions made in the Parliament influence on people’s everyday life. That’s one of the reasons why Sanna wants to get to know different workplaces and get her ‘hands dirty’.

‘When you’ve done 11 hour rounds with the

nurses in the night shift at the chronic ward and have had only one 15 minute break, one understands how rough the nursing job is. When you’ve fed, washed and changed diapers for hours, and you will remember for a long time to come, how your muscles felt and what thoughts crossed your mind during the shift, says Sanna.

Sanna has worked also in the old age people’s unit, at the reception home for alcoholics and as a teachers substitute. She has also dealt out food at the bread queue and participated in different kind of community work with the old age people, like raking the dead leaves off the grass or just keeping company. ‘By doing something concrete you get a happy mood. Through work you can see many faults which we try to fix in the Parliament through legislation or budgeting’, says Sanna.

Sanna has also been thinking that the voluntary

work should be included as optional subject in the upper and the secondary schools: 'The young people wish to do something interesting. Many just don't know what possibilities there are.' Mental problems of children and young people have increased a lot in the past years. In public there have been concerns that, even young

people who are financially and materially fine, are feeling bad. Maybe we could help them by making them feel usefully. Helping others is an excellent way of helping oneself, adds Sanna.

Contribution by Citizens Forum (contact person: Anitta Raitanen)

As we celebrate International Volunteer Day, these are just some of the ways in which individuals are giving up their time to make a difference to the world around them in a voluntary capacity.

Happy international volunteer day to all of you!

The EYV Alliance



Thanks to all of those who have contributed to this newsletter:

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