

Fact sheets on volunteering

Role of volunteering in EU policy areas

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Table of contents

Volunteering and active citizenship	3
Volunteering and communication	7
Volunteering, justice and fundamental rights	10
Volunteering, education and lifelong learning	15
Volunteering, youth and mobility	19
Volunteering and culture	25
Volunteering through sport	28
Volunteering and employability	32
Volunteering, social inclusion and non-discrimination	36
Volunteering and active ageing	40
Volunteering and regional development	44
The economic value of volunteering	49
Volunteering and budgetary questions	54
Volunteering and tax related questions	58
Volunteering, enterprise and corporate social responsibility (CSR)	63
Volunteering, public sector administration and the European Commission being a responsible employer	68
Volunteering and environment	71
Volunteering and climate change	74
Volunteering and development	77
Volunteering, humanitarian assistance and crisis response	81
Volunteering and the promotion of human rights and democracy worldwide	84
Volunteering and enlargement	88
Volunteering and health	92
Volunteering and research	97



Volunteering and active citizenship

Volunteering empowers people in their communities

“As citizens, we all have an obligation to intervene and become involved – it's the citizen who changes things.”

Jose Saramago,

Nobel-laureate novelist, playwright and journalist



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Volunteering plays a major role in the efforts to **‘encourage citizens to become actively involved in the process of European integration, develop a sense of European identity and enhance mutual understanding between European citizens’**. Volunteering is an expression of civic participation in European societies. Voluntary actions are carried out by active and committed citizens without motivation for financial gain and promote participation in public affairs.¹ This is vital for the preservation of democratic principles. Volunteering enables citizens of all nationalities, religions, socio-economic backgrounds, abilities and ages to participate and actively contribute to the life of their local communities. This creates bonds of trust and fosters solidarity. It promotes social inclusion and mutual understanding. Furthermore, volunteer exchanges to other European countries contribute to the development of a European identity.

To the point

More than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three in ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and close to 80% of survey respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.²

¹ Alliance for European Year of Volunteering, 2009. ‘The European Year of Volunteering EYV 2011 Discussion paper’, p. 2.

² Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. ‘European Social Reality’, February 2007.



Promoting European values

Volunteering contributes to building a European identity rooted in the shared values of democracy, solidarity and participation. It promotes mutual understanding between people within our society and across Europe and it stimulates active and responsible European citizenship.³

Empowerment and building networks and trust

- The voluntary sector serves as platform for individuals to express their concerns. Through volunteering people learn to be active, to take the initiative and to become more active citizens. Local authorities already discovered the advantages and positive effects of involving citizens through volunteering.
- The voluntary sector brings people together, builds and strengthens social capital. It facilitates collective action, encourages people to get involved in their community and in society. Volunteering is a means of addressing the problems of the community with sustainable solutions. It creates trust among citizens in communities and might lower the level of criminality.⁴
- According to a 2005 UK Citizenship Survey, '54% of people who volunteered felt that many people in the neighbourhood could be trusted, compared to 45% among those who did not volunteer'.⁵

Fighting democratic deficit

- Volunteering reduces the democratic deficit and encourages active engagement within the political processes. 'As people begin to see that they can make a difference through volunteering they become more likely to vote.'⁶ As a result, the more citizens are involved, the more confidence they have in the authorities and governmental institutions.
- According to a 2005 UK Citizenship Survey, '**57% of people participating in civic activism felt they could influence local decisions**', compared to 37% who did not participate.⁷

³ Alliance for European Year of Volunteering, 2009. 'The European Year of Volunteering EYV 2011 Discussion paper', p. 3.

⁴ Michigan State University Extension, 2003. 'The Cost and Benefits of Volunteers', White paper, p. 3.

⁵ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 14.

⁶ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 13.

⁷ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 14.



Our recommendations

- Benchmark Active Citizenship and Volunteering in Europe: An effort should be undertaken on basis of the recently commissioned Study on Volunteering in Europe to gather different understanding of volunteering and active citizenship in the EU 27 and extract common ground. Both concepts are intertwined but not clear definitions are available to describe the different perspectives the EU 27 have.
- Identify and address barriers to active involvement of citizens in volunteering and active citizenship: 7 out of 10 Europeans do not volunteer, are not 'active' – while 80% say volunteering is important. This is a huge potential the EU and its Member States needs to unleash.
- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies in your DG, notably in the field of active citizenship. The European policies shall be assessed concerning the positive (or negative) impact they have on the citizens, enabling and motivating them to become active and get involved.
- Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 and its legacy in close collaboration with CEV and the organisations of the "EYV 2011 Alliance".
- Feed into the efforts of creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Europe in order to make volunteering accessible for all: The EU should develop a White Paper on Volunteering and Active Citizenship for a comprehensive policy agenda with inclusive volunteering programmes and sustainable funding opportunities.
- Use the revision of the current generation of EU programmes for the period after 2013 to establish a priority action for volunteering as an expression of active citizenship: While it is currently a horizontal feature in the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007 – 2013, the programme has very limited funding opportunities. Different programmes for volunteering are currently scattered over other areas such as Youth in Action, Grundtvig and Europe for Citizens. We call on your DG to design an ambitious EU Programme on Volunteering as an Expression Active Citizenship providing funding for all ages and different forms of voluntary action.

Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

- 2009** | Council decision on the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship (2011), 15658/09
- 2007** | Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the Contribution of Volunteering on Economic and Social Cohesion, CdR 254/2007



Calls on European decision makers to promote the economic and social benefits of volunteering, stresses that it is a key element of active citizenship and democracy at all levels. Opinion recommends that there should be designated the European Year of Active Citizenship through Volunteering, to provide a focus for the promotion of volunteering and the implementation of initiatives across the EU's 27 Member States.

2006 | Decision No 1904/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 establishing for the period 2007 to 2013 the programme 'Europe for Citizens' to promote active European citizenship

Based on article 308 and article 151 of the Treaty establishing the European Community.

In the implementation documents for the Programme – Programme Guide volunteering is a horizontal feature.

Programme Guide, p. 24: Volunteering is recognized in the Programme Guide and in general Commission citizenship policy as an expression of active European citizenship: 'Volunteering is an essential element in active citizenship: by giving one's time for the benefit of others, volunteers service their community and play an active role in society. They develop the sense of belonging to a community thereby also gaining ownership. Volunteering is therefore a particularly powerful means to develop citizens' commitment to their society and to its political life. Civil society organisations, associations of a European general interest, town twinning associations and other participating organisations often rely on volunteer work to carry out and to develop their activities. Therefore, particular attention is paid within this Programme to the promotion of volunteering.'

Volunteering and communication

Volunteers act local – and are European

“Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy and mutual valuing.”

Rollo May,
existential psychologist



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Volunteering may play a major role in the efforts of the DG Communication to **‘keep the general public informed about the EU activities while taking into account national specificities’**. Volunteers put the values the EU has been founded upon into daily practice – without necessarily being aware, they do communicate Europe – by local action.

To the point

Volunteers are numerous

More than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three in ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and close to 80% of survey respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.¹

¹ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. ‘European Social Reality’, February 2007.



Volunteers put European values into actions

Volunteering entails the promotion of a variety of European traditions and values such as solidarity, an inclusive society and active civic participation, social cohesion, respect towards human rights and environmental protection etc. Volunteers are directly involved in defining current societal problems and actively addressing them.

Volunteers are active in current priority issues

Volunteering corresponds to the current needs of European societies. Various volunteering organisations across Europe are combining their special efforts to address crucial issues, such as the climate change, combating poverty and social exclusion, the promotion of active citizenship and active ageing.

Volunteering goes local and reaches all

Volunteers, mostly active in their own communities, communicate European values and translate them into action at the local level, for example through town twinning projects.

Our recommendations

- Deploy specific action to bring the value of volunteering to peoples' and decision-makers' consciousness. Volunteering and active citizenship is part of the European identity, of European culture. Although there are differences in numbers and in traditions of voluntary action across the countries in Europe, citizens volunteer all over the continent. The communicative potential of local volunteers is massive if appropriately tapped into. The European Commission should raise awareness with volunteers all over Europe that what they are doing is living practice of European values; they agents of European integration.
- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing services in your DG, notably in the field of communication. European policies and programmes shall be assessed as to the positive (or negative) impact they have on citizens' ability and motivation to become active and get involved.
- Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 by providing high-level visibility to events to raise awareness about the values of volunteering.
- Feed into the efforts of creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Europe in order to make volunteering accessible for all: The EU should develop a White Paper on Volunteering for a comprehensive policy agenda to promote, recognize and facilitate voluntary engagement of citizens all over Europe – and devise a strategy on how to use the communicative potential of volunteers all over Europe.
- Put a specific priority on volunteering when developing the new generation of EU programmes for the period after 2013.



Reference to civil society in selected policy documents

2008 | Communication from the Commission 'Debate Europe — building on the experience of Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate' [COM(2008) 158/4]

2006 | White Paper on a European Communication Policy [COM(2006) 35 final]

Civil society organisations, including professional and sectoral organisations, also have a very important role to play in raising public awareness of European issues and policy debates, and in encouraging people to take an active part in those debates.

Civil society organisations have an important part to play in the European debate. Their role could be strengthened through targeted cooperation projects in the field of public communication.

2005 | Communication from the Commission 'The Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond: Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate' [COM(2005) 494 final]

Heads of State and Government gave guidance to the Member States on the type of debate that could be organised: "the period of reflection will be used to enable a broad debate to take place in each of our countries, involving citizens, civil society, social partners, national parliaments and political parties".



Volunteering, justice and fundamental rights

Through volunteering towards active societies and positive peace

“Once you realise a project in collaboration with someone you cannot look at him as an enemy anymore...”

Anonymous project participant¹



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Volunteering plays a major role in the efforts of the DG Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship to ‘ensure that the whole European Union is an area of freedom, security and justice’. Volunteers engage in peace and security projects; promote justice and fundamental rights; contribute to community development, intercultural dialogue and respect leading to the endorsement of positive peace in European societies.²

To the point

More than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three in ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and close to 80% of survey respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.³

¹ CEV, 2008. ‘VIP Seminar on the Promotion of Local and Intercultural Youth Volunteering for Peace Building and Conflict Resolution in Europe’, Final Report, 25–30 June 2008, p. 65. Available at: http://www.cev.be/data/File/VIP_Report_2008.pdf [cited 25.11.2009].

² Positive peace is defined as: ‘The condition characterized by the existence of peaceful social and cultural beliefs and norms; the presence of justice at all levels (economic, social, and political); the shared democratic use of power; and non-violence.’ Available at: <http://www.answers.com/topic/positive-peace> [cited 4.12.2009].

³ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. ‘European Social Reality’, February 2007.



Volunteers are key actors in promoting justice and fundamental rights

- Volunteers contribute to creating stability and peace within and beyond the borders of Europe by promoting human rights through various actions, such as awareness-raising, fundraising, social activities and the denunciation of human rights violations.
- The staff of human rights organisations, such as e.g. Amnesty International often largely depends on the work done by volunteers.⁴

Volunteers play part in promoting positive peace and community development

- Volunteers are a driving force for understanding and mutual respect in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies in Europe. Voluntary activities exercised by local inhabitants reduce racism and prejudices and contribute to inter-cultural dialogue, thus building trust and confidence. Volunteering prevents xenophobia by uniting people with different backgrounds and origins through common engagement. It increases tolerance and intercultural skills, promotes intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and builds communities.⁵ Volunteering reconnects people and helps to rebuild trust and confidence. It contributes towards the rebuilding of tolerance and peace in divided societies.
- As demonstrated by a post-conflict reconstruction in Bosnia and Herzegovina, many peace building and reconciliation initiatives would not be possible without the voluntary efforts of local inhabitants.⁶
- In Northern Ireland volunteers supported by PEACE or INTEREG funding played a key role in the reconciliation and peace building process. By working on common projects, they rebuild trust between divided communities.⁷ Similar outcomes also occurred in other conflict areas.

Volunteers are real human resources for integration

- Volunteering aims at being inclusive and at stimulating participation. It unites people to work towards common goals. By doing this, it fights against social exclusion, discrimination, prejudices and social inequality. Socially excluded groups are not only recipients, but also often active participants in volunteering. Volunteering offers them opportunity of expression and active engagement. It is often referred to as 'social glue' that holds together different groups of people in society.⁸

⁴ Amnesty International, 2009. 'Volunteer information'. Available at: <http://www.amnesty.org.au/NSW/volunteer/> [cited 11.11.2009].

⁵ CEV, 2006. 'INVOLVE Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration', Final Project Report, p. 22. Available at: <http://www.cev.be/data/File/INVOLVEreportEN.pdf> [cited 24.11.2009].

⁶ CEV, 2008. 'V.I.:P Seminar on the Promotion of Local and Intercultural Youth Volunteering for Peace Building and Conflict Resolution in Europe', Final Report, 25-30 June 2008. Available at: http://www.cev.be/data/File/VIP_Report_2008.pdf [cited 25.11.2009].

⁷ European Parliament, 2008. 'Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion (2007/2145(INI))', p. 13.

⁸ CEV, 2007. 'CEV Contribution to the Draft Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion', p. 3.



- The INVOLVE (Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration) project funded by DG JLS discovered through interviews, that '92% believe that participating in volunteering is a way of integrating into the host society'.⁹

Our recommendations

- Identify barriers to active involvement of citizens in volunteering and active citizenship: Visa restrictions are still one major barrier for non-EU citizens to engage in voluntary service programmes. The council directive 2004/114 should be obligatory for Member States to implement. A second major restriction is that asylum seekers and refugees are not always allowed to do 'paid or unpaid' work, including volunteering.
- The identification of legal barriers as those mentioned above should lead to a strategy at EU level towards positive action to 'Ensure a right to volunteer for all'.
- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies and programmes in your DG. European policies and programmes shall be assessed as to the positive (or negative) impact they have on the citizens' ability and motivation to become active and get involved.
- Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 by organising events to showcase good practice of volunteering in promoting justice, fundamental rights and integration of third country nationals.
- Feed into the efforts of creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Europe in order to make volunteering accessible for all: The EU should develop a White Paper on Volunteering for a comprehensive policy agenda to promote, recognize and facilitate voluntary engagement of citizens all over Europe – especially of those with fewer opportunities or currently legally excluded from the right to volunteer.
- Put a specific priority on volunteering when developing the new generation of EU programmes for the period after 2013.

Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents and programmes

2006 | Decision No 1904/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 establishing for the period 2007 to 2013 the programme Europe for Citizens to promote active European citizenship

⁹ CEV, 2006. 'INVOLVE Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration', Final Project Report, p. 22. Available at: <http://www.cev.be/data/File/INVOLVEreportEN.pdf> [cited 24.11.2009].



2005 | Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament establishing a framework programme on Solidarity and the Management of Migration Flows for the period 2007-2013 [COM/2005/0123 final]

Article 4: Eligible actions in the Member States (...) increases third-country nationals' civic participation and their role as active citizens by facilitating their participation in mainstream (volunteer) organisations or by supporting the development and implementation at local or regional level of special volunteering programs, internship schemes and capacity building designed thereto.

2005 | European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals for the period 2007–2013 as part of the general programme 'Solidarity and management of migration flows'

Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and Council establishing the European Return Fund for the period 2007–2013 as part of the General programme 'Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows' [COM(2005) 123 final]

The fund shall support actions in Member States which increase third-country nationals' civic participation and their role as active citizens by facilitating their participation in mainstream (volunteer) organisations or by supporting the development and implementation at local or regional level of special volunteering programs, internship schemes and capacity building designed thereto.

2004 | Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down general provisions establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument [COM(2004) 628 final]

The European Council encourages the Union's institutions, within the framework of their competences, to maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society and to promote and facilitate citizens' participation in public life;

It acknowledges that integration requires basic skills for participation in society;

2004 | Council Directive on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service [2004/114/EC]

and related acts:

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the 'Proposal for a Council Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, vocational training or voluntary service' [2003/C 244/02]

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the 'Proposal for a Council Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, vocational training or voluntary service' [COM (2002) 548 final]

2004 | Common Basic Principles for immigrant integration policy in the European Union, Council of the European Union (Council Document 14615/04)

It Acknowledges that the participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration.



2004 | Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners, EC Commission, DG Justice, Freedom and Security, 2nd edition, May 2007

Acknowledgment that in most European countries, volunteers play an important role in the introduction of new comers;

Acknowledgment that the communities benefit from the diversification of volunteers;

Acknowledgement that many potential volunteers may lack confidence;

Acknowledgement that volunteering is a form of social participation in which immigrants play an important role as active citizens. Facilitating their participation and valuing their contribution promotes their inclusion and mobilises their skills;

Volunteering is recognized as a facet of active citizenship;

Immigrating volunteering is a good way of promoting civic participation in the social sphere.

Volunteering, education and lifelong learning

Volunteering raises peoples' potential

“Arriving at one goal is the starting point to another.”

John Dewey,

philosopher, and educational reformer



Volunteering plays a major role in the efforts of the DG Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth to **'pursue stimulating learning opportunities across Europe'**. By providing non-formal learning opportunities, volunteering is crucial in life-long learning. Volunteers gain knowledge, exercise skills and extend their social networks leading to unlimited personal and social development.

To the point

More than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three out of ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and close to 80% of respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.¹

Volunteering in education and learning

Many voluntary actions are in the field of informal and non-formal education and training:

- In Slovakia, the most volunteering activities are concentrated in the area of education and training with 39,9% of the total share.²

¹ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. 'European Social Reality', February 2007.

² CSVnet – National Coordination Body of Voluntary Support Centres, 2009. 'Brief compendium of the research: Volunteering across Europe. Organisations, promotion, participation', p. 17.



- In Flanders, there are in average around 30 socio-cultural organisations per community. The majority of them organises educational activities.

Volunteering is a means of acquiring vocational, soft and interpersonal skills for all

- A variety of projects have shown that volunteers gain a range of vocational and soft skills, including communication, organisational, time and project management skills. They acquire a sense of solidarity and caring for others; negotiating, coaching and listening skills; accountability and assessment reporting; planning ahead or budgeting skills. They learn how to manage stress and prioritise work.³ Volunteering is part of the Lisbon strategy towards a more competitive European labour market, providing learning opportunities that arise from volunteering.⁴
- According to a research conducted in the UK, '6 out of 10 volunteers said volunteering gave them the opportunity to learn new skills'.⁵ Volunteering provides a positive, not enforced way to learn new things especially among young people.
- The CEV projects ELLA and LACE have shown how senior citizens can benefit from "lifelong learning" after retirement and how they can become agents providing learning opportunities for others: Elderly persons in our society have a huge reservoir of knowledge to share and can do so through volunteering.

Volunteering increases motivation and provides fresh drive

- Volunteering enriches people both personally and professionally. It raises their potential, widens their scope of activities and raises their self-esteem. It fosters motivation, moral values and loyalty.
- A survey carried out in over 200 leading UK companies found that **94% of correspondents thought that volunteering added value to the skills of their workforce.**⁶

³ CEV, 2007. 'Contribution to the Draft Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion'.

⁴ Alliance for European Year of Volunteering, 2009. 'The European Year of Volunteering EYV 2011 Discussion paper', p. 4.

⁵ Volunteering England, 2009. 'Key Volunteering Facts and Figures'. Available at: <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/News/mediacentre/keyvolunteeringfactsandfigures.htm> [cited 26.10.2009].

⁶ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 29.



