

## Volunteering: a tool for inclusion?



Volunteering:  
national focus  
on UK,  
Bulgaria,  
Poland  
and Portugal

Special issue on the  
2011 European Year  
of Volunteering

CEV:  
The 100 million  
Europeans  
volunteering  
deserve  
recognition



## Supporting the potential of volunteering without undermining public-sector responsibility

BY SIAN JONES, POLICY COORDINATOR OF EAPN

In 2011, the spotlight shifts from Poverty and Social Exclusion to Volunteering, with the baton passed from the EU Year for combating poverty and social exclusion to the EU Year of volunteering. But what is the link? What is the role of volunteers and voluntary organizations in the fight against poverty and social exclusion? Where do people experiencing poverty come in? How can we build on the strengths of volunteering yet guard against the risks of abuse in the context of current attacks on Europe's welfare State and social model? How can we use the year to raise our voices in solidarity, but also in anger at current developments and build stronger anti-poverty movements and alliances across the globe?

Voluntary activity is at the heart of our work as anti-poverty organizations, a reflection of solidarity, and of our common desire to strive together for an end to poverty, social exclusion and a better life for all. The EU Year offers a key opportunity to get the value of volunteering and the work of our organizations better recognized, and to raise its profile, to press for better legal and financial frameworks which can support the sustainable development of the sector. It raises the issue of who the volunteers are and what volunteering means, giving a chance to ensure that volunteering is made accessible to people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, as a tool for empowerment and a step towards inclusion, employment and participation. But we must also take the opportunity to understand our different realities, and to forge a clearer understanding of the role of volunteers in the current context. This means analysing the current trends and assessing the risks and opportunities. In particular, we need to reflect on how to build a coherent understanding of the role of volunteering so as to ensure that it is not systematically used to undermine Welfare

States across the EU, by shifting the burden of voluntary actors.

Probably the oldest form of voluntary action was self-help or mutual aid, where people came together to find solutions for common problems, and work together for change. The Welfare State grew out of a recognition of the limitations of such individual effort and mutual aid and the need for a greater implication of the State, to guarantee the right to quality services for all. In the UK, the Big Society model proposed by the current Government risks to turn the clocks back to this individualistic model, replacing public sector services with voluntary endeavour, at the same time as delivering 40% cuts in funding to the sector. These developments are a major threat and raise fundamental questions about the role of volunteering.

Luckily, not all Governments appear to have the same intentions. Neither has the development of volunteering followed the same tracks. In many countries, particularly ex-socialist ones, the voluntary