Our recommendations

- Devise suitable measures and instruments towards a better recognition of skills and competences learned through volunteering. Europass, the Youth Pass and other instruments should be tailored and further developed in a way to make volunteering experience and the skills acquired visible.¹
- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies and programmes in your DG. European policies and programmes shall be assessed as to the positive (or negative) impact they have on citizens' ability and motivation to become active and get involved.
- Contribute actively to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 and its legacy by showcasing ways to recognize skills acquired through volunteering further developing the debate and instruments in this area.
- Support efforts to work towards a White Paper on Volunteering recognising its horizontal nature and developing a comprehensive policy agenda to promote, facilitate and recognize volunteering and its value for the EU.

Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents and programmes

2008 | Lifelong Learning Programme LLP Guide 2009

Mobility of individuals, which comprises in-service training, visits, assistantships and exchanges for adult education staff, as well as various opportunities for adult learners including attendance at Grundtvig Workshops and participation in Learning Partnerships and Senior Volunteering Projects under the Grundtvig Initiative for Volunteering in Europe for Seniors ("GIVE")

"GIVE" (Grundtvig Initiative on Volunteering in Europe for Seniors) is a new initiative, which will be implemented from 2009 onwards. It consists of a scheme of grants to support Senior Volunteering Projects between local organisations located in two countries participating in the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP).

2008 | Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'The contribution of volunteering to Economic and Social Cohesion' [2008/C 105/03]

Notes the critical role that volunteering can play in relation to life long learning, in allowing individuals to develop new skills that contribute to their personal, social and cultural development, and increase and adapt their employability in an ever changing economic environment.

2006 | Decision No 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning



2004 | Report on the follow-up to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 10 July 2001 on mobility within the Community of students, persons undergoing training, volunteers and teachers and trainers [COM(2004) 21 final]

The Report recognises more and better mobility as an important instrument for the modernisation of education and training systems.

2001 | Commission Communication Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality [COM(2001) 678 final]

Recognises that community and voluntary groups have a unique role in lifelong learning and underlines the value of learning opportunities provided by adult education or the voluntary sector, including NGOs and local community organisations. To this end it recommends that the local partnerships should be promoted between voluntary organisations and other stakeholders.

Grundtvig Programme, under the LLL programme (Decision 1720/2006/EC of the Parliament and of the Council of November 15 2006 (OJ L 327 of 24.11.06, p.45) which in the projects promotes volunteering as one of the means to update knowledge and to provide adults with pathways to improve their know-how and competences, as they progress through life so that they can adapt to changes in the labour market and society.

1999 | Communication from the Commission Towards a Europe for All Ages Promoting Prosperity and Intergenerational Solidarity [COM(1999) 221 final]

Older people are already very active in non-governmental organisations. Involving a much larger share of able older people in voluntary work could be a major tool in active ageing strategies. There is a triple benefit from engaging older persons in voluntary activities in their communities. Recipients of the services produced will be better off. Older volunteers acquire meaningful social roles, physical and mental stimulation from new contacts and a sense of personal satisfaction and fulfilment. Local services can be provided in a very cost-efficient way.



Volunteering, youth and mobility

Volunteering empowers youth

“It's faith in something and enthusiasm for something that makes a life worth living.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes,
physician, professor, lecturer, and author



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Volunteering plays a major role in the efforts of DG Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth to **'meet young people's changing expectations while encouraging them to contribute to society'**. It is a way of self-realisation while doing something positive for the benefit of others. Volunteering is widespread among young people in Europe, but it can be further promoted.

To the point

Volunteers are numerous but young volunteers are not enough

- More than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three out of ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and close to 80% of respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.¹
- There is a gap between advocacy and practice. Available data revealed that in Europe, young people participate less in voluntary activities than other age groups.²
- According to the Eurobarometer from 2007, 16% of people aged between 15 and 30 declare to be engaged regularly or occasionally in voluntary activities and only 2% report that they participate regularly in voluntary or community work.³

¹ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. 'European Social Reality', February 2007.

² European Commission, 2009. 'EU Youth Report', p. 52.

³ Flash Eurobarometer 202, 2007. 'Eurobarometer survey on youth', January 2007.



Volunteering leads young people towards active and responsible citizenship

- Volunteering acts as a trigger for young people to re-engage with formal learning or training, or engage more effectively with alternative forms of learning. Volunteering empowers young people through the acquisition of skills, knowledge and social and other competences.
- Volunteering increases social competences of young people. It increases tolerance and intercultural skills, reduces racism and prejudice.⁴
- Young people gain self-esteem and self-confidence through volunteering, as they are given responsibility and they realise that they can be useful for others.
- According to the Eurobarometer 2007 survey, 74% of respondents think that 'more available programmes encouraging voluntary work' will help young people to become more active citizens in society.⁵

Volunteering promotes mobility and improves career possibilities

- The European Voluntary Service (EVS) is a special type of voluntary service providing young people with the opportunity to volunteer in a foreign country within or outside the EU.
- In 2007, almost 4 300 young people participated in some 2 100 individual or group EVS projects.⁶
- According to EU Youth Report, **62% of former EVS volunteers consider that this experience has changed for the better their career possibilities.**⁷
- In Hungary, a voluntary programme for unemployed youth Ötlet resulted in employing 2/3 of the participants during or after the programme. In the South-Transdanubia region up to 90% of the participants managed to settle in the labour market.⁸

⁴ Alliance for European Year of Volunteering, 2009. 'The European Year of Volunteering EYV 2011 Discussion paper', p. 4.

⁵ Flash Eurobarometer 202, 2007. 'Eurobarometer survey on youth', January 2007.

⁶ European Commission, 2009. 'EU Youth Report 2009', p. 54.

⁷ European Commission, 2009. 'EU Youth Report 2009', p. 54.

⁸ Ötlet program, 2005. 'Program Impact Assessment Report', p. 7. Available at: <http://otletprogram.hu/formanyom/Microsoft Word - zarotanutmany-vegleges.pdf> [cited 18.12.2009].



Our recommendations

- Identify barriers to active involvement of youth in volunteering and active citizenship: e.g. lack of clear legal and financial status, exclusion of certain social groups of young people, lack of language skills, lack of training, lack of access to appropriate information. [European Commission, 2009. 'EU Youth Report 2009', p. 53.]
- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies and programmes in your DG. European policies and programmes shall be assessed as to the positive (or negative) impact they have on the youth's ability and motivation to become active and get involved.
- Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 and its legacy by further developing youth volunteering policies and dedicating efforts to this topic during the Year's activities.
- Feed into the efforts of creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Europe in order to make volunteering accessible for all. The EU should develop a White Paper on Volunteering for a comprehensive policy agenda that facilitates involvement of young people from all walks of life in voluntary action, with a priority focus on disadvantaged and long-term unemployed youth.

Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

2009 | Green Paper – Promoting the learning mobility of young people [COM/2009/0329 final]

2008 | Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council on implementing the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people [2008/C 241/01]

2008 | Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member states, meeting within the Council on 20 and 21 November 2008 on youth mobility

Among other underlines that mobility concerns all young Europeans, whether they be schoolchildren, students, apprentices, volunteers, teachers, young researchers, trainers, youth workers, entrepreneurs or young people on the labour market.

It invites Member States to:

Adopt the objective of gradually making periods of learning abroad the rule rather than the exception for all young Europeans by increasing cross-border mobility opportunities in the various education and training areas and, while having due regard to their national frameworks and legislation, in the field of voluntary activities;

Every young person should have the opportunity to take part in some form of mobility, whether this during their studies or training, in the form of a work placement, or in the context of voluntary activities.



It invites the Member States and the European Commission, within their respective spheres of competences to adopt measures, which take account of national situations and national legislation, with a view to removing barriers to mobility in different areas and ensuring that periods of study and training abroad are recognised. Within the framework of the various exercises of the open method of coordination for education, training, culture and youth, they should seek in particular to: develop scope for mobility for all young persons and promote the development of new mobility opportunities, in particular by: – creating opportunities for exchanges in the framework of voluntary activities.

2008 | Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers Across the European Union [2008/C 319/03]

Promotes exchange between different voluntary traditions and systems between the Member States and enhanced mobility of young Europeans.

2007 | Council Resolution on Voluntary Activities of Young People [14427/07]

Invites the European Commission to consider the opportunity to organise a European Year to promote volunteering in order to improve the image of volunteering in society in general and among young people in particular.

2006 | Council resolution on participation by and information for young people in view of promoting their active citizenship [14471/06]

Recognises volunteering as an expression of active citizenship.

2006 | Decision No 1719/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing the Youth in Action programme

The Programme Guide recognises volunteering as a part of non-formal learning, which fosters the participants' personal and social development and is complementary to the formal education and training system.

One of the actions is the EVS European Voluntary Service which aims to support young people's participation in various forms of voluntary activities, both within and outside the European Union; aims to develop solidarity and promote active citizenship and mutual understanding among young people. EVS enables young people to carry out voluntary service for up to 12 months in a country other than their country of residence. It fosters solidarity among young people and is a true learning service'. Beyond benefiting local communities, volunteers learn new skills and languages, and discover other cultures.

2006 | Resolution of the Council on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field [2006/C 168/01]

It acknowledges the added value of non-formal and informal learning, and it considers volunteering as a form of non-formal/informal learning enabling youngsters the acquisition of additional knowledge.

2004 | Communication from the Commission to the Council of 30 April 2004 – Follow-up to the White Paper on a New Impetus for European Youth – Proposed common objectives for voluntary activities among young people in response to the Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field [COM(2004) 337 final]



The overall objective of the proposal is to develop, facilitate, promote and recognise voluntary activities at all levels. On the basis of Member States' replies to the questionnaire on voluntary activities at national level, the Commission has proposed four common objectives:

- Develop voluntary activities with the aim of enhancing the transparency of the existing possibilities, enlarging their scope and improving their quality
- Make it easier for young people to carry out voluntary activities by removing existing obstacles
- Promote voluntary activities with a view to reinforcing young people's solidarity and engagement as Citizen
- Recognise the voluntary activities of young people with a view to acknowledging their personal skills and their engagement for society

2003 | Council Resolution on Common Objectives for Participation by and Information for Young People [2003/C 295/04]

It outlines actions to achieve the common objectives on access to information services; and participation by young people in civic life by inter alia promoting the involvement of young people in participatory structures, for example NGOs, associations, voluntary work, local youth councils, and encourage the activities of youth NGOs.

2002 | Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting with the Council of 27 June 2002 regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field [2002/C 168/02]

Endorses the four thematic priorities as proposed in the White Paper, and with whose importance the Council conclusions of 14 February 2002 agreed: (a) participation;(b) information;(c) voluntary activities among young people;(d) greater understanding and knowledge of youth.

Stresses that the following thematic priorities should be aimed at:

Voluntary activities among young people

- to facilitate opportunities for the exercise of solidarity and voluntary commitment on the part of young people, and the promotion of networks among all the actors involved,
- to promote voluntary activities that allow young people to develop their sense of commitment and Active citizenship, individual and social skills and to gain useful knowledge and abilities which contribute to their participation in society in general and to their greater employability,
- to foster recognition and appreciation of voluntary activities, inter alia, by public authorities, enterprise sector and civil society;

2002 | Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of on the added value of voluntary activity for young people in the context of the development of Community action on youth [2002/C 50/02]

2001 | Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 10 July 2001 on mobility within the Community for students, persons undergoing training, young volunteers, teachers and trainers

Free movement for students, persons undergoing training, young volunteers, teachers and trainers in the Community is still impeded by numerous administrative, regulatory and cultural obstacles. The European Parliament and Council wish to encourage Member States to remove all such obstacles to mobility...



2001 | European Commission, White Paper New impetus for European Youth [COM(2001) 681 final]

- voluntary activities were included as one of the priorities to achieve and express active citizenship.
- Commissions says that 'a greater emphasis should therefore be placed on mobility and voluntary service, which are still not sufficiently widespread and not properly recognised
- voluntary service among young people is a form of social participation, an educational experience and a factor in employability and integration, and as such it meets the expectations of young people and society alike.'
- says that the Member States should take immediate action to remove obstacles to mobility for young volunteers
- confirms that volunteering is a way of acquiring new skills and competences and a means of socialising for young.

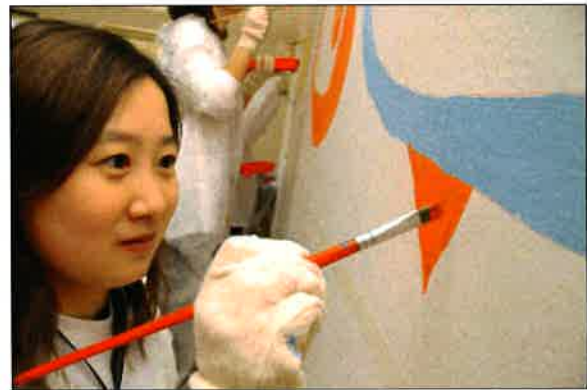


Volunteering and culture

Volunteers foster intercultural dialogue

*“Dialogue means Process, Identity, Engagement,
Interaction and Sharing.”*

Anonymous conference participant¹



© Volunteering England

Volunteering plays a major role in the efforts of the DG Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth to **‘set out new approaches for cultural involvement and promoting intercultural dialogue’**. Volunteers put the values that the EU has been founded on in practice and contribute to intercultural dialogue in Europe.

To the point

More than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three out of ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and close to 80% of respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.²

Volunteering done through arts

- Volunteering in the area of culture, arts and heritage provides opportunities for self-realisation, self-improvement, and social networking and is a means of raising interest of citizens for the culture of their societies and openness for the culture of others.
- According to a research from 1991, there are ‘roughly 10–15 million cultural volunteers’ in the UK, which means that ‘over half the adult population is involved in the voluntary arts and crafts’.

¹ CEV, 2009. ‘Volunteering and Intercultural dialogue’, CEV General Assembly Conference Final Report, 7 November 2008, p. 5. Available at: http://www.cev.be/data/File/GA_Luxembourg_Final_Report.pdf [cited 4.12.2009].

² Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. ‘European Social Reality’, February 2007.



These volunteers 'play a vital role in promoting community cohesion and through their activities pump an estimated £50 million into the economy each year'.³

Volunteering puts European values and identity into action

Volunteers put European values such as solidarity, an inclusive society and an active civic participation and social cohesion into concrete action. They do so all over Europe and are, thus, agents of these values.

Volunteering brings people together, promotes integration and mutual understanding

- There are over 100 million European volunteers.⁴ Volunteering stimulates participation. It puts different people together for common goals. By doing this, it fights against social exclusion, discrimination, prejudices and social inequality. Socially excluded groups are not only recipients, but also often active participants in volunteering. Volunteering offers them opportunity of expression and active engagement. It is often referred to as the 'social glue' that holds together different groups in society.⁵
- Two studies found that 'between 22 and 29% of refugees and asylum seekers had volunteered in the UK'.⁶
- The INVOLVE (Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration) project discovered through interviews, that **'92% believe that participating in volunteering is a way of integrating into the host society'**.⁷

³ Voluntary Art Network, 2009. 'About the voluntary arts'. Available at: <http://www.voluntaryarts.org/cgi-bin/website.cgi?tier1=network&tier2=about%20VAN&tier3=about%20the%20voluntary%20arts&fp=true> [cited 7.12.2009].

⁴ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. 'European Social Reality', February 2007.

⁵ CEV, 2007. 'CEV Contribution to the Draft Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion', p. 3.

⁶ CEV, 2006. 'INVOLVE Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration', Final Project Report, p. 22. Available at: <http://www.cev.be/data/File/INVOLVEreportEN.pdf> [cited 24.11.2009].

⁷ CEV, 2006. 'INVOLVE Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration', Final Project Report, p. 37. Available at: <http://www.cev.be/data/File/INVOLVEreportEN.pdf> [cited 24.11.2009].



Our recommendations

- Deploy specific action to bring the value of volunteering to peoples' and decision-makers' consciousness. Volunteering and active citizenship is part of the European identity, of European culture. Although there are differences in numbers and in traditions of voluntary action across the countries in Europe, citizens volunteer all over the continent.
- Identify barriers to active involvement of volunteers in the field of culture, arts and heritage. Seven out of ten Europeans do not volunteer and different stakeholders need to identify barriers towards engagement and solutions of how these barriers can be overcome. In the field of intercultural dialogue these barriers are often linked to a lack of mutual understanding, a lack of knowledge of specificities of each other's culture and missing possibilities to engage on common projects – regardless of the ethnic background.
- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies and programmes in your DG: European policies and programmes shall be assessed as to the positive (or negative) impact they have on citizens' ability and motivation to become active and get involved.
- Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 and its legacy by developing programmes to promote volunteering in the field of culture and intercultural dialogue.
- Feed into the efforts of creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Europe in order to make volunteering accessible for all: The EU should develop a White Paper on Volunteering for a comprehensive policy agenda to promote, recognize and facilitate voluntary engagement of citizens all over Europe – especially of those with fewer opportunities and of citizens from minority ethnic groups.
- Put a specific priority on volunteering when developing the new generation of EU programmes for the period after 2013.

Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

2006 | Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the “Youth in Action” programme for the period 2007–2013 [Decision No 1719/2006/EC]

The respect for cultural diversity together with the fight against racism and xenophobia are priorities of the Youth in Action Programme. By facilitating joint activities of young people from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, the Programme aims to develop the intercultural learning of young people.

One of the actions is the EVS European Voluntary Service, which aims to support young people's participation in various forms of voluntary activities.



Volunteering through sport

Volunteers in sport speak a common language

“Individual commitment to a group effort – that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.”

Vince Lombardi,
football coach



© Volunteering England

Volunteering plays a major role in the efforts of DG Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth to **‘coordinate the implementation of EU activities in the field of sport’**. The sporting activities in Europe are traditionally based on voluntary engagement. Sport plays a crucial role in unifying society and is an important factor in the promotion of health and social inclusion across nations and different social groups. Sport touches upon a variety of EU policies and volunteers play a key role in managing and promoting them. The European Commission recognises the role of volunteers in the field of sport and launched a comprehensive study on volunteering in the EU in March 2009. Under Lisbon Treaty, the EU also gains a competence in the field of sport.

To the point

More than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three out of ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and close to 80% of respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.¹

¹ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. ‘European Social Reality’, February 2007.



Volunteers are key players in sport events

- According to the Eurobarometer 2007, the highest proportion of engagement of Europeans in voluntary activities is in the field of sport and outdoor activities.² The sport organisations sector is the largest voluntary and non-governmental organisation throughout Europe.
- According to a research conducted **in 2002 in Poland, sport volunteers accounted for 59.3% of all volunteers**. In the Czech Republic, 40% of voluntary activities are developed in the sector of arts and recreation. In Denmark, 52,2% of local and regional associations are active in the field of culture, sports, recreation and leisure time activities.³
- According to the European non-governmental sports organisation (ENGSO), the 'labour force' of sport clubs consists of 86% volunteers and only 14% paid staff.⁴

Volunteers in sport promote inclusion and understanding

- Sport and culture are universal tools for promoting mutual understanding and respect, while recognising the value of diversity. Through volunteering in sport, European citizens indirectly prevent and fight against all forms of social exclusion, discrimination and violence.
- Volunteering through sport has the potential to bring the EU closer to its citizens.⁵

Volunteering in sport reinforces non-formal education

Volunteering in sport reinforces active citizenship and non-formal education. It helps to develop skills and competences such as leadership, organisation, commitment and the sense of fair play.

² Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. 'European Social Reality', February 2007.

³ CSVnet – National Coordination Body of Voluntary Support Centres, 2009. 'Brief compendium of the research: Volunteering across Europe. Organisations, promotion, participation', p. 16, 8, 9.

⁴ Alliance for European Year of Volunteering, 2009. 'The European Year of Volunteering EYV 2011 Discussion paper', p. 5.

⁵ Kelly, Seán, 2009. 'Irish MEP: Sport can bring EU closer to citizens'. *Euractive*, 1 October 2009.



Our recommendations

- Identify barriers to active involvement of volunteers in sports. While it is the sector with most engagement, there is huge potential to be developed, especially with young people whose engagement is low and declining.
- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies and programmes in your DG. European policies and programmes shall be assessed as to the positive (or negative) impact they have on the youth's ability and motivation to become active and get involved.
- Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 and its legacy by developing a policy agenda to promote volunteering in the field of sport and by exporting good practice and success stories in this field to other fields of engagement.
- Use the new Article 149 of the Treaty of Lisbon to develop policies and programmes in the field of volunteering and sports.
- Feed into the efforts of creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Europe in order to make volunteering accessible for all: The EU should develop a White Paper on Volunteering for a comprehensive policy agenda to promote, recognize and facilitate voluntary engagement of citizens all over Europe – especially of those with fewer opportunities.
- Put a specific priority on volunteering when developing the new generation of EU programmes for the period after 2013.
- Make use of the results of the recently commissioned EU study on volunteering and sports to feed into both the comprehensive policy agenda and the design of the new generation of EU programmes.

Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

2009 | Treaty of Lisbon

Art. 149 (1) The Union shall contribute to the promotion of European sporting issues, while taking account of the specific nature of sport its structures based on voluntary activity and its social and educational function.

2007 | Action Plan "Pierre de Coubertin" Commission staff working document, Accompanying document to the White Paper on Sport [SEC(2007) 934]

Plans to encourage young people's volunteering in sport through the Youth in Action Programme and to develop the exchange of information and best practice on volunteering in sport.

2007 | White Paper on Sport [COM (2007) 391 final]



Point 2.4: Promoting volunteering and active citizenship through sport

- calls for promoting volunteering and active citizenship through sport, recognises that volunteering reinforces active citizenship and that volunteering in sport organisations provides many occasions for non-formal education which need to be recognised and enhanced.
- warns about a declining volunteer base for amateur sport clubs and points out a stagnation in the number of volunteers which results in new challenges for the organisation of sport in Europe.
- proposes to encourage young people's volunteering in sport through the Youth in Action programme in fields such as youth exchanges and voluntary service for sporting events.
- the Commission commits itself to further develop exchange of information and best practice on volunteering in sport involving Member States, sport organisations and local authorities.
- the Commission commits itself to promote training of monitors, volunteers and host staff of clubs and organisations for the purpose of welcoming people with disabilities in order to ensure the equal access to sport (Point 2.5 Using the potential of sport for social inclusion, integration and equal opportunities)
- encourages collecting the national data on volunteering in sport.



Volunteering and employability

Volunteering and a milestone towards employment

“In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity.”

Albert Einstein,
physicist



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Volunteering plays a major role in the efforts of the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion to **‘work towards the creation of more and better jobs’**. With its strong social and learning aspects, volunteering is beneficial not only to the community, but also to individuals. It can help job seekers and especially long-term unemployed to remain active, train and acquire new skills as well as widen their scope of qualification. By providing these life-long learning opportunities, volunteering is part of the Lisbon strategy towards a more competitive European labour market.

To the point

In Europe, more than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three in ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and close to 80% of survey respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe. While 1 out of 3 Europeans volunteer, it is only 1 out of 5 in the case of unemployed people.¹

¹ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. ‘European Social Reality’, February 2007.



Volunteering improves self-confidence

Volunteering is an opportunity for anyone to stay active and improve confidence. Over '80 % of volunteers report that engagement in voluntary work makes them happy and improves their self-esteem'.²

Volunteering brings new opportunities

- Actions through volunteering give people new perspectives and help them to plan their future and career with a broader outlook. It is also a way of establishing a network, strengthening professional skills and morale.
- According to a study among job seekers, '81% of respondents said that volunteering gave them a chance to learn new skills'.³
- In 2007, '62% of former volunteers under the European Voluntary Service considered that this experience has changed for the better their career possibilities'.⁴

Volunteering as a means of preventing unemployment

Volunteering not only alleviates the symptoms of social exclusion and the exclusion of the long-term unemployed, but also addresses some of its causes.⁵ Available research data also suggest that volunteering is not only a 'way back to employment' but also a 'way of avoiding unemployment', since volunteers are less likely to become unemployed.⁶

Volunteering leads to skills perfection

- Volunteering is a form of informal and non-formal learning. Volunteers have the opportunity to acquire new skills and competences, which increase their qualification. It brings a number of benefits for the individual professional development such as vocational skills, public speaking and teamwork.
- A survey carried out in over 200 leading UK companies found that '**94 % correspondents thought that volunteering added value to the skills of their workforce**'.⁷
- Almost 3/4 of employers prefer to recruit candidates with volunteering experience in their CV.⁸

² Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 24.

³ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 29.

⁴ European Commission, 2009. 'EU Youth Report', p. 25.

⁵ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 19.

⁶ CEV, 2007. 'Volunteering as a route (back) to employment', General Assembly Final Report. Available at: <http://www.cev.be/data/File/CEV-GAParisReport.pdf> [cited 24.11.2009].

⁷ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 29.

⁸ McBain, Cathy and Amanda Jones, 2005: 'Employer Supported volunteering – the guide'. Volunteering England, p. 35.



- In Hungary, a voluntary programme for unemployed youth Ötlet resulted in employing 2/3 of the participants during or after the programme. In the South-Transdanubia region up to 90% of the participants managed to settle in the labour market.⁹

Volunteering complements not supplements paid work

It is hereby crucial to draw the line between paid work and volunteering. Wherever people engage together out of free will and without financial gain in voluntary activities both society as a whole and the individual volunteers benefit and social cohesion is significantly strengthened. Volunteering has its own intrinsic value – not the least being that it very often leads to paid employment when volunteers detect social needs and find solutions for them, or when volunteers gain through their engagement skills opening doors to employment. Volunteering complements paid work and may not be used as supplement for it.¹⁰

Our recommendations

- Identify barriers to active involvement of citizens in volunteering, especially of marginalized and vulnerable groups: Research shows that the unemployed, people coming from minority ethnic groups and unskilled workers are under-represented in the 'volunteering force' of Europe – while they could benefit hugely by their engagement. [Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. 'European Social Reality'.]
- Collaborate with DG EAC in the field of developing instruments to recognize skills and competences volunteers learn in order to inscribe volunteering into the policies promoting employability.
- These efforts include the acknowledgement of the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies in your DG. European policies shall be assessed concerning the positive (or negative) impact they have on the citizens, enabling and motivating them to become active and get involved. Especially legal provisions that discourage unemployed people and job seekers from engaging in volunteering, need to be addressed and removed. There is still too many cases in Europe where people see their unemployment benefits cut when volunteering; where no specific programmes are available to encourage the long-term unemployed to volunteer (without obliging them to do so); where insurance schemes for volunteers lack; or finally where the reimbursement of expenses is not tax exempt.
- Pay special attention to volunteering when implementing the activities of the Year 2010 to combat poverty and social exclusion: Volunteering is a tool through which citizens support people facing poverty – but more importantly a tool to empower these persons to actively

⁹ Ötlet program, 2005. 'Program Impact Assessment Report', p. 7. Available at: <http://otletprogram.hu/formanyom/Microsoft Word - zarotanutmany-vegleges.pdf> [cited 18.12.2009].

¹⁰ Alliance for European Year of Volunteering, 2009. 'The European Year of Volunteering EYV 2011 Discussion paper'.



improves their living conditions.

- Ensure equally a good coordination between the Year 2010 and the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011: Develop a policy agenda to promote volunteering in the field of the promotion of employability and social inclusion, especially by showcasing good practices in this field.
- Feed into the efforts of creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Europe in order to make volunteering accessible for all: The EU should develop a White Paper on Volunteering for a comprehensive policy agenda to promote, recognize and facilitate voluntary engagement of citizens all over Europe – especially of those with fewer opportunities. The experiences of your DG in organizing the ‘Open Methods of Coordination’ in the field of employment and social affairs can feed into this process. [CEV, 2006. ‘Manifesto for volunteering in Europe’, p. 10.] The OMC in your fields should on the other hand pay systematic attention to volunteering and active citizenship engagement.
- Collaborate with DG ENTR and DG REGIO for the better recognition of volunteering in the field of employability and skills development in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy: The potential of volunteering in the further development of the European ‘knowledge-based’ economy and as an area of lifelong learning is far from fully realized.
- Put a specific priority on volunteering when developing the new generation of EU programmes for the period after 2013, especially in the framework of the European Social Funds.
- Devise in collaboration with DG BUDG the possibility to recognize volunteering as a contribution to the eligible costs and income (contribution) to projects funded through the Social Fund. This possibility has been removed in some countries and not implemented in others, but should be mainstreamed in European Programmes.

Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

2008 | Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on ‘The contribution of volunteering to Economic and Social Cohesion’, 2008/C 105/03

In point 7 it highlights the benefits of volunteering with regards to the employability of a person through participation in a volunteering and voluntary service scheme.

2007 | Communication from the Commission entitled ‘Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society’ [COM(2007)498]

Voluntary activities provide a valuable non-formal learning experience, which enables young people to acquire skills and facilitate their transition from education to employment.

2005 | Resolution of the Council on addressing the concerns of young people in Europe – implementing the European Pact for Youth and promoting Active Citizenship, 2005/C 292/03

The Pact focuses on three areas: employment, integration and social advancement; education, training and mobility; reconciliation of working life and family life.

The Resolution invites the Commission to help young people make the most of opportunities to work, volunteer and study abroad.



Volunteering, social inclusion and non-discrimination

Volunteering as the social kit of societies

“My volunteer engagement has opened doors – (...) I feel that I am well accepted in my community now.”

Participant in INVOLVE project, 2006¹



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Volunteering plays role also in the efforts of the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion to **‘work towards an inclusive society and equal opportunities for all’**. Volunteering is a tool par excellence to promote the social cohesiveness of our societies: By engaging for each other people develop a sense of solidarity and bonds of trust. Volunteering empowers the vulnerable groups of society and provides them with a unique opportunity to (re-)connect to society and take an active part in it. Finally, volunteers put European values of solidarity and inclusion, social cohesion, diversity and mutual respect into practice, day after day.

To the point

In Europe, more than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three in ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and close to 80% of survey respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.²

Volunteers add value to social care towards all

- Social exclusion concerns many groups, such as homeless, disabled, poor, unemployed, elderly people, people with mental disorders, immigrants etc. Voluntary organisations and their volunteers work with these isolated groups and add value to the social sector.

¹ CEV, 2006. ‘INVOLVE Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration’, Final Project Report, p. 33. Available at: <http://www.cev.be/data/File/INVOLVEreportEN.pdf> [cited 24.11.2009].

² Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. ‘European Social Reality’, February 2007.



- In Lithuania, 55% and in Spain, 31,80% of voluntary sector activities are concentrated in the field of social care and services.³ Volunteers and voluntary organisations are also involved in the work for the integration of migrants.

Volunteering should be for all

All socially excluded groups should have a chance to actively participate in their society. One of the means of their involvement is volunteering, which should be made accessible to all.

- 'Disabled people tend to be seen as passive recipients of volunteering. But disabled people, like non-disabled people, can make valuable contributions to society through volunteering. Volunteering is key to the social inclusion of disabled people'.⁴
- Volunteering stimulates participation. It unites different people working towards common goals. Through this, volunteering fights against social exclusion, discrimination, prejudices and social inequality. Socially excluded groups are not only recipients, but often active participants in volunteering. Volunteering offers them the opportunity of expression and active engagement. It is often referred to as the 'social glue' that holds together different groups in society.⁵
- Two studies found that 'between 22 and 29% of refugees and asylum seekers had volunteered in the UK'.⁶
- The INVOLVE (Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration) project discovered, that **'92% believe that participating in volunteering is a way of integrating into the host society'**.⁷

Volunteering transmits effective knowledge and builds communities through social capital

Volunteering is a form of non-formal education; it collects, enriches, validates and distributes effective knowledge.⁸ It not only 'alleviates symptoms of social exclusion, but it also help to address some of it causes'.⁹ In this way, volunteering acts as preventive measure to social exclusion.

- Social capital in our societies is crucial to promote inclusion and connectedness between citizens in a society. The potential of volunteering both to empower individuals and to strengthen social

³ CSVnet – National Coordination Body of Voluntary Support Centres, 2009. 'Brief compendium of the research: Volunteering across Europe. Organisations, promotion, participation', p. 14, 18.

⁴ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 20.

⁵ CEV, 2007. 'CEV Contribution to the Draft Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion', p. 3.

⁶ CEV, 2006. 'INVOLVE Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration', Final Project Report, p. 22. Available at: <http://www.cev.be/data/File/INVOLVEreportEN.pdf> [cited 24.11.2009].

⁷ CEV, 2006. 'INVOLVE Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration', Final Project Report, p. 37. Available at: <http://www.cev.be/data/File/INVOLVEreportEN.pdf> [cited 24.11.2009].

⁸ MOVISIE, 2008. 'Towards an inclusive society', MOVISIE (Netherlands centre for social development).

⁹ Ockenden, Nick (ed), 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 19.



cohesion is far from fully realized: 7 out of 10 Europeans do not volunteer whereas 80% think it is important to help each other.¹⁰

Our recommendations

- Identify barriers to active involvement of citizens in volunteering, especially of marginalized and vulnerable groups: Research shows that the unemployed, people coming from minority ethnic groups and unskilled workers are underrepresented in the 'volunteering force' of Europe – while they could benefit hugely by their engagement. [Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. 'European Social Reality'.]
- Collaborate with DG EAC in the field of developing instruments to recognize skills and competences volunteers learn in order to inscribe volunteering into the policies promoting employability.
- These efforts include the acknowledgement of the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies in your DG. European policies shall be assessed concerning the positive (or negative) impact they have on the citizens, enabling and motivating them to become active and get involved. Especially legal provisions that discourage unemployed people and job seekers from engaging in volunteering, need to be addressed and removed. There is still too many cases in Europe where people see their unemployment benefits cut when volunteering; where no specific programmes are available to encourage the long-term unemployed to volunteer (without obliging them to do so); where insurance schemes for volunteers lack; or finally where the reimbursement of expenses is not tax exempt.
- Pay special attention to volunteering when implementing the activities of the Year 2010 to combat poverty and social exclusion: Volunteering is a tool through which citizens support people facing poverty – but more importantly a tool to empower these persons to actively improve their living conditions.
- Ensure equally a good coordination between the Year 2010 and the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011: Develop a policy agenda to promote volunteering in the field of the promotion social inclusion, especially by showcasing good practices in this field.
- Feed into the efforts of creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Europe in order to make volunteering accessible for all: The EU should develop a White Paper on Volunteering for a comprehensive policy agenda to promote, recognize and facilitate voluntary engagement of citizens all over Europe – especially of those with fewer opportunities. The experiences of your DG in organizing the 'Open Methods of Coordination' in the field of employment and social affairs can feed into this process. [CEV, 2006. 'Manifesto for volunteering in Europe', p. 10.] The OMC in your fields should on the other hand pay systematic attention to volunteering and active citizenship engagement.

¹⁰ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. 'European Social Reality'.



Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

2008 | Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'The contribution of volunteering to Economic and Social Cohesion', 2008/C 105/03

In point 7 it highlights the benefits of volunteering with regards to the employability of a person through participation in a volunteering and voluntary service scheme. The CoR further considers that the most vulnerable groups of society (immigrants, minorities, unemployed, homeless, substance abusers, school drop-outs) are empowered to transform their lives, get actively involved in society, through acquired skills and competences, get access to better paid jobs or find a path back to education. Through this opportunity, people from all backgrounds contribute together for the common good, and achieve social cohesion, diversity and respect;

2007 | Communication from the Commission entitled 'Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society' [COM(2007)498]

Voluntary activities provide a valuable non-formal learning experience, which enables young people to acquire skills and facilitate their transition from education to employment.

2006 | Council Directive 2004/114/EC of 13 December 2004 on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service

The Directive provides for the following conditions where a third-country national applies to be admitted to a voluntary service scheme:

age limits are set by the Member State concerned;

an agreement giving a description of tasks, the conditions in which the volunteer is supervised in the performance of those tasks, the working hours, and the resources available to cover travel, subsistence and accommodation costs throughout the stay;

the organisation responsible for the voluntary service scheme must accept responsibility for the volunteer's activities and for subsistence, healthcare and return travel costs;

the volunteer must, if the host Member State specifically requires it, receive a basic introduction to the language, history and political and social structures of that Member State.

2005 | Resolution of the Council on addressing the concerns of young people in Europe – implementing the European Pact for Youth and promoting Active Citizenship, 2005/C 292/03

The Pact focuses on three areas: employment, integration and social advancement; education, training and mobility; reconciliation of working life and family life.

The Resolution invites the Commission to help young people make the most of opportunities to work, volunteer and study abroad.

Volunteering and active ageing

Volunteering helps elderly stay active

“I will retire in 4 months, 25 days and 30 minutes. The three most important things I will need are: health and well-being, social activity and purpose. I will need to reinvent myself and give me a new purpose.”

Professor Raymond Thomson attending VALUE workshop on older volunteers as learners on 6 November 2009¹



© Think Future Volunteer Together

Senior citizens have an invaluable contribution to make to our societies – also beyond retirement. Due to the demographic development and growing number of elderly in Europe, it is even more crucial to create opportunities for elderly to stay active and promote intergenerational solidarity in our societies. Volunteering is a means of bringing generations together and of providing opportunities for senior citizens to stay active, to contribute to the community and to disseminate knowledge and experience they have acquired over a lifetime period.

To the point

In Europe, more than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three in ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and close to 80% of survey respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.²

Volunteering promotes intergenerational solidarity

- Volunteering combats prejudices towards elderly and promotes intergenerational solidarity. It strengthens the ties between the young and old through common volunteering projects. Volunteering helps to maintain and restore family links. It contributes significantly to a

¹ Compare with: Clifton, Jonathan, 2009. 'Ageing and Well-Being in International Context'. Available at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/21794071/Ageing-and-Wellbeing-in-an-International-Context> [cited 16.11.2009].

² Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. 'European Social Reality', February 2007.



satisfactory family life and proper work and private life balance. It is indispensable in areas, such as childcare and care of older generations.

- The ELLA project (Volunteers for Lifelong Learning in Old Age) between 2005 and 2008 applied the 'process of learning by dialogue between voluntary workers and persons of advanced age' allowing the exchange and preservation of memories between generations.³
- The LACE project (Lifelong Learning and Active Citizenship in Europe's ageing society) between 2005 and 2007 focused on the transition of senior citizens of the so-called baby boomer generation from work life to retirement with the need to define new roles for themselves.⁴

Volunteering as a means of active engagement of elderly beyond retirement

- Senior volunteering contributes to valuing the personal contribution to society. It prevents the isolation of elderly, contributes to better physical and mental health, happiness, self-esteem and self-satisfaction.
- In 2007, 53% of people aged 65 and over had formally volunteered in the UK.⁵ The same report concludes that more people of this age are getting involved, compared to 34% in 1991.
- However, there are countries especially in Central and Eastern Europe, where senior volunteering does not have such a strong tradition and needs to be further promoted. In Slovakia, young people below the age of 30 represent about 70% of volunteers, whilst 30% are comprised of middle aged or elderly people.⁶
- According to a 2008 Eurobarometer, **73% of elderly in Europe are eager to participate in community or volunteer work after retirement** and 44% of already retired engage or plan to get engaged in the community or voluntary action.⁷

Senior volunteering lacks opportunities

- The project 'Think Future, Volunteer Together' promoting senior volunteering through the exchanges of 100 European volunteers between 2007 and 2009 shows that volunteering opportunities among elderly are popular and desired, but not available in satisfactory numbers.⁸
- There is not sufficient funding for senior volunteering programmes. From 7 billion € in the Lifelong Learning Programme only about 5% goes to Grundtvig with its 10 different actions. The

³ Project Guide: 'Training volunteers as mediators working with elderly people in senior citizens' residences and nursing homes', p. 3. Available at: http://www.cev.be/data/File/ProjectGuideELLA_final_product_EN.pdf [cited 25.11.2009].

⁴ Klercq, Jumbo and Joke Zwart (ed.), 2007. 'Lifelong Learning as a Key to Active Citizenship'.

⁵ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 19.

⁶ SME, 2008. 'Mimovládka: Na Slovensku chýba zákon o dobrovoľníctve [NGO: Slovakia is missing a law on volunteering]'. SME, 6 March 2008. Available at: <http://www.sme.sk/c/3764985/Mimovladka-Na-Slovensku-chyba-zakon-o-dobrovolnictve.html> [cited 1.12. 2008].

⁷ Flash Eurobarometer 247, 2008. 'Family life and the need of ageing population', September 2008.

⁸ CEV, 2009. 'Think Future, Volunteer Together – Promotion of senior volunteering through international exchanges: practical and policy recommendations'. Available at: http://www.cev.be/data/File/TFVT_final_report_practical_and_policy_recommendations.pdf [cited 25.11.2009].



budget from the EU available for senior volunteers exchanges is very low, even though Member States contribute with their own funds.

Our recommendations

- Identify barriers to active involvement of senior citizens in volunteering and active citizenship. While before retirement 73% say they would like to be involved, at the age of retirement only 44% report being involved or planning to get involved. There is a huge untapped potential of senior citizens to volunteer.
- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies and programmes in your DG. European policies and programmes shall be assessed as to the positive (or negative) impact they have on the senior citizen's ability and motivation to become active and get involved.
- Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 and its legacy by developing a policy agenda to promote volunteering for the elderly and to further develop the potential of volunteering as an instrument for intercultural dialogue.
- Ensure smooth collaboration of the activities planned for the Year 2011 and the possible Year 2012 on intergenerational dialogue and active aging. Both years are unique opportunities to work on policies and programmes to enhance active citizenship of the elderly.
- Feed into the efforts of creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Europe in order to make volunteering accessible for all: The EU should develop a White Paper on Volunteering for a comprehensive policy agenda to promote, recognize and facilitate voluntary engagement of citizens all over Europe – especially of those with fewer opportunities.
- Further develop and expand the Senior Volunteering Programme and put a specific priority on volunteering when developing the new generation of EU programmes for the period after 2013.

Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents and programmes

2009 | Grundtvig Senior Volunteering Projects

Senior Volunteering Projects is a scheme of grants to support projects that aim at enabling senior citizens to volunteer in another European country for any kind of non-profit activity, as a form of informal (and mutual) learning activity (learning / sharing knowledge); at creating lasting cooperation between the host and sending organizations around a specific topic or target group, and thanks to the exchange of volunteers; and at enabling the local communities involved in the exchange of volunteers to draw on the potential of senior citizens as a source of knowledge, competence and experience.



2008 | EC Demography Report 2008: Meeting Social Needs in an Ageing Society, Commission staff working document [SEC(2008) 2911]

2008 | Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion [A6-0070/2008] European Parliament, Committee on Regional Development

Calls on the Commission to promote opportunities for older volunteers and to develop a Seniors in Action Programme for the increasing number of very experienced senior citizens who are willing to volunteer that might run in parallel with and complement the Youth in Action Programme and furthermore to promote specific programmes for intergenerational volunteering and for mentoring.

2006 | ENEA preparatory action on active ageing and mobility of elderly people

In accordance with the European Parliament resolution on the second United Nations World Assembly on Ageing and the European Parliament resolution on the Commission Communication 'Towards a Europe for all ages – promoting prosperity and intergenerational solidarity'.

1999 | Communication from the Commission Towards a Europe for All Ages Promoting Prosperity and Intergenerational Solidarity [COM(1999) 221 final]

Page 21: Older people are already very active in non-governmental organisations. Involving a much larger share of able older people in voluntary work could be a major tool in active ageing strategies. There is a triple benefit from engaging older persons in voluntary activities in their communities. Recipients of the services produced will be better off. Older volunteers acquire meaningful social roles, physical and mental stimulation from new contacts and a sense of personal satisfaction and fulfilment. Local services can be provided in a very cost-efficient way.



Volunteering and regional development

Volunteering is a driver for economic and social cohesion in European regions

“This is the duty of our generation as we enter the twenty-first century – solidarity with the weak, the persecuted, the lonely, the sick, and those in despair. It is expressed by the desire to give a noble and humanizing meaning to a community in which all members will define themselves not by their own identity but by that of others.”

Elie Wiesel, writer and peace Nobel Price laureate



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Volunteering plays a major role in the efforts of the DG Regional Policy to ‘**strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion by reducing disparities between the levels of development of regions and countries of the European Union**’. Volunteering contributes to ensuring good and equal regional development both in economic and social terms as it leads to greater social participation and increased economic and social cohesion. Volunteering enhances solidarity among citizens and provides them with skills that help them find employment, boost the efficiency of their work and increase social cohesion among different social groups and generations.

To the point

Volunteers are numerous

More than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three out of ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and **close to 80% of respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.**¹

¹ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. ‘European Social Reality’, February 2007



Volunteering contributes to social development

- Volunteering offers European citizens a means of meaningful participation in the life of their communities and strengthens social cohesion. It is a means to ensure intergenerational solidarity and allow the third generation to stay active and to contribute to the development of their region or other regions in need.²
- Volunteering plays an important role in the integration of new and historically excluded communities at a local, regional and national level. It enables individuals and groups to meet other people from other walks of life in a positive and mutually supportive environment.³
- Volunteers raise the attractiveness of regions by contributing to sustainable development, environmental consciousness and through ecological action: Volunteers are at the forefront of environmental activism – and direct action towards a clean, bio-diverse and healthy environment enhancing quality of life. In days of eco-tourism and the search of regions for their specific potential, an attractive and healthy environment will attract (sustainable) tourism.⁴
- Volunteering brings 'life' into rural areas and areas in risk of (urban) migrations. The creative potential of volunteers will contribute to promote the cultural and social development of regions and ensure that quality of life is high. In deprived areas with economic difficulties or permanent natural or demographic handicaps such as remote regions with very low population density, voluntary action and participation is often the only means for citizens to take ownership of creating a place worth living in.⁵

Volunteering contributes to economic development and employability

- In the United Kingdom, the economic value of voluntary activity is estimated at 7,9% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with 38% of the total population engaged in voluntary activities.⁶
- The sector of non-profit institutions and the value of volunteers account for an average of 5% of the GDP. This contribution is about equal to the construction (5,1%) and the financial industry (5,6%) and twice as much as the utility industry (2,4%).⁷
- The Institute for Volunteering Research suggests that for every £1 volunteer-organisations invest in supporting volunteering, volunteers give back up to £14.⁸

² European Parliament, 2008. 'Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion', A6-0070/2008, European Parliament, Committee on Regional Development.

³ Committee of the Regions, 2008. 'Opinion on the Contribution of Volunteering to Economic and Social Cohesion', 6–7 February 2008.

⁴ CEV, 2008. The European Volunteer Centre (CEV) statement on Volunteering and Regional Development; submitted to Rapporteur MEP Marian Harkin.

⁵ CEV, 2008. The European Volunteer Centre (CEV) statement on Volunteering and Regional Development; submitted to Rapporteur MEP Marian Harkin.

⁶ CEV, 2008. 'Putting volunteering on the economic map of Europe', CEV General Assembly Conference Final Report, 18 April 2008, p. 20. Available at: http://www.cev.be/data/File/GA_Ljubljana_FINALReport_Complete.pdf [cited 7.12.2009].

⁷ The research comes from 8 countries with satellite account data available. Johns Hopkins University, 2007. 'Measuring Civil Society and Volunteering', p. 4–6.

⁸ Volunteering England, 2009. 'Key Volunteering Facts and Figures'. Available at: <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/News/mediacentre/keyvolunteeringfactsandfigures.htm> [cited 26.10.2009].



- Volunteering is a precious tool for the fight against unemployment by providing people with non-formal learning opportunities in order to gain useful experiences and insights into the problems of our societies. According to a study among job seekers, '81% of the respondents said that volunteering gave them a chance to learn new skills'.⁹
- It provides unemployed people with an opportunity to continue to be active in their field of expertise or to explore new possibilities.¹⁰
- Volunteering not only alleviates the symptoms of social exclusion and the exclusion of long-term unemployed, but it also addresses some of its causes.¹¹ Available research data suggest that volunteering is not only a 'way back to employment' but also a 'way of avoiding unemployment' since volunteers are less likely to get unemployed.¹²
- Volunteering can lead to paid labour opportunities. Basic educational projects in Belgium lead to government provided service run by paid staff, although the programme originated from volunteer action.

⁹ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 29.

¹⁰ European Parliament, 2008. 'Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion', A6-0070/2008, European Parliament, Committee on Regional Development.

¹¹ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 19.

¹² CEV, 2007. 'Volunteering as a route (back) to employment', General Assembly Final Report. Available at: <http://www.cev.be/data/File/CEV-GAParisReport.pdf> [cited 24.11.2009].



Our recommendations

- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies in your DG, notably in the fields of social and economic development. Regional policies shall be assessed concerning the positive (or negative) impact they have on citizens, enabling and motivating them to become active and get involved.
- Identify barriers to active involvement of volunteers: 7 out of 10 Europeans do not volunteer and, thus, do not benefit from the above-mentioned values.
- Commit to developing an enabling infrastructure for volunteering, especially in regions that are beneficiaries of the different structural funds: Citizens very often are not aware of possibilities to engage with their local community. Investing in a local volunteering infrastructure will be beneficial for regional development according to above-mentioned investment ratio. In turns, the endowment with volunteering infrastructure as well as social capital shall be taken into account in statistics and indicators of regional development and benchmarking exercise.
- Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 by supporting the activities organised by local and regional volunteer centres and by developing an award system for regions that do have supportive volunteering policies.
- Feed into the efforts of creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Europe in order to make volunteering accessible for all: The EU should develop a White Paper on Volunteering for a comprehensive policy agenda to promote, recognize and facilitate voluntary engagement of citizens all over Europe – especially in regions with development potential.
- Acknowledge the economic value of volunteering and support DG ENTR in commissioning EUROSTAT to establish satellite accounts and collect systematically data on volunteering and its economic value. Johns Hopkins University, the ILO Manual for Labour Force Surveys and the UN Handbook on Not-for-Profit Organisations in the system of National Accounts are precedents in this respect. The European 2011 can serve as a momentum in this respect.
- Collaborate with DG BUDG in the current revision of the Financial Regulation to devise an instrument to acknowledge volunteering as eligible co-funding in the Structural Funds. This possibility has been removed in some countries and not implemented in others, but should be mainstreamed in European Programmes, especially in the Structural Funds.
- Collaborate with DG ENTR and DG EMPL for a better recognition of volunteering in the field of employability and skills development in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy: The potential of volunteering in the further development of the European 'knowledge-based' economy and as an area of lifelong learning is far from fully realized.



Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents and programmes

2008 | Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion [A6-0070/2008] European Parliament, Committee on Regional Development

Based, among other acts, on art 158 and 159 of the Treaty establishing the European Community. Among others recommendations, the report recommends that 2011 be declared the European Year on Volunteering (p.14). It also confirms that volunteering plays an important role in gaining skills, and improving the employability of the volunteer as volunteers gain a very wide range of skills and competences. Volunteering plays an important role in social inclusion.

2007 | Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the Contribution of Volunteering on Economic and Social Cohesion, CdR 254/2007 Rapporteur: Councillor Declan McDonnell

Calls on European decision makers to promote the economic and social benefits of volunteering, stresses that it is a key element of active citizenship and democracy at all levels. The Opinion recommends that there should be designated the European Year of Active Citizenship through Volunteering, to provide a focus for the promotion of volunteering and the implementation of initiatives across the EU 27 Member States.

2007 | Council Resolution on Voluntary Activities of Young People, 16th November 2007

It confirms and adapts the four common objectives for voluntary activities of young people – to develop, to facilitate, to recognise and to promote – agreed by the Council of Youth Ministers in 2001. Thus the method of cooperation applied to voluntary activities of young people – the open method of coordination, is confirmed and strengthened. By this method the Member States set themselves common objectives and report to the Commission on how they are implemented in each country. In the Resolution Member States agree to reflect upon practical means of measuring progress and to undertake peer learning activities to strengthen the implementation of the common objectives. Member States are also willing to discuss the need for additional instruments for promoting voluntary activities.

2007–2013 | Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013

The programme provides the instruments to promote active citizenship.

2007–2013 | Youth in Action Programme 2007-2013

The objective of this programme is to provide young people with opportunities for non-formal or informal learning with a European dimension. One of the Actions within this programme is the European Voluntary Service.



The economic value of volunteering

Volunteers bring money to the economy

“The non-profit sector and volunteering have long been the invisible subcontinent on the social landscape of our world.”

Prof. Lester Salamon,
Johns Hopkins University¹



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Volunteering plays a major role in the efforts of the DG Economic and Monetary Affairs to ‘**improve the economic well-being of the citizens of the EU, by developing and promoting policies that lead to sustainable economic growth and high level of employment**’. Measuring the economic value of volunteering became a core issue over the last years. Volunteering is indeed per definition not a pure economic activity, but its contribution can actually be counted in economic terms. A recent Johns Hopkins University Study reveals that volunteering is a significant economic factor.² Other organisations including the United Nations (UN) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) also contribute to research and policy development in this area.

¹ CEV, 2008, ‘Putting volunteering on the economic map of Europe’, CEV General Assembly Conference Final Report, 18 April 2008, p. 18. Available at: http://www.cev.be/data/File/GA_Ljubljana_FINALReport_Complete.pdf [cited 26.11.2009].

² The Johns Hopkins University (JHU), Center for Civil Society Studies has been conducting research on the contribution of the voluntary sector and volunteering to national economies and their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – the so-called ‘Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project’. Available at: <http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/> [cited 26.11.2009].



To the point

Volunteering has strong economic potential and generates significant economic value

Globally

- The sector of non-profit institutions and the value of volunteers account for an average of 5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This contribution is about equal to the construction (5,1%) and the financial industry (5,6%) and twice as much as the utility industry (2,4%).³
- The number of full-time equivalent volunteers worldwide accounts for approximately 140 million people, which would make them the 9th most populous country in the world if they were a nation.⁴

European level

- In Europe, more than 100 million Europeans declare being engaged in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three in ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and close to 80% of survey respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.⁵

National level

- In the United Kingdom, the economic value of voluntary activity is estimated to be 7,9% of the GDP, with 38% of the total population engaged in voluntary activities.⁶
- In France, the time devoted to volunteering in associations 'was equivalent to over 716 000 full time jobs in 2002'.⁷

Volunteering is a long-term investment in the communities

- Volunteering is a means to connect with societies and invest in local communities. It is also a way of addressing local problems and to promote innovative and sustainable solutions.
- According to a research from 2000 on the impact that employer supported volunteering has on UK society, 'small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) make a social contribution of up to £3 billion per annum in the community'.⁸
- The Institute for Volunteering Research suggests that for every £1 volunteer organisations invest in supporting volunteering, volunteers give back up to £14.⁹

³ The research comes from 8 countries with satellite account data available. Johns Hopkins University, 2007. 'Measuring Civil Society and Volunteering', p. 4-6.

⁴ Johns Hopkins University, 2007. 'Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project'.

⁵ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. 'European Social Reality', February 2007.

⁶ CEV, 2008, 'Putting volunteering on the economic map of Europe', CEV General Assembly Conference Final Report, 18 April 2008, p. 20. Available at: http://www.cev.be/data/File/GA_Ljubljana_FINALReport.Complete.pdf [cited 26.11.2009].

⁷ CEV, 2006. 'Manifesto for volunteering in Europe', p. 3.

⁸ McBain, Cathy and Amanda Jones, 2005: 'Employer Supported volunteering – the guide'. Volunteering England, p. 65.

⁹ Volunteering England, 2009. 'Key Volunteering Facts and Figures'. Available at: <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/News/mediacentre/keyvolunteeringfactsandfigures.htm> [cited 26.10.2009].



Volunteering contributes to employability

- Volunteering is a form of informal and non-formal learning, acquiring new skills and increasing qualifications. It contributes to higher employment.
- In 2007, '62% of former volunteers taking part in the European Voluntary Service programme consider that this experience has changed for the better their career possibilities'.¹⁰
- Almost 3/4 of employers prefer to recruit candidates with volunteering experience on their CV.¹¹
- In Hungary, the voluntary programme for unemployed youth Ötlet resulted in employing 2/3 of the participants during or after the programme. In the South-Transdanubia region up to 90% of the participants managed to settle in the labour market.¹²
- In times of economic crisis or higher unemployment rates, volunteering is a temporary alternative for the unemployed to maintain or to develop new skills and competences and stay active.

Our recommendations

- Acknowledge the economic value of volunteering commissioning EUROSTAT to establish satellite accounts and collect systematically data on volunteering and its economic value. Johns Hopkins University, the ILO Manual for Labour Force Surveys and the UN Handbook on Not-for-Profit Organisations in the system of National Accounts are precedents in this respect. The European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 can serve as a momentum in this respect.
- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies and programmes in your DG. European policies and programmes shall be assessed as to the positive (or negative) impact they have on the youth's ability and motivation to become active and get involved.
- Collaborate with DG BUDG in the current revision of the Financial Regulation to devise an instrument to acknowledge volunteering as eligible co-funding to European programmes. Currently, contribution of volunteers is mostly recognized merely as 'in kind' contribution with no acceptance as contribution to the eligible match-funding equal to monetary match funding.

¹⁰ European Commission, 2009. 'EU Youth Report', p. 25.

¹¹ McBain, Cathy and Amanda Jones, 2005: 'Employer Supported volunteering – the guide'. Volunteering England, p. 35.

¹² Ötlet program, 2005. 'Program Impact Assessment Report', p. 7. Available at: <http://otletprogram.hu/formanyom/Microsoft Word - zarotanulmany-vegleges.pdf> [cited 18.12.2009].



Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

2008 | Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion [A6-0070/2008] European Parliament, Committee on Regional Development

(...) volunteering not only has a measurable economic value but may also lead to significant savings for public services; whereas, in this context, it is important to ensure that voluntary activity is additional to public services and not a replacement of them, The Economic Value of Volunteering According to the Johns Hopkins University Report, 'Measuring Civil Society and Volunteering', released on September 25th 2007, the Non Profit Institutions N.P.I sector contributes about as much to the gross domestic product in a wide range of countries as do the construction and finance industries and twice as much as the utilities industry. This means that it accounts for 5-7% of the GDP in the countries surveyed. These findings emerge from data generated by official statistical agencies in eight countries, (Australia, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Japan, New Zealand and the United States). It is worth noting that twenty additional countries, both developed and developing, have committed to issuing these satellite accounts and a number of others are about to begin implementation. This clearly indicates that more and more countries are recognising the importance of including volunteering in their National Accounts.

2008 | Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'The contribution of volunteering to Economic and Social Cohesion', 2008/C 105/03

Committee of the Regions emphasises the considerable economic contribution that voluntary activity makes to local, regional, national and the EU economies through (a) the extra human resources that it adds to social and economic activity and (b) the creation of social capital and a better 'quality of life' which can be an influential factor in investment and job creation.

Policy Recommendations:

15. highlights the need to immediately address the lack of complete and accurate EU wide or national statistics on the economic contribution of volunteering. The Committee of the Regions therefore welcomes the Belgian, French, Czech Republic, Italian and Slovakian commitment to implement the UN Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts;

16. encourages the Member States to collect accurate statistical information on volunteer involvement at a local and regional level, also to support the development of appropriate initiatives at both levels;

17. calls on the European Commission to develop more systematic data collection on volunteers and the services they provide and supports the inclusion of volunteering as a specific category in the Statistical Accounts of EUROSTAT to accurately assess the economic value of volunteering;

18. recommends that comparative research on volunteering be carried out across the EU to obtain data on its development trends, scope and characteristics at national, regional and local levels. This would enable a clear indication of cultural similarities and differences in relation to volunteer activity and infrastructure;

19. recommends that research be carried out EU-wide to identify best practice experiences in promoting and supporting volunteerism on a local and regional basis. Depending on research findings, areas with more historical experience of volunteering could support other regions and localities to develop new initiatives.

2006 | Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on Voluntary Activities: its role in European Society and its Impact [2006/C325/13]

At European level we need reliable and comparable statistics on the scale, importance and socio-economic value of voluntary activity.

Voluntary activity also makes an essential contribution to our economies' output. This contribution is often overlooked in national statistics, as it does not always involve the exchange of goods of monetary value and because there is no single accepted method for measuring its economic value. Where it is measured, however, the economic value of voluntary activity and its contribution to the economy has proved considerable (5). For



example, in the United Kingdom the economic value of voluntary activity is estimated at 7.9 % of GDP, with 38 % of total population engaged in voluntary activity. In Ireland and Germany more than 33 % of the population are involved in voluntary activity in one form or another, compared to 18 % in Poland.

Calls on European decision makers to promote the economic and social benefits of volunteering, stresses that it is a key element of active citizenship and democracy at all levels. Opinion recommends that there should be designated the European Year of Active Citizenship through Volunteering, to provide a focus for the promotion of volunteering and the implementation of initiatives across the EU's 27 Member States.

2003 | UN Non-profit Handbook – Handbook on the Non-profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts



Volunteering and budgetary questions

Volunteering – freely given, but not cost free

“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.”

Sign hanging in Albert Einstein's
office at Princeton



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Volunteering plays a crucial role in no less than 17 different DGs and contributes to achieving EU objectives in many areas of its competence. Through their activities volunteers carry and communicate the European values of solidarity, democracy, freedom and equality. They contribute to social cohesion, intercultural and intergenerational dialogue, wellbeing, the active involvement of citizens, as well as the promotion of the EU in the world. Thanks to a recent Johns Hopkins University Study¹, we can now conclude that volunteering is also a significant economic factor. All these reasons prove the importance of taking volunteering into account when developing EU policies and budget.

To the point

Volunteers are numerous and have strong potential

- The number of full-time volunteers worldwide accounts for approximately 140 million people what would make them the 9th most populous country in the world if they were a nation.²
- In Europe, more than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and make a difference to our society through their engagement. Three in ten Europeans claim to be

¹ The Johns Hopkins University (JHU), Center for Civil Society Studies has been conducting research on the contribution of the voluntary sector and volunteering to national economies and their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – the so-called ‘Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project’. Available at: <http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/> [cited 26.11.2009].

² Johns Hopkins University, 2007. ‘Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project’.



active in a voluntary activity and nearly 80% of survey respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.³

Volunteering has a significant economic value

- In the United Kingdom, the economic value of voluntary activity is estimated at 7,9% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with 38% of the total population engaged in voluntary activities.⁴
- In France, the time devoted to volunteering in associations 'was equivalent to over 716 000 full time jobs in 2002'.⁵
- The sector of non-profit institutions and the value of volunteers account for an average of 5% of the GDP. This contribution is about equal to the construction (5,1%) and the financial industry (5,6%) and twice as much as the utility industry (2,4%).⁶

Volunteering is a long-term investment in communities

- Volunteering is a means to connect with society and to invest in local communities. It is also a way of addressing local problems and promoting innovative and sustainable solutions.
- According to a research from 2000 on the impact of employer supported volunteering on society in the UK, 'small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) make a social contribution of up to £3 billion per annum in the community'.⁷
- The Institute for Volunteering Research suggests that for every £1 volunteer organisations invest in supporting volunteering, volunteers give back up to £14.⁸

³ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. 'European Social Reality', February 2007.

⁴ CEV, 2008, 'Putting volunteering on the economic map of Europe', CEV General Assembly Conference Final Report, 18 April 2008, p. 20. Available at: http://www.cev.be/data/File/GA_Ljubljana_FINALReport.Complete.pdf [cited 26.11.2009].

⁵ CEV, 2006. 'Manifesto for volunteering in Europe', p. 3.

⁶ The research comes from 8 countries with satellite account data available. Johns Hopkins University, 2007. 'Measuring Civil Society and Volunteering', p. 4-6.

⁷ McBain, Cathy and Amanda Jones, 2005: 'Employer Supported volunteering – the guide'. Volunteering England, p. 65.

⁸ Volunteering England, 2009. 'Key Volunteering Facts and Figures'. Available at: <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/News/mediacentre/keyvolunteeringfactsandfigures.htm> [cited 26.10.2009].



Our recommendations

- Facilitate the work of volunteer organisations beneficiaries of EU funding by reducing red tape and by revising the Financial Regulations in a way that EU programmes become more accessible.
- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing services in your DG, notably in the field of planning the EU budget, the allocation of financial resources and the rules applying to the use of these funds. The European policies shall be assessed concerning the positive (or negative) impact they have on the citizens and citizens' organisations, enabling and motivating them to become active and get involved.
- Recognise the contribution of volunteers as eligible match funding equal to monetary support for European projects and operating grants. The new financial regulation shall foresee that:
 - Contribution through voluntary work be obligatorily recognised by the 'authorising officer' as in kind contribution in areas where volunteers are indispensable, such as Youth in Action, Lifelong Learning, Europe for Citizens, European Social Fund, Regional Funds. This should also be the case for reimbursement of actual costs incurred by volunteers during the contribution to the project.
 - These contribution through voluntary work be recognised as eligible costs / contribution to the project equal to monetary contributions / match funding.
 - A model for calculation of the financial value to be placed on the contributions of volunteers to projects or activities within the framework of an operating grant shall be established in collaboration with the European networks of volunteer organisations
- The European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 can provide an appropriate momentum.

Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

2008 | Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion [A6-0070/2008] European Parliament, Committee on Regional Development

(...) volunteering not only has a measurable economic value but may also lead to significant savings for public services; whereas, in this context, it is important to ensure that voluntary activity is additional to public services and not a replacement of them (...)

The Economic Value of Volunteering

According to the Johns Hopkins University Report, 'Measuring Civil Society and Volunteering', released on September 25th 2007, the Non Profit Institutions N.P.I sector contributes about as much to gross domestic product in a wide range of countries as do the construction and finance industries and twice as much as the utilities industry. This means that it accounts for 5-7% of the GDP in the countries surveyed. These findings



emerge from data generated by official statistical agencies in eight countries, (Australia, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Japan, New Zealand and the United States). It is worth noting that twenty additional countries, both developed and developing, have committed to issuing these satellite accounts and a number of others are about to begin implementation. This clearly indicates that more and more countries are recognising the importance of including volunteering in their National Accounts.

2008 | Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'The contribution of volunteering to Economic and Social Cohesion' (2008/C 105/03)

Committee of the Regions emphasises the considerable economic contribution that voluntary activity makes to local, regional, national and the EU economies through (a) the extra human resources that it adds to social and economic activity and (b) the creation of social capital and a better 'quality of life' which can be an influential factor in investment and job creation.

Policy Recommendations:

15. highlights the need to immediately address the lack of complete and accurate EU wide or national statistics on the economic contribution of volunteering. The Committee of the Regions therefore welcomes the Belgian, French, Czech Republic, Italian and Slovakian commitment to implement the UN Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts;

16. encourages the Member States to collect accurate statistical information on volunteer involvement at a local and regional level, also to support the development of appropriate initiatives at both levels;

17. calls on the European Commission to develop more systematic data collection on volunteers and the services they provide and supports the inclusion of volunteering as a specific category in the Statistical Accounts of EUROSTAT to accurately assess the economic value of volunteering;

18. recommends that comparative research on volunteering be carried out across the EU to obtain data on its development trends, scope and characteristics at national, regional and local levels. This would enable a clear indication of cultural similarities and differences in relation to volunteer activity and infrastructure;

19. recommends that research be carried out EU-wide to identify best practice experiences in promoting and supporting volunteerism on a local and regional basis. Depending on research findings, areas with more historical experience of volunteering could support other regions and localities to develop new initiatives.

2007 | Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on Voluntary Activities: its role in European Society and its Impact [2006/C325/13]

At European level we need reliable and comparable statistics on the scale, importance and socio-economic value of voluntary activity.

Voluntary activity also makes an essential contribution to our economies' output. This contribution is often overlooked in national statistics, as it does not always involve the exchange of goods of monetary value and because there is no single accepted method for measuring its economic value. Where it is measured, however, the economic value of voluntary activity and its contribution to the economy has proved considerable (5). For example, in the United Kingdom the economic value of voluntary activity is estimated at 7.9 % of GDP, with 38 % of total population engaged in voluntary activity. In Ireland and Germany more than 33 % of the population are involved in voluntary activity in one form or another, compared to 18 % in Poland.

Calls on European decision makers to promote the economic and social benefits of volunteering, stresses that it is a key element of active citizenship and democracy at all levels. Opinion recommends that there should be designated the European Year of Active Citizenship through Volunteering, to provide a focus for the promotion of volunteering and the implementation of initiatives across the EU's 27 Member States.



Volunteering and tax related questions

Volunteering – freely given, but not cost free

*“Not everything that can be counted counts,
and not everything that counts can be
counted.”*

Sign hanging in Albert Einstein's
office at Princeton



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Volunteering plays a crucial role in no less than 17 different DGs and contributes to achieving EU objectives in many areas of its competence. For further development of its potential, a joint effort of all stakeholders, including the European Commission and your DG, is crucial. In view of the responsibility of the DG Taxation and Customs Union to **‘tackle the tax obstacles that currently prevent individuals and companies from operating freely across borders and from exploiting the full benefit of the Internal Market’**, we call on you to consider the effects on taxation on the ability and willingness of people to volunteer. Through their activities, volunteers carry and communicate the core European values of solidarity, democracy, freedom and equality. They contribute to social cohesion, intercultural and intergenerational dialogue, well-being and active involvement of citizens, and to the promotion of the EU in the world. A recent Johns Hopkins University Study reveals that volunteering is also a significant economic factor.¹

All these reasons prove the importance of taking volunteering into account when developing EU financial regulations for organisations supporting volunteering in Europe.

¹ The Johns Hopkins University (JHU), Center for Civil Society Studies has been conducting research on the contribution of the voluntary sector and volunteering to national economies and their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – the so-called ‘Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project’. Available at: <http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/> [cited 26.11.2009].



To the point

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- The number of full-time volunteers worldwide accounts for approximately 140 million people what would make them the 9th most populous country in the world if they were a nation.²
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- Volunteering is a means to connect with society and to invest in local communities. It is also a way of addressing local problems and of promoting innovative and sustainable solutions.
- According to a research on the impact of employer supported volunteering on society in the UK from 2000, 'small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) make a social contribution of up to £3 billion per annum in the community'.⁷
- The Institute for Volunteering Research suggests that for every £1 volunteer organisations invest in supporting volunteering, volunteers give back up to £14.⁸
- Voluntary organisations invest into their volunteers through the provision of a good support system, ensuring their protection and training. For their work, they need supportive measures and regulations.

² Johns Hopkins University, 2007. 'Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project'.

³ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. 'European Social Reality', February 2007.

⁴ CEV, 2008, 'Putting volunteering on the economic map of Europe', CEV General Assembly Conference Final Report, 18 April 2008, p. 20. Available at: http://www.cev.be/data/File/GA_Ljubljana_FINALReport_Complete.pdf [cited 26.11.2009].

⁵ CEV, 2006. 'Manifesto for volunteering in Europe', p. 3.

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⁸ Volunteering England, 2009. 'Key Volunteering Facts and Figures'. Available at: <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/News/mediacentre/keyvolunteeringfactsandfigures.htm> [cited 26.10.2009].



Our recommendations

- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies in your DG. European policies shall be assessed concerning the positive (or negative) impact they have on the citizens, enabling and motivating them to become active and get involved.
- Feed into the efforts of creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Europe in order to make volunteering accessible for all. This enabling environment needs to comprise a favourable taxation environment voluntary organisations and volunteers including:
 - In the current revision of the EU VAT rules: Exemption from VAT and other obligatory taxes on goods and services necessary for implementing and accompanying voluntary activities;
 - Exemption from income tax for expenses reimbursed to volunteers;
 - Unambiguous, guaranteed and quantitative recognition and valorisation of the contributions volunteers make to activities co-funded by public institutions, notably the EU in its programmes: This contribution should be accepted as eligible match funding with a monetary value. A model for calculation of the financial value to be placed on the contributions of volunteers to projects or activities within the framework of an operating grant shall be established in collaboration with the European networks of volunteer organisations.
 - Introduction of a specific exemption to the Bolkenstein Directive, acknowledging the specificities of services delivered by and with volunteers, including an exemption for public services entrusted to voluntary organisations from this Directive. [CSVnet – National Coordination Body of Voluntary Support Centres, 2009. 'Manifesto of Italian volunteering for Europe'. Part of the project Volunteers, European citizens.]
 - Provide a framework for tax breaks for companies that support voluntary organisations or /and that promote voluntary engagement of their employees in the framework of Employer Supported Volunteering.

The European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 can serve as a momentum to further develop the above-mentioned activities.

Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

2008 | Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion [A6-0070/2008] European Parliament, Committee on Regional Development



Calls on Member States and regional and local authorities to make real efforts to help voluntary organisations to access sufficient and sustainable funding (...);

Calls on the Commission to work towards putting in place a system for all Community funds whereby volunteer activity can be recognised as a contribution to co-financed projects and to devise mechanisms whereby voluntary work can be suitably costed; welcomes efforts by some Directorates-General of the Commission to adopt a more flexible approach to the acceptance of voluntary work as a contribution matching Community funding in joint-funded projects;

Encourages companies and other private-sector operators, as part of their corporate social responsibility strategy, to financially support initiatives promoting and enhancing volunteering (...);

Calls on the relevant authorities to ensure that volunteers are adequately covered by accident insurance and personal liability insurance in respect of their voluntary activities (...);

Calls on the Commission to investigate the creation of a legal basis in Community Law for the exemption of voluntary organisations from VAT on purchases intended for the accomplishment of their objective and the exemption of donors from tax on donations for voluntary work purposes;

2008 | Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'The contribution of volunteering to Economic and Social Cohesion' (2008/C 105/03)

Committee of the Regions emphasises the considerable economic contribution that voluntary activity makes to local, regional, national and the EU economies through (a) the extra human resources that it adds to social and economic activity and (b) the creation of social capital and a better 'quality of life' which can be an influential factor in investment and job creation.

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of total population engaged in voluntary activity. In Ireland and Germany more than 33 % of the population are involved in voluntary activity in one form or another, compared to 18 % in Poland.

Calls on European decision makers to promote the economic and social benefits of volunteering, stresses that it is a key element of active citizenship and democracy at all levels. Opinion recommends that there should be designated the European Year of Active Citizenship through Volunteering, to provide a focus for the promotion of volunteering and the implementation of initiatives across the EU's 27 Member States.

2006 | Council Directive on the common system of value added tax [2006/112/EC]

CHAPTER 2 presents some exemptions for certain activities in the public interest.

Article 132

1. Member States shall exempt the following transactions:

(g) the supply of services and of goods closely linked to welfare and social security work, including those supplied by old people's homes, by bodies governed by public law or by other bodies recognised by the Member State concerned as being devoted to social wellbeing;

(h) the supply of services and of goods closely linked to the protection of children and young persons by bodies governed by public law or by other organizations recognised by the Member State concerned as being devoted to social wellbeing;

(l) the supply of services, and the supply of goods closely linked thereto, to their members in their common interest in return for a subscription fixed in accordance with their rules by non-profit-making organisations with aims of a political, trade-union, religious, patriotic, philosophical, philanthropic or civic nature, provided that this exemption is not likely to cause distortion of competition;

(m) the supply of certain services closely linked to sport or physical education by non-profit-making organisations to persons taking part in sport or physical education;

(o) the supply of services and goods, by organisations whose activities are exempt pursuant to points (b), (g), (h), (i), (l), (m) and (n), in connection with fund-raising events organised exclusively for their own benefit, provided that exemption is not likely to cause distortion of competition;

Article 133

Member States may make the granting to bodies other than those governed by public law of each exemption provided for in points (b), (g), (h), (i), (l), (m) and (n) of Article 132(1) subject in each individual case to one or more of the following conditions:

(b) those bodies must be managed and administered on an essentially voluntary basis by persons who have no direct or indirect interest, either themselves or through intermediaries, in the results of the activities concerned;

Volunteering, enterprise and corporate social responsibility (CSR)

Employee volunteering gives a face to the concept of CSR

“I believe that to meet the challenges of our times, human beings will have to develop a greater sense of universal responsibility.”

H. H. the Dalai Lama



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Volunteering plays a major role in the efforts of the DG Industry and Entrepreneurship to ensure and encourage **‘stimulating innovation, sustainable production and friendly environment for businesses’**. The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become indispensable for companies to be able to demonstrate being good ‘corporate citizens’ and to do business ‘responsibly’. Employer supported volunteering (ESV) is one way of making CSR concrete in the business but also in the public sector. It is a win-win-win solution: a means to connect with societies and invest in the local communities, to meet business’ priorities and objectives and to promote motivation, skills and social awareness of employees.¹

To the point

In Europe, more than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three in ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity

¹ Ramrayka, Liza, 2001. ‘Employee volunteering: the guide’. The National Centre for Volunteering, London, p. 8.



and close to 80% of survey respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.²

Employee volunteering connects and contributes to the communities

- Employee volunteering is a means for businesses to connect with societies and invest in local communities. It is also a way of addressing local problems and promoting innovative solutions.
- The Institute for Volunteering Research has shown that 'for every £1 invested in supporting volunteering, volunteers give back up to £14' to the communities.³
- According to a research on the impact on society in 2000, 'small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make a social contribution of up to £3 billion per annum in the community'.⁴
- 'There is no doubt that volunteering exposes us more directly to society's needs and provides insights not available in the workplace – seeing is believing'.⁵

Employee volunteering raises companies' attractiveness and reputation

- Through employer supported schemes, companies show their corporate citizenship. It improves their relations with the community as well as their public image.
- According to research from 2002, '**89% of people say that a community programme makes a difference in their perception of a company**'.⁶
- The CEV Conference on the topic 'Developing Employee Volunteering – A joint venture between volunteer organisations and companies: Strategies – Success Stories – Challenges' showed the huge potential of collaborations between the voluntary sector and companies to bring value to communities – and to companies as well as volunteer organisations: A true win-win situation if properly instigated and accompanied.⁷

² Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. 'European Social Reality', February 2007.

³ Volunteering England, 2009. 'Key Volunteering Facts and Figures'. Available at: <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/News/mediacentre/keyvolunteeringfactsandfigures.htm> [cited 26.10.2009].

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⁵ Churchill, Lawrence (Chairman and MD, Unum) quoted in: Ramrayka, Liza, 2001. 'Employee volunteering: the guide'. The National Centre for Volunteering, London, p. 55.

⁶ McBain, Cathy and Amanda Jones, 2005: 'Employer Supported volunteering – the guide'. Volunteering England, p. 14–15.

⁷ CEV, forthcoming. 'Developing Employee Volunteering – A joint venture between volunteer organisations and companies: Strategies – Success Stories – Challenges', Final Report, 15 May 2009.



Employee volunteering widens business opportunities and promotes sustainability

- Employee volunteering leads to sustainability in economic, social and environmental areas. It fosters social cohesion, economic competitiveness and a more rational use of natural resources. It promotes new partnerships and responsible development.
- In Slovakia, business sustainability has been identified as the greatest internal benefit (31%) of CSR.⁸

Employee volunteering is popular among the employees

- Employee volunteering allows for a cohesive workforce and attracts motivated labour. It increases employee productivity, loyalty and performance and improves their skills.
- In an 'IBM España' employee volunteering programme, 95% of the employees felt it had helped to develop their skills, providing them with a good reason to stay with the company and 91% agreed that it gave them a sense of achievement and was personally rewarding.⁹
- Volunteering provides 'a unique opportunity for the staff – it helps people enhance their teamwork, communication skills, initiative and patience, and gives them a far greater disability awareness. All indispensable tools for today's workplace'.¹⁰

⁸ World Bank and European Commission. 'What Does Business Think about Corporate Social Responsibility? Part II: A comparison of attitudes and practices in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia', p. 91.

⁹ ENAGAGE, 2008. 'CSR Laboratories: Bringing the European Alliance on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to Life', p. 28.

¹⁰ Smith, Tracy (Senior Business Manager) quoted in: McBain, Cathy and Amanda Jones, 2005: 'Employer Supported volunteering – the guide'. Volunteering England, p. 46.



Our recommendations

- Collaborate with DG ADMIN to devise an employer supported volunteering programme within the European Commission to allow civil servants getting active in their local communities or in volunteer organisations within their places of residence. Volunteer centres all over Europe will be supportive in the effort to develop a suitable and meaningful employee volunteering policy.
- Identify barriers to the further development of Employer Supported Volunteering, be it the lack of information of companies as to how to design such programmes; be it the legal or taxation framework being discouraging for companies to allow their staff to get involved in such programmes.
- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies and programmes in your DG. European policies and programmes shall be assessed as to the positive (or negative) impact they have on the companies' and employees' ability and motivation to actively develop volunteering schemes.
- Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 and its legacy by developing a policy agenda to promote Employer Supported Volunteering, by showcasing good practice in employee volunteering in Europe, by organising events that bring together employers and voluntary organisations, and by developing an award scheme for employee volunteers and companies developing successful employee volunteer schemes.
- Consider the creation of a European Employee Volunteering Day.
- Feed into the efforts of creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Europe in order to make volunteering accessible for all: The EU should develop a White Paper on Volunteering for a comprehensive policy agenda to promote, recognize and facilitate voluntary engagement of citizens all over Europe – especially of those with fewer opportunities and those alienated from the labour market. The White Paper should contain proposals for incentives for employers to engage in Employer Supported Volunteering schemes and the recommendation to make a systematic link between CSR and employee volunteering: Employee volunteers are the agents of CSR in practice. [CEV, 2006. 'Manifesto for volunteering in Europe', p. 9.]
- Collaborate with DG EMPL for the better recognition of volunteering in the field of employability and skills development in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy: The potential of volunteering in the further development of the European 'knowledge-based' economy and as an area of lifelong learning is far from fully realized.
- Invite volunteer organisations at European level such as the European Volunteer Centre (CEV) when developing the CSR agenda at European level and in any multi-stakeholder forum operating in this area.



Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

2007 | European Parliament resolution of 13 March 2007 on corporate social responsibility: a new partnership (2006/2133(INI))

Article 42: underlines the importance of the EU-budget line for pilot projects such as those involving employee community engagement.

Article 45: calls on the Commission to fulfil its commitment to (...) developing policies to encourage the staff of EU institutions to undertake voluntary community engagement.

2006 | Communication from the Commission on Implementing the Partnership For Growth and Jobs: Making Europe a Pole of Excellence on Corporate Social Responsibility [COM(2006) 136 final]

Defines CSR as a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis.

Specifies that CSR practices can involve for example the improvements in public health, as a result of voluntary initiatives by enterprises.

The European Commission commits to step up its policy of promoting the voluntary and innovative efforts of companies on CSR (...)

2002 | Communication from the Commission concerning Corporate Social Responsibility: A business contribution to Sustainable Development [COM(2002) 347 final]

Confirms and recognizes the voluntary nature of CSR and evokes that promoting convergence and transparency of CSR practices and tools helps to create an impressive richness of voluntary enterprise initiatives.

2001 | Corporate Social Responsibility Green Paper, Promoting a European Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility [COM(2001) 366 final]

Sets out the principles underlying CSR and introduces some of the sustainability tools at the disposal of companies and governments. Also opens a consultation about the concept of CSR.



Volunteering, public sector administration and the European Commission being a responsible employer

Employee volunteering is a win-win-win solution

*“I believe that to meet the challenges of our times,
human beings will have to develop a greater sense of
universal responsibility.”*

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© BTCV

Volunteering might play a major role in the efforts of DG Inter-institutional relations and Administration to ensure that the **‘European Commission staff is dedicated to making the civil service of the European Union a modern, effective and dynamic organisation, fit for the challenges of the 21st century’**. The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become indispensable for employers to be able to demonstrate being responsible ‘corporate citizens’. Employer supported volunteering (ESV) is one way of making CSR concrete – in the business but also in the public sector.¹ It is a win-win-win solution: a means to promote motivation, skills and social awareness of employees, meet employers’ priorities and connect with the local communities.²

To the point

In Europe, more than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three in ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity

¹ The Flemish administration allows its employees to dedicate a few days of their paid work time towards volunteer engagement.

² Ramrayka, Liza, 2001. ‘Employee volunteering: the guide’. The National Centre for Volunteering, London, p. 8.



and close to 80% of survey respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.³

Employee volunteering is popular among employees

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- Volunteering provides 'a unique opportunity for the staff – it helps people enhance their teamwork, communication skills, initiative and patience, and gives them a far greater disability awareness. All indispensable tools for today's workplace'.⁵

Employee volunteering raises employer's attractiveness and reputation

- Through employer supported volunteering schemes, employers show their corporate citizenship. It improves their relation with the community, their public image and raises their credibility.
- According to a research from 2002, '89% of people say that a community programme makes a difference in their perception of a company'.⁶

Employee volunteering connects with local communities

- Employee volunteering is a means for employers to connect with society and invest in local communities. It is also a way of addressing local problems and promoting innovative solutions. The connection with European citizens is crucial for the European institutions.
- The Institute for Volunteering Research has shown that 'for every £1 invested in supporting volunteering, volunteers give back up to £14'.⁷
- 'There is no doubt that volunteering exposes us more directly to society's needs and provides insights not available in the workplace – seeing is believing'.⁸

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Our recommendations

- Devise an employer supported volunteering programme within the DG ADMIN work structure to allow civil servants getting active in their local communities or in volunteer organisations within their places of residence. Volunteer centres all over Europe will be supportive in the effort to develop a suitable and meaningful employee volunteering policy.
- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies and programmes in your DG. European policies and programmes shall be assessed as to the positive (or negative) impact they have on the youth's ability and motivation to become active and get involved.
- Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 and its legacy by setting up a good example within the European Commission.

Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

- 2007 |** European Parliament resolution of 13 March 2007 on corporate social responsibility: a new partnership (2006/2133(INI))
- Article 42: underlines the importance of the EU-budget line for pilot projects such as those involving employee community engagement.
- Article 45: calls on the Commission to fulfil its commitment to (...) developing policies to encourage the staff of EU institutions to undertake voluntary community engagement
- 2006 |** Communication from the Commission on Implementing the Partnership For Growth and Jobs: Making Europe a Pole of Excellence on Corporate Social Responsibility [COM(2006) 136 final]
- Defines CSR as a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis.
- Specifies that CSR practices can involve for example the improvements in public health, as a result of voluntary initiatives by enterprises.
- The European Commission commits to step up its policy of promoting the voluntary and innovative efforts of companies on CSR (...)
- 2002 |** Communication from the Commission concerning Corporate Social Responsibility: A business contribution to Sustainable Development [COM(2002) 347 final]
- Confirms and recognizes the voluntary nature of CSR and evokes that promoting convergence and transparency of CSR practices and tools helps to create an impressive richness of voluntary enterprise initiatives.
- 2006 |** Communication from the Commission concerning Corporate Social Responsibility: A business contribution to Sustainable Development [COM(2002) 347 final]
- Confirms and recognizes the voluntary nature of CSR and evokes that promoting convergence and transparency of CSR practices and tools helps to create an impressive richness of voluntary enterprise initiatives.



Volunteering and environment

Volunteering: local solutions to global challenges

*“I believe that to meet the challenges of our times,
human beings will have to develop a greater sense of
universal responsibility.”*

H. H. the Dalai Lama



Volunteering plays a major role in the efforts of the DG Environment to **‘protect, preserve and improve the environment for present and future generations’**. At a time when climate change has become a major issue for our society, conservation volunteering is crucial in tackling its challenges. In addition, in line with the priorities of the DG Environment, volunteers contribute worldwide to protecting nature and biodiversity, to preserve the environment and natural resources. Conservation volunteering is also an invaluable source of health and well-being.

To the point

Volunteers are numerous

- More than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three in ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and nearly 80% of respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of the democratic life in Europe.¹
- **In the UK, the environmental charity British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) works with over 300 000 volunteers each year.**²

¹ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. ‘European Social Reality’, February 2007.

² BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers), 2009. ‘Volunteer’. Available at: <http://www2.btcv.org.uk/display/volunteer> [cited 7.12.2009].



- The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) campaign 'Volunteering for our planet' counted that people around the world have done 1 505 606 hours of environmental volunteering between 5 June and 15 December 2009.³
- In Slovakia, volunteering activities in the field of environment represent 13,3% of the total share.⁴

Volunteers trigger action

- Volunteers and volunteering organisations play a key role in promoting actions to help achieve sustainable development and to encourage citizens and communities to 'take ownership of their local environment'.⁵
- Environmental volunteering increases awareness of environmental issues and the likelihood of carrying out environmentally friendly practices.⁶
- Volunteers are involved in different ways in environmental volunteering:⁷ activism or ecological restoration, proactive actions to improve the environment, monitoring and educational activities.
- Volunteers are the main actors of civil protection as shown by DG ENV funded projects in the framework of the Civil Protection Action Programme.⁸ In Italy, The public civil protection system established after the big floods of Florence back in 1966 allows now to mobilise quickly thousands of volunteers in the event of catastrophes (currently over 1,3 million volunteers can be deployed within minutes – and they are protected during their work by state law).⁹

Volunteering delivers health benefits

Foremost, environmental volunteering serves the planet and the community. Beyond, it also proves to be beneficial for people who volunteer: it increases satisfaction from acting for the planet and thus contributing to the improvement of the future; it allows volunteers to socialise with others; it increases their well-being, physical and mental health; and it promotes personal development in terms of learning new skills and gaining self-esteem.¹⁰

³ United Nations, 2009. United Nations campaign Seal the Deal. Available at: <http://sealthedeal2009.org/unv> [cited 15.12.2009].

⁴ CSVnet – National Coordination Body of Voluntary Support Centres, 2009. 'Brief compendium of the research: Volunteering across Europe. Organisations, promotion, participation', p. 17.

⁵ BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers), 2009. 'Investing in sustainable futures. BTCV Strategic Plan 2009-2013', p. 9.

⁶ Hine, Rachel, Jo Peacock and Jules Pretty, 2008. 'Evaluating the impact of environmental volunteering on behaviours and attitudes to the environment', University of Essex, Report for BTCV Cymry.

⁷ Measham, Thomas G. and Guy B. Barnett, 2007. 'Environmental volunteering: motivations, modes and outcomes', CSIRO Working Paper Series, 2007-2003.

⁸ 'Volunteers in Civil Protection'. Available at: <http://www.eu-volunteers.net/> [cited 23.12.2009].

⁹ Information provided by the National Volunteer Support Centre CSVnet (<http://www.csvnet.it/>).

¹⁰ Hine, Rachel, Jo Peacock and Jules Pretty, 2008. 'Evaluating the impact of environmental volunteering on behaviours and attitudes to the environment', University of Essex, Report for BTCV Cymry.



Our recommendations

- Mainstream volunteering as a tool for environmental action and civil protection: When developing policies in your DG these policies shall be assessed as to the positive (or negative) impact they have on citizens' ability and motivation to become active and get involved.
- Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 by showcasing the contribution of volunteers to environment protection.
- Devise a new Programme for Volunteering in Environmental Action: 7 in 10 Europeans do not volunteer whereas 80% do consider volunteering important for their lives and for society. This huge potential needs to be capitalized on, notable as volunteers have undoubtedly a major added value to the actions of your DG and deserve targeted action. The good example of the 1999 Civil Protection Action Programme should be used to develop a new agenda for the promotion of active citizens' engagement in preserving nature, ensuring biodiversity and addressing climate change.
- Establish relationships with the European networks of Volunteering such as the European Volunteer Centre (CEV) in order to develop a comprehensive policy agenda on how to better harness volunteers to contribute to the delivery of your policies and programmes.

Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

1999 | Council decision establishing the Community Civil Protection Action Programme, (1999/847/EC OJ L327/53), adopted in 1999 and ending in 2006 (2005/12/EC OJ L6/7)

The Community action programme in the field of civil protection was intended to support and supplement Member States' efforts at national, regional and local levels by implementing actions for the protection of persons, property and environment in the event of natural and technological disasters. It also intends to implement actions that facilitate cooperation, exchange of experience and mutual assistance between Member States.

The Programme also supported volunteering.

Example of projects supported:

Involving citizens in civil protection, British Red Cross Society, project aimed in raising awareness among European citizens to participate in civil protection volunteer organisations and to promote volunteer work.

The promotion of volunteer work in civil protection in the EU member states and EEA countries on the basis of the recommendation of common standards, Technisches Hilfswerk; The main objective of the two-year project was the promotion of volunteer work in civil protection in the EU member states and the three EEA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.



Volunteering and climate change

Volunteering: local solutions to global challenges

“Individuals, households and communities have a crucial role to play in tackling climate change.”

DEFRA 2006, Climate Change
the UK Programme



Volunteering plays a major role in the efforts of the DG Climate Action to ‘**protect, preserve and improve the environment for present and future generations**’, and more specifically to ‘**tackle the challenges posed by climate change**’. At a time when climate change has become a major issue for our society, environmental volunteering is crucial in tackling the challenges that it poses. Volunteers are key actors in this field. Through their commitment, time and energy to protect the environment and to raise awareness on climate change worldwide, actions with real impact at all levels take place. While climate action has become a top priority on the EU agenda, it is crucial to take the contribution of volunteers in this area into account.

To the point

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- In the UK, the environmental charity British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) works with over 300 000 volunteers each year.²

¹ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. ‘European Social Reality’, February 2007.

² BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers), 2009. ‘Volunteer’. Available at: <http://www2.btcv.org.uk/display/volunteer> [cited 7.12.2009].



- The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) campaign 'Volunteering for our planet' counted that people around the world have done 1 505 606 hours of environmental volunteering between 5 June and 15 December 2009.³
- In Slovakia, volunteering activities in the field of environment represent 13,3% of total share.⁴

Volunteers trigger actions

- Volunteers and volunteering organisations play a key role in promoting actions to help achieve sustainable development and to encourage citizens and communities to 'take ownership of their local environment'.⁵
- Environmental volunteering increases awareness of environmental issues and the likelihood of carrying out environmentally friendly practices.⁶
- Volunteers are involved in different ways in environmental volunteering:⁷ activism or ecological restoration, proactive actions to improve the environment, monitoring and educational activities.
- Volunteers are the main actors of civil protection as shown by DG ENV funded projects in the framework of the Civil Protection Action Programme.⁸ In Italy, The public civil protection system established after the big floods of Florence back in 1966 allows now to mobilise quickly thousands of volunteers in the event of catastrophes (currently over 1,3 million volunteers can be deployed within minutes – and they are protected during their work by state law).⁹

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³ United Nations, 2009. United Nations campaign Seal the Deal. Available at: <http://sealthedeal2009.org/unv> [cited 15.12.2009].

⁴ CSVnet – National Coordination Body of Voluntary Support Centres, 2009. 'Brief compendium of the research: Volunteering across Europe. Organisations, promotion, participation', p. 17.

⁵ BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers), 2009. 'Investing in sustainable futures. BTCV Strategic Plan 2009-2013', p. 9.

⁶ Hine, Rachel, Jo Peacock and Jules Pretty, 2008. 'Evaluating the impact of environmental volunteering on behaviours and attitudes to the environment', University of Essex, Report for BTCV Cymry.

⁷ Measham, Thomas G. and Guy B. Barnett, 2007. 'Environmental volunteering: motivations, modes and outcomes', CSIRO Working Paper Series, 2007-2003.

⁸ 'Volunteers in Civil Protection'. Available at: <http://www.eu-volunteers.net/> [cited 23.12.2009].

⁹ Information provided by the National Volunteer Support Centre CSVnet (<http://www.csvnet.it/>).

¹⁰ Hine, Rachel, Jo Peacock and Jules Pretty, 2008. 'Evaluating the impact of environmental volunteering on behaviours and attitudes to the environment', University of Essex, Report for BTCV Cymry.



Our recommendations

- **Mainstream volunteering as a tool for environmental and climate change action: When developing policies in your DG these policies shall be assessed as to the positive (or negative) impact they have on citizens' ability and motivation to become active and get involved.**
- **Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 by showcasing the contribution of volunteers to environment protection.**
- **Devise a new Programme for Volunteering in Climate Action: 7 in 10 Europeans do not volunteer whereas 80% do consider volunteering important for their lives and for society. This huge potential needs to be capitalized on, notable as volunteers have undoubtedly a major added value to the actions of your DG and deserve targeted action. The good example of the 1999 Civil Protection Action Programme should be used to develop a new agenda for the promotion of active citizens' engagement in preserving nature, ensuring biodiversity and addressing climate change.**
- **With the newly created DG, establish dialogue with the European networks of Volunteering such as the European Volunteer Centre (CEV) from the very beginning of your work in order to develop a comprehensive policy agenda on how to better harness volunteers to contribute to the delivery of your policies and programmes.**

Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

1999 | Council decision establishing the Community Civil Protection Action Programme, (1999/847/EC OJ L327/53), adopted in 1999 and ending in 2006 (2005/12/EC OJ L6/7)

The Community action programme in the field of civil protection was intended to support and supplement Member States' efforts at national, regional and local levels by implementing actions for the protection of persons, property and environment in the event of natural and technological disasters. It also intends to implement actions that facilitate cooperation, exchange of experience and mutual assistance between Member States.

The Programme also supported volunteering.

Example of projects supported:

- Involving citizens in civil protection, British Red Cross Society, project aimed in raising awareness among European citizens to participate in civil protection volunteer organisations and to promote volunteer work.
- The promotion of volunteer work in civil protection in the EU member states and EEA countries on the basis of the recommendation of common standards, Technisches Hilfswerk. The main objective of the two-year project was the promotion of volunteer work in civil protection in the EU member states and the three EEA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.



Volunteering as a means of acquiring skills and empowerment

- Volunteering in development and humanitarian aid allows people to develop skills while engaging into concrete actions for improving the life of people living in developing countries. According to Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), a UK-based international development organisation that works through volunteers, **95% of returned volunteers feel that they made a difference to the people they lived and worked with and that their volunteer experience increased their professional capabilities.**⁴

Volunteers as ambassadors for development

- When working in the field, volunteers empower local people and other humanitarian and development workers through sharing their skills, creativity and knowledge in their respective area of expertise. VSO reports: 'our 33 000 returned volunteers have unique experiences and insights that mean they can act as real ambassadors for development (...)'⁵

Volunteering brings results

- In Cambodia, the number of women dying in childbirth fell as a direct result of VSO-supported publicity work to encourage women to deliver their babies with the help of a skilled birth attendant.⁶
- The local population benefits from the skills, knowledge and creativity shared with them by volunteers. For example, in Pakistan, VSO volunteers helped reorganise and train 1 250 school management committees over 2007–2008. Resulting improvements in school management delivered a 20% reduction in teacher absenteeism and a 10% increase in pass rates.⁷

³ CLONG Volontariat, 2009. 'Le VSI en quelques chiffres'. Available at: http://www.clong-volontariat.org/php/vsi_chiffres.php [cited 26.11.2009].

⁴ VSO, 2009. 'Benefits of volunteering'. Available at: <http://www.vso.org.uk/volunteer/why-volunteer/volunteering-benefits.asp> [cited 7.12.2009].

⁵ VSO, 2007/2008. 'Annual Review 2007/08', p. 30.

⁶ VSO, 2007/2008. 'Annual Review 2007/08', p. 17.

⁷ VSO, 2007/2008. 'Annual Review 2007/08', p. 5.



Our recommendations

- **Mainstream volunteering as a tool for development in the policies and programmes of your DG: Both volunteers from 'the North' and 'the South' are invaluable resources for the implementation of development support – complementing not supplementing paid development professionals:**
 - Those from the North can bring know-how as well as carrying European values when engaging in development countries. However, their involvement in the local community is crucial if the volunteer placement is to have a lasting impact.
 - A crucial element in order to ensure real impact on communities is the design of a tailored enabling environment for civil society development and voluntary action in developing countries: An enabling legal environment for civil society development together with a local volunteering infrastructure will enable people to get involved in the development of their societies and ensure ownership of this process.
 - Volunteers from developing countries coming to Europe for voluntary engagement are equally Ambassadors for their countries; they will bring and share their experience and culture enriching our societies; gain knowledge through their engagement and ought to be supported in their efforts to contribute as volunteers in the so-called developed world.
 - Conditions for volunteers in the field of development such as social and health security, the full reimbursement of expenses, and simpler procedures to obtain visas need to be addressed if volunteering is to deploy its full potential. This also entails resources for professional volunteer management, training and capacity building of organisers of voluntary activities.
 - Encourage and build capacity with governments in developing countries to design national volunteering policies to support the creation of civil society and to promote active citizens' engagement.
 - Support DG BUDG in its current revision of the financial regulation: Volunteering should be recognized as eligible match funding to EU programmes with a value equal to monetary match funding. Many organisations bringing value to local communities do count with significant support by volunteers that needs to be taken into account when calculating contributions to project grants.
- **Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies in your DG: Development policies need to be assessed as to the positive (or negative) impact they have on the citizens' ability and motivation to become active and get involved.**
- **Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 and its legacy by ensuring the role of volunteering in development is prominently highlighted and by exporting good practice and success stories in this field to other fields of engagement.**
- **Support DG ECHO in collaborating with the Volunteering networks such as CEV at European level when taking the proposed European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps forward. As the ex-ante evaluation of EVHAC commissioned by the services of the EU has been overall very cautious as to the usefulness of this initiative, it will be crucial to carefully assess options of its implementation together with the organisations concerned.**



Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

- 2009 |** Treaty of Lisbon, art. 188 (5) – reference to the creation of a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps:

In order to establish a framework for joint contributions from young Europeans to the humanitarian aid operations of the Union, a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps shall be set up. The European Parliament and the Council, acting by means of regulations in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, shall determine the rules and procedures for the operation of the Corps.

- 2004 |** THW (German Federal Agency for Technical Relief) project 'The promotion of volunteer work in civil protection in the EU Member States and EEA countries', 2004-2006

Project supported by the European Commission, DG Environment, Civil Protection Unit

The project aimed at promoting the deployment of volunteers in the civil protection of EU Member States and EEA countries. The project was to identify transferable examples of good practice and sector-specific problems and to identify existing networks between European volunteer organisations in the area of education and training.

- 1997 |** Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaty on European Union, the Treaties establishing the European Communities and Related Acts, 10 November 1997

Final Act

Article 38: Declaration on voluntary service activities

The Conference recognises the important contribution made by voluntary service activities to developing social solidarity.

The Community will encourage the European dimension of voluntary organisations with particular emphasis on the exchange of information and experiences as well as on the participation of the young and the elderly in voluntary work.

- 1985 |** Council Recommendation of 13 June 1985 on social protection for volunteer development workers [85/308/EEC]

Volunteering, humanitarian assistance and crisis response

Volunteers work towards building better world for all

“This is the duty of our generation as we enter the twenty-first century – solidarity with the weak, the persecuted, the lonely, the sick, and those in despair. It is expressed by the desire to give a noble and humanizing meaning to a community in which all members will define themselves not by their own identity but by that of others.”

Elie Wiesel, writer and peace Nobel Price laureate

Volunteering plays a major role in the efforts of the DG International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response to **‘provide emergency assistance and relief to the victims of natural disasters or armed conflict outside the European Union’**. Assistance to people in the aftermath of humanitarian disasters requires people’s engagement, from the North as well as from the South. Through their activities, volunteers represent an added value carrying and communicating core European values of solidarity, democracy, freedom and equality. Their contribution is vital for humanitarian projects to be operational – quickly and with a lasting impact.

To the point

Volunteers are numerous

- More than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three out of ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and close to 80% of respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.¹
- In the humanitarian sector volunteers contribute significantly to the work done by the hired staff. The French organisation CLONG-Volontariat listed 2 121 Volunteers of International Solidarity in France in 2007, which represents an increase of 35% since 1996.²
- The humanitarian NGO *Médecins du Monde* (MDM) works with 1 389 volunteers.³

¹ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. ‘European Social Reality’, February 2007.

² CLONG Volontariat, 2009. ‘Le VSI en quelques chiffres’. Available at: http://www.clong-volontariat.org/php/vsi_chiffres.php [cited 26.11.2009].



Volunteering empowers volunteers and local people

- Volunteering in the humanitarian aid sector allows people to develop skills while engaging into concrete actions for improving the life of people living in poorer countries. According to CLONG Volontariat, a large majority of volunteers affirm that their volunteering experience in another country provided them with an increased awareness of inequalities, but also with new relational and professional skills and an increased sense of responsibility.⁴
- Volunteering is an opportunity for intercultural exchange. Moreover, when working in the field, volunteers empower local people and humanitarian workers through sharing their skills, creativity and knowledge in their respective area of expertise.⁵

Volunteers contribute to civil protection

- Volunteers contribute considerably as fire fighters or in the form of technical assistance, rebuilding houses or offering shelters when responding to man-made or natural disasters.
- In Germany, there are around 1,7 million people active in voluntary activities related to civil protection.⁶

³ Médecins du monde, 2009. 'Bénévoles et volontaires, piliers de nos actions'. Available at: http://www.medecinsdumonde.org/fr/thematiques/benevoles_et_volontaires_piliers_de_nos_actions [cited 7.12.2009].

⁴ CLONG Volontariat, 2009. 'Vers une solidarité engagée: les nouveaux enjeux du Volontariat de Solidarité Internationale', p.32. Available at: http://www.clong-volontariat.org/php/lecture_fiche.php?id=166 [cited 7.12.2009].

⁵ CLONG Volontariat, 2009. 'Vers une solidarité engagée: les nouveaux enjeux du Volontariat de Solidarité Internationale', p.4. Available at: http://www.clong-volontariat.org/php/lecture_fiche.php?id=166 [cited 7.12.2009].

⁶ Technisches Hilfswerk (THW), 2007. 'The promotion of volunteer work in civil protection in the EU member states and EEA countries on the basis of the recommendation of common standards', Project report.



Our recommendations

- Collaborate with the Volunteering networks such as CEV at European level when taking the proposed European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps forward. As the ex-ante evaluation of EVHAC commissioned by the services of the EU has been overall very cautious as to the usefulness of this initiative, it will be crucial to carefully assess options of its implementation together with the organisations concerned. Issues to be addressed are:
 - Mapping the field, notably existing volunteer programmes and lessons learned from these, and assessing whether an additional scheme at European level is needed and what its added value could be.
 - Identifying best practice and minimum standards for recruiting, training and management of humanitarian volunteers;
 - Ways to capitalize on the complementary nature of professional humanitarian aid workers and volunteers;
 - The necessity of targeted efforts and resources for capacity-building in developing countries to encourage governments and local organisations to develop own disaster relief and civil protection programmes. A focus should be on the ownership of local communities in these processes.
- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies in your DG: Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response policies need to be assessed as to the positive (or negative) impact they have on the citizens' ability and motivation to become active and get involved – both from 'the North' and from 'the South'.
- Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 and its legacy by ensuring the role of volunteering in Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response is prominently highlighted and actors in the field have the opportunity to exchange good practice, success stories in this field and to develop a policy agenda for the years to come.

Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

- 2009 |** Treaty of Lisbon, art. 188 (5) – reference to the creation of a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps:

In order to establish a framework for joint contributions from young Europeans to the humanitarian aid operations of the Union, a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps shall be set up. The European Parliament and the Council, acting by means of regulations in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, shall determine the rules and procedures for the operation of the Corps.

- 1985 |** Council Recommendation of 13 June 1985 on social protection for volunteer development workers [85/308/EEC]

Provisions on social protection for volunteer development workers.



Volunteering and the promotion of human rights and democracy worldwide

Volunteers are agents of human rights and democratic principles

“This is the duty of our generation as we enter the twenty-first century – solidarity with the weak, the persecuted, the lonely, the sick, and those in despair. It is expressed by the desire to give a noble and humanizing meaning to a community in which all members will define themselves not by their own identity but by that of others.”

Elie Wiesel, writer and peace Nobel Price laureate



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Volunteering plays a major role in your efforts to **‘promote the European Union as a global actor in the world facing the new challenges and responsibilities, and to protect and promote human rights and the rule of law’**. Volunteers from all countries work for a fairer world by joining their skills, creativity and learning to advocate for peace and democratic values beyond the EU’s borders and give aid to those in need. They play an increasing role at the international level, by supporting the victims of human rights violations and civil society creation as part of the democratic life of societies. Through their activities, volunteers represent an added value carrying and communicating core European values of solidarity, democracy, freedom and equality. The positions and the track record of the EU’s partner countries on promoting and developing active citizenship and volunteering should be a core element in negotiations at the global stage.

To the point

Volunteers are numerous

- More than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three out of ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary



activity and close to 80% of the respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of the democratic life in Europe.¹

- Volunteers contribute to bringing stability and peace within and beyond the European borders by promoting human rights through various actions such as awareness-raising, fundraising, social activities and the denunciation of violations of human rights.
- The staff of human rights organisations such as e.g. Amnesty International often largely depends on the work done by volunteers.²

Volunteering empowers people

- Volunteering for the promotion of human rights allows people to engage into concrete actions for improving the lives of people. Through volunteering, people actively participate in society and live their dignity.³
- International volunteering gives the opportunity to intercultural exchanges and the learning of new skills. According to the French organisation CLONG Volontariat, a majority of volunteers affirm that their international volunteering experience provided them with an increased awareness to inequalities, but also with new relational and professional skills and an increased sense of responsibility.⁴

Volunteering contributes to building democracy and intercultural dialogue

- Volunteering constitutes a factor of integration, social cohesion, solidarity, and intercultural dialogue, which will contribute to a peaceful cohabitation between diverse communities.⁵
- Volunteering prevents xenophobia by uniting people with different backgrounds and origins through common engagement. It increases tolerance and intercultural skills, promotes intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and builds communities.⁶ Volunteering reconnects people and helps to rebuild trust and confidence. It contributes to tolerance and peace in divided societies.
- Local neighbourhood actions set up by volunteers raises cohesion and leads to better mutual understanding.

¹ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. 'European Social Reality', February 2007.

² Amnesty International, 2009. 'Volunteer information'. Available at: <http://www.amnesty.org.au/NSW/volunteer/> [cited 7.12.2009].

³ Leigh, Robert, 2007. 'Volunteerism, Empowerment and Human Dignity', World Volunteer Web. Available at: <http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/news-views/viewpoints/doc/volunteerism-empowerment-and-human.html> [cited 7.12.2009].

⁴ CLONG Volontariat, 2009. 'Vers une solidarité engagée: les nouveaux enjeux du Volontariat de Solidarité Internationale', p.32. Available at: http://www.clong-volontariat.org/php/lecture_fiche.php?id=166 [cited 7.12.2009].

⁵ CEV, 2009. 'Volunteering and Intercultural Dialogue', CEV General Assembly Final Report, p. 4. Available at: http://www.cev.be/data/File/GA_Luxembourg_Final_Report.pdf [cited 27.11.2009].

⁶ CEV, 2006. 'INVOLVE Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration', Final Project Report, p. 22. Available at: <http://www.cev.be/data/File/INVOLVEreportEN.pdf> [cited 24.11.2009].



- The INVOLVE project (Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration) discovered that '92% of third country nationals believe that participating in volunteering is a way of integrating into the host society'.⁷

Our recommendations

- Include the track record of countries all over world on civil society development and volunteering into the negotiation. When and where the EU engages with countries, it should hold high the values of active citizenship engagement and volunteering. Countries that do not allow citizens to engage or oppress active participation should be encouraged to commit to providing an, enabling environment for active citizens engagement: This is a core European value that we ought to transport in our relationships with partner countries.
- Identify barriers to active involvement of citizens in volunteering and active citizenship such as visa burdens on citizens engaging in volunteering both in Europe and outside. DG RELEX should see to it in collaboration with DG JLS that the Council Directive council directive 2004/114 is extended to countries worldwide in order to allow for volunteer exchanges between the North and the South without unnecessary legal burdens.
- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing the external relations of the EU. International agreements and relations need to be assessed as to the positive (or negative) impact they have on the citizens' ability and motivation to become active and get involved in their societies.
- Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011: It will be a unique opportunity to showcase with your partners worldwide our European values of solidarity, active citizenship and social cohesion, especially as the UN have decided to celebrate 2011 the 10th anniversary of the International Year of the Volunteer 2001.

Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

2009 | Treaty of Lisbon, art. 188 (5) – reference to the creation of a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps:

In order to establish a framework for joint contributions from young Europeans to the humanitarian aid operations of the Union, a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps shall be set up. The European Parliament and the Council, acting by means of regulations in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, shall determine the rules and procedures for the operation of the Corps.

⁷ CEV, 2006. 'INVOLVE Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration', Final Project Report, p. 22. Available at: <http://www.cev.be/data/File/INVOLVEreportEN.pdf> [cited 24.11.2009].



2004 | Council Directive on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service [2004/114/EC]

and related acts:

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the 'Proposal for a Council Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, vocational training or voluntary service' [2003/C 244/02]

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the 'Proposal for a Council Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, vocational training or voluntary service' [COM (2002) 548 final]

2000 | Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union [2000/C 364/01]

It recognises that the EU is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It places the individual at the heart of its activities, by establishing the citizenship of the Union and by creating an area of freedom, security and justice



Volunteering and enlargement

Volunteering as a means of integration

“This is the duty of our generation as we enter the twenty-first century – solidarity with the weak, the persecuted, the lonely, the sick, and those in despair. It is expressed by the desire to give a noble and humanizing meaning to a community in which all members will define themselves not by their own identity but by that of others.”

Elie Wiesel,

writer and peace Nobel Price laureate



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Volunteering plays a role in the efforts of the DG Enlargement to ‘**consolidate democracy and the rule of law in Europe, enhance economic opportunities and increase the weight of the EU in tackling global challenges**’. Volunteering is a tool *par excellence* to promote the social cohesiveness of diverse societies. By engaging for each other people develop a sense of solidarity and bonds of trust across borders. Volunteering empowers individuals in different societies and provides them with a unique opportunity to (re-)connect to society and take an active part in it. Finally, volunteers put European values of solidarity and inclusion, social cohesion, diversity and mutual respect into practice, day after day.

To the point

In Europe, more than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three in ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and close to 80% of survey respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.¹

¹ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. ‘European Social Reality’, February 2007.



Volunteers are real human resources for integration

- Volunteering aims at being inclusive and at stimulating participation beyond EU borders. It unites people from different countries to work towards common goals. By doing this, it fights against social exclusion, discrimination, prejudices and social inequality. Volunteering offers people opportunity of expression and active engagement. It is often referred to as 'social glue' that holds together different societies.²
- CEV unites member organisations from the EU member states, candidate countries (Croatia and Turkey) and potential candidate countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Moldavia, Switzerland or even Israel.³ Volunteers of CEV member organisations are real agents of European integration and put the European values in practice by concrete actions beyond EU borders.

Volunteering contributes to community development and intercultural dialogue

- Volunteering constitutes a factor of integration, social cohesion, solidarity, and intercultural dialogue, which will contribute to a peaceful cohabitation between diverse communities.⁴
- Volunteers are a driving force for understanding and mutual respect in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies in Europe. Voluntary activities exercised by local inhabitants reduce racism and prejudices and contribute to inter-cultural dialogue, thus building trust and confidence. Volunteering prevents xenophobia by uniting people with different backgrounds and origins through common engagement. It increases tolerance and intercultural skills, promotes intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and builds communities.⁵ Volunteering reconnects people and helps to rebuild trust and confidence. It contributes towards the rebuilding of tolerance and peace in divided societies.
- Local neighbourhood actions set up by volunteers raise cohesion and lead to better mutual understanding.

Volunteering contributes to stability and building democracy

- Volunteering reduces the democratic deficit and encourages active engagement within the political processes. 'As people begin to see that they can make a difference through volunteering they become more likely to vote.'⁶ The more citizens are involved, the more confidence they have in the authorities and governmental institutions.

² CEV, 2007. 'CEV Contribution to the Draft Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion', p. 3.

³ CEV, 2010. CEV member organisations. Available at: http://www.cev.be/9-cev_member_organisations-EN.html [cited 8.1.2010].

⁴ CEV, 2009. 'Volunteering and Intercultural Dialogue', CEV General Assembly Final Report, p. 4. Available at: http://www.cev.be/data/File/GA_Luxembourg_Final_Report.pdf [cited 27.11.2009].

⁵ CEV, 2006. 'INVOLVE Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration', Final Project Report, p. 22. Available at: <http://www.cev.be/data/File/INVOLVEreportEN.pdf> [cited 24.11.2009].

⁶ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 13.



- According to a 2005 UK Citizenship Survey, **'57% of people participating in civic activism felt they could influence local decisions'** compared to 37% who did not participate.⁷
- Volunteers contribute to creating stability and peace within and beyond the borders of Europe by promoting human rights through various actions, such as awareness-raising, fundraising, social activities and the denunciation of human rights violations.
- As demonstrated by a post-conflict reconstruction in Bosnia and Herzegovina, many peace building and reconciliation initiatives would not be possible without the voluntary efforts of local inhabitants.⁸
- In Northern Ireland volunteers supported by PEACE or INTEREG funding played a key role in the reconciliation and peace building process. By working on common projects, they rebuild trust between divided communities.⁹ Similar outcomes also occurred in other conflict areas.

Our recommendations

- Identify barriers to active involvement in volunteering such as visa or other restrictions for non-EU citizens.
- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies in your DG. European policies shall be assessed concerning the positive (or negative) impact they have on the European people, enabling and motivating them to become active and get involved. Especially legal provisions that discourage non-EU citizens from engaging in volunteering need to be addressed and removed.
- Actively contribute to the preparations and implementation of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011: Develop a policy agenda to promote volunteering in the field of enlargement and showcase good practices in this field.
- Feed into the efforts of creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Europe in order to make volunteering accessible for all and beyond the EU borders: Introduce and further develop programmes and actions such as People to People that would allow interaction of EU member states with non-EU member states through voluntary actions and would contribute to civil society development.

People to people actions aim 'to improve regional and sub-regional collaboration between civil society organisations and to enhance "bottom-up" collaboration' between the European Union and its eastern neighbours. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/regional-cooperation/enpi-east/people_en.htm [cited 8.1.2010].

⁷ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 14.

⁸ CEV, 2008. 'V::l::P Seminar on the Promotion of Local and Intercultural Youth Volunteering for Peace Building and Conflict Resolution in Europe', Final Report, 25–30 June 2008. Available at: http://www.cev.be/data/File/VIP_Report_2008.pdf [cited 25.11.2009].

⁹ European Parliament, 2008. 'Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion (2007/2149(INI))', p. 13.



Reference to civil society in selected policy documents

2009 | Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2009–2010 [COM(2009) 533]

Increased participation of civil society organisations strengthens the quality of democracy and contributes to reconciliation. Their involvement in the reforms undertaken in the enlargement countries contributes to the quality of the accession process, as well as to sustaining public support for accession.

2008 | Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament - Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2008–2009 [COM(2008) 674 final]

Increased participation of civil society organisations in the reforms undertaken in the enlargement countries is a strong determinant for the pace and quality of the accession process, as well as in attaining public support for accession.

2007 | Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2007–2008 [COM(2007) 663 final]

The Commission will continue to further improve the quality of the enlargement process. Enlargement policy will put more emphasis on the fundamental issues of state-building, good governance, administrative and judicial reform, rule of law, reconciliation, compliance with International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), and civil society development. People-to-people contacts need to be promoted; in particular it is time to initiate a dialogue on visa liberalisation for citizens of the Western Balkan countries.

Civil society is an essential element of European public life. Western Balkan countries have made efforts to adopt legislation and strategies that are more favourable to civil society development. Some first steps have been taken towards more participatory democracy. However, civil society remains weak in the region. Wars and ethnic strife have done major damage to the social fabric of the region. Local NGOs need training to adapt to present conditions. Further efforts are required to deepen the freedom of association, to put in place regulatory frameworks and public incentives for the development of civil society organisations.

Mutual knowledge and understanding require further development of civil society and of dialogue between the citizens of EU Member States and the enlargement countries. These priorities will be reflected in programming financial assistance under the new Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). The Commission will also establish under IPA a financing facility to promote dialogue and civil society development, notably through capacity-building and exchange projects.



Volunteering and health

Volunteering adds value to health care and contributes to well-being

“When we feel love and kindness toward others, it not only makes others feel loved and cared for, but it helps us also to develop inner happiness and peace.”

H.H. the Dalai Lama



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Volunteering plays a major role in the efforts of the DG Health and Consumer Protection to make **‘Europe’s citizens healthier, safer and more confident’**. It delivers health benefits both to volunteers and health service users. By helping others, volunteers’ mental health and well-being improves. By engaging in health care and social services, volunteers add value to the European health care systems.

To the point

In Europe, more than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three in ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and close to 80% of survey respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.¹

¹ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. ‘European Social Reality’, February 2007.



Volunteering delivers health benefits to volunteers

- There is a link between volunteering and happiness, a phenomenon identified by researchers as the 'helper's high'.² In a national survey in the UK in 2007, 96% of volunteers identified 'I really enjoyed it' as an important personal benefit gained through volunteering.³
- Volunteering has a positive impact on the physical and mental health of volunteers. According to a research, volunteering positively impacts on:
 - 'longevity,
 - ability to carry out activities associated with daily living,
 - ability to cope with their own ill-health,
 - adoption of healthy lifestyles and practices,
 - family relationships,
 - quality of life,
 - social support and interaction,
 - self-esteem and the sense of purpose, and
 - view of their own health'.⁴
- Volunteering reduces:
 - 'depression,
 - stress,
 - hospitalisation,
 - pain and psychological distress'.⁵
- Volunteering is a means of self-realisation for the young and of active ageing for the elderly.
- Volunteering improves self-confidence. Over **'80 % of volunteers report that engagement in voluntary work make them happy and improve their self-esteem'**.⁶

Volunteering adds value to health and social services

- Many of the non-profit institutions and volunteering activities concentrate on the subjects of health and social services.
 - In Belgium, 34,4% of the non-profit efforts was allocated to health and 24,5% to social services in 2001.⁷

² Luks, Allan, 1992. 'The Healing Power of Doing Good: The Health and Spiritual Benefits of Helping Others'.

³ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 29.

⁴ Volunteering England, 2008. 'Volunteering and Health: What Impact Does It Really Have?'.

⁵ Volunteering England, 2008. 'Volunteering and Health: What Impact Does It Really Have?'.

⁶ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 24.



- In Lithuania, 55% of all voluntary work concentrates on the social services and health care sector.⁸
- The Little People Association in Romania reports that 83% of the work of their daily volunteer staff is within healthcare.⁹
- Volunteers significantly contribute to the services provided in the health and social care sector. According to the research, volunteering does make a difference to the health of service users including the following positive outcomes:
 - 'increased self-esteem and confidence,
 - better social interaction,
 - integration and support,
 - improved disease management,
 - reduced depression,
 - less intense response to grief,
 - reduced burden on carers,
 - decreased anxiety,
 - improved cognitive functions,
 - increased uptake and longer duration of breastfeeding,
 - improved mental health of children,
 - better parenting skills,
 - improved physical health and functioning,
 - increased levels of physical activity,
 - improved diet,
 - compliance with medication and clinic attendance,
 - fewer hospital visits,
 - improved relationships between patients and health professionals'.¹⁰

Volunteering contributes to the reduction of health inequalities

- Volunteering, focusing especially on people with fewer opportunities, provides equal care to all users, regardless their origins, gender, social conditions and economic situation.¹¹

⁷ Johns Hopkins University, 2007. 'Measuring Civil Society and Volunteering', p. 7.

⁸ CSVnet – National Coordination Body of Voluntary Support Centres, 2009. 'Brief compendium of the research: Volunteering across Europe. Organisations, promotion, participation', p. 14.

⁹ Little People Romania, 2009. Available at: <http://www.thelittle-people.org> [cited 24.11.2009].

¹⁰ Volunteering England, 2008. 'Volunteering and Health: What Impact Does It Really Have?'

¹¹ CEV, 2009. Consultation on the Commission Communication 'Solidarity in Health' Contribution of the European Volunteer Centre How volunteering contributes to reducing health inequalities.



- Volunteers serve as 'intermediate' between the most disadvantaged people and the respective health programmes. In that way, they make a major contribution to preventive healthcare.¹²
- Volunteers are active especially in the fields where healthcare systems need additional support for example when combating HIV/AIDS, drug addictions, cancer or caring for terminally ill patients.
- Volunteers have been the first to develop new ways of providing lifelong learning opportunities for very senior citizens attained by diseases such as Alzheimer and residing in care facilities, a project funded by the European Commission.¹³

Our recommendations

- Identify barriers to active involvement of citizens in volunteering. 7 out of 10 Europeans do not volunteer and different stakeholders need to find solutions of how these barriers can be overcome. Very often it is a lack of information on how to become involved, discouraging legal provisions and the absence of protection against risks involved that deters citizens from engaging.
- Acknowledge the crosscutting nature of volunteering when developing policies in your DG, notably in health policies. European policies and programmes shall be assessed as to the positive (or negative) impact they have on the citizens' ability and motivation to become active and get involved.
- Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 and its legacy by developing a policy agenda to promote volunteering in the field of health and consumer protection and by exporting good practice and success stories in this field to other fields of engagement.
- Feed into the efforts of creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Europe in order to make volunteering accessible for all: The EU should develop a White Paper on Volunteering for a comprehensive policy agenda to promote, recognize and facilitate voluntary engagement of citizens all over Europe – especially of those with fewer opportunities.

Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

2009 | Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Solidarity in Health: reducing health inequalities in the EU [COM(2009) 567 final]

¹² CEV, 2009. Consultation on the Commission Communication 'Solidarity in Health' Contribution of the European Volunteer Centre How volunteering contributes to reducing health inequalities.

¹³ ELLA, 2007. Project on Lifelong Learning for the Elderly in Foster Care. Available at: http://www.projekt-ella.eu/cms/front_content.php?client=1&changelang=2&parent=&subid=&idcat=1 [cited 23.12.2009].



2008 | Mental Health in Older People: Consensus Paper

Additional forms of beneficial participation include community development initiatives involving older people and volunteering, which can increase the mental well-being of elderly who volunteer and also of those receiving the services.

2008 | Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'The contribution of volunteering to Economic and Social Cohesion' [2008/C 105/03]

Highlights the positive effects of volunteering on the health of a person, and the potential reduction of costs volunteering can pose to the health expenditure of local, regional and national health services. Research has shown that volunteering can have a particularly positive effect on the health of older people (5). This health benefit can impact on all ages from youth to retirement, and can play a preventative role in relation to physical and mental illness;

2005 | Green Paper Improving the mental health of the population: Towards a strategy on mental health for the European Union [COM(2005)484]

Promoting mental health in older people

Some successful actions identified through EU-projects: Social support networks; encouragement of physical activity and participation in community and volunteering programmes.

2003 | 2512th Council meeting – Employment, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Affairs, 9688/1/03 REV 1 (Presse 152)

Calls to: 'to foster the new possibilities that ICTs offer for civic participation and volunteering;'

Recommends in accordance with national traditions and practices: 'to support by different means the attainment of an adequate work-life balance allowing citizens to fully engage in family and community related activities, as well in volunteering, civic and political participation;'

1999 | Communication from the Commission Towards a Europe for All Ages Promoting Prosperity and Intergenerational Solidarity [COM(1999) 221 final]

Page 21: Older people are already very active in non-governmental organisations. Involving a much larger share of able older people in voluntary work could be a major tool in active ageing strategies. There is a triple benefit from engaging older persons in voluntary activities in their communities. Recipients of the services produced will be better off. Older volunteers acquire meaningful social roles, physical and mental stimulation from new contacts and a sense of personal satisfaction and fulfilment. Local services can be provided in a very cost-efficient way.



Volunteering and research

Volunteering – recognising its value to society

“This is the duty of our generation as we enter the twenty-first century – solidarity with the weak, the persecuted, the lonely, the sick, and those in despair.

It is expressed by the desire to give a noble and humanizing meaning to a community in which all members will define themselves not by their own identity but by that of others.”

Elie Wiesel, writer and peace Nobel Price laureate



Volunteering plays a crucial role in the efforts of the DG Research, Innovation and Science to ‘support the Union’s policies in other fields such as environment, health, energy, regional development etc.’. Volunteers contribute to no less than 17 different DGs’ policies and, thus, to achieving EU objectives in a wide area of its competence. Through their activities volunteers communicate the core European values of solidarity, democracy, freedom and equality and put them into practice everyday. They contribute to social cohesion, intercultural and intergeneration dialogue, well-being and active involvement of citizens, as well as promotion of the EU in the world. A recent Johns Hopkins University Study reveals that volunteering is also a significant economic factor.¹

What is missing, however, is comprehensive and comparable data on volunteering and its impact in Europe. A recent tender by DG EAC of 300.000 € aimed at providing this comprehensive overview. This has proved to be a most limited endeavour with little impact on knowledge of the phenomenon of active citizenship in Europe. In order to make responsible decisions and design evidence-based policies research is crucial.

¹ The Johns Hopkins University (JHU), Center for Civil Society Studies has been conducting research on the contribution of the voluntary sector and volunteering to national economies and their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – the so-called ‘Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project’. Available at: <http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/> [cited 26.11.2009].



To the point

Volunteers are numerous and have strong potential

- The number of full-time equivalent volunteers accounts for approximately 140 million people what would make them the 9th most populous country in the world if they were a nation.²
- In Europe, more than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. Three in ten Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary activity and nearly 80% of survey respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.³

Volunteering contributes to social development

- Volunteering offers European citizens a means of meaningful participation in the life of their communities and strengthens social cohesion. It is a means to ensure intergenerational solidarity and it allows the third generation to stay active and contribute to their regions or to other regions in need.⁴
- Volunteering plays an important role in the integration of new and historically excluded communities at a local, regional and national level. It enables individuals and groups to meet other people from other walks of life in a positive and mutually supportive environment.⁵

Volunteering contributes to economic development and employability

- In the United Kingdom, the economic value of voluntary activity is estimated at 7,9% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with 38% of the total population engaged in voluntary activities.⁶
- The sector of non-profit institutions and the value of volunteers account for an average of 5% of the GDP. This contribution is about equal to the construction (5,1%) and the financial industry (5,6%) and twice as much as the utility industry (2,4%).⁷
- Volunteering is an effective tool for fighting unemployment by providing people with non-formal learning opportunities in order to gain useful experience and insights into the problems of our societies. According to a study among job seekers, '81% of respondents said that volunteering gave them a chance to learn new skills'.⁸

² Johns Hopkins University, 2007. 'Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project'.

³ Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. 'European Social Reality', February 2007.

⁴ European Parliament, 2008. 'Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion', A6-0070/2008, European Parliament, Committee on Regional Development.

⁵ Committee of the Regions, 2008. 'Opinion on the Contribution of Volunteering to Economic and Social Cohesion', 6-7 February 2008.

⁶ CEV, 2008. 'Putting volunteering on the economic map of Europe', CEV General Assembly Conference Final Report, 18 April 2008, p. 20. Available at: http://www.cev.be/data/File/GA_Ljubljana_FINALReport_Complete.pdf [cited 7.12.2009].

⁷ The research comes from 8 countries with satellite account data available. Johns Hopkins University, 2007. 'Measuring Civil Society and Volunteering', p. 4-6.

⁸ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 29.



- It also provides unemployed people with an opportunity to continue to be active in their respective field of expertise or to explore new possibilities.⁹
- Volunteering not only alleviates symptoms of social exclusion and exclusion of long-term unemployed, but it also addresses some of its causes.¹⁰ Available research data also suggest that volunteering is not only a 'way back to employment' but also a 'way of avoiding unemployment' as volunteers are less likely to become unemployed.¹¹

Our recommendations

- Set-up an advisory group to propose within the next degeneration of Framework Programmes at EU level a focus on volunteering. The following elements are largely not researched at a comparative level in the EU:
 - The impact of volunteering on and relationship with active citizenship;
 - Volunteering and the creation of social capital as well as the impact of social capital in societies;
 - Volunteering as part of European identity building;
 - The economic value of volunteering;
 - Alternative ways of measuring well-being in societies.
 - The impact of volunteering infrastructure organisations on the ability and motivation of citizens to volunteer.
- Continue funding for networks of experts and researches in the field of civil society development and volunteering such as the CINEFOGO network.
- Actively contribute to the planning and the success of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 by developing a research agenda for volunteering in Europe and allocated necessary funding to it.
- Encourage Member States to collect provide ongoing data on the different elements of volunteering mentioned above, for example through household surveys or as adjunct to

⁹ European Parliament, 2008. 'Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion', A6-0070/2008, European Parliament, Committee on Regional Development.

¹⁰ Volunteering England, 2007. 'Volunteering works – Volunteering and social policy'. The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, p. 19.

¹¹ European Volunteer Centre (CEV), 2007: General Assembly Final Report 'Volunteering as a route (back) to employment'. Available at: <http://www.cev.be/data/File/CEV-GAParisReport.pdf> [cited 24.11.2009].



Reference to volunteering in selected policy documents

2008 | Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion [A6-0070/2008] European Parliament, Committee on Regional Development

(...) volunteering not only has a measurable economic value but may also lead to significant savings for public services; whereas, in this context, it is important to ensure that voluntary activity is additional to public services and not a replacement of them, (...)

The Economic Value of Volunteering

According to the Johns Hopkins University Report, 'Measuring Civil Society and Volunteering', released on September 25th 2007, the Non Profit Institutions N.P.I sector contributes about as much to gross domestic product in a wide range of countries as do the construction and finance industries and twice as much as the utilities industry. This means that it accounts for 5-7% of the GDP in the countries surveyed. These findings emerge from data generated by official statistical agencies in eight countries, (Australia, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Japan, New Zealand and the United States). It is worth noting that twenty additional countries, both developed and developing, have committed to issuing these satellite accounts and a number of others are about to begin implementation. This clearly indicates that more and more countries are recognising the importance of including volunteering in their National Accounts.

2008 | Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'The contribution of volunteering to Economic and Social Cohesion' (2008/C 105/03)

Committee of the Regions emphasises the considerable economic contribution that voluntary activity makes to local, regional, national and the EU economies through (a) the extra human resources that it adds to social and economic activity and (b) the creation of social capital and a better 'quality of life' which can be an influential factor in investment and job creation.

Policy Recommendations:

15. highlights the need to immediately address the lack of complete and accurate EU wide or national statistics on the economic contribution of volunteering. The Committee of the Regions therefore welcomes the Belgian, French, Czech Republic, Italian and Slovakian commitment to implement the UN Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts;

16. encourages the Member States to collect accurate statistical information on volunteer involvement at a local and regional level, also to support the development of appropriate initiatives at both levels;

17. calls on the European Commission to develop more systematic data collection on volunteers and the services they provide and supports the inclusion of volunteering as a specific category in the Statistical Accounts of EUROSTAT to accurately assess the economic value of volunteering;

18. recommends that comparative research on volunteering be carried out across the EU to obtain data on its development trends, scope and characteristics at national, regional and local levels. This would enable a clear indication of cultural similarities and differences in relation to volunteer activity and infrastructure;

19. recommends that research be carried out EU-wide to identify best practice experiences in promoting and supporting volunteerism on a local and regional basis. Depending on research findings, areas with more historical experience of volunteering could support other regions and localities to develop new initiatives.

2007 | Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on Voluntary Activities: its role in European Society and its Impact [2006/C325/13]

At European level we need reliable and comparable statistics on the scale, importance and socio-economic value of voluntary activity.



Voluntary activity also makes an essential contribution to our economies' output. This contribution is often overlooked in national statistics, as it does not always involve the exchange of goods of monetary value and because there is no single accepted method for measuring its economic value. Where it is measured, however, the economic value of voluntary activity and its contribution to the economy has proved considerable (5). For example, in the United Kingdom the economic value of voluntary activity is estimated at 7.9 % of GDP, with 38 % of total population engaged in voluntary activity. In Ireland and Germany more than 33 % of the population are involved in voluntary activity in one form or another, compared to 18 % in Poland.

Calls on European decision makers to promote the economic and social benefits of volunteering, stresses that it is a key element of active citizenship and democracy at all levels. Opinion recommends that there should be designated the European Year of Active Citizenship through Volunteering, to provide a focus for the promotion of volunteering and the implementation of initiatives across the EU's 27 Member States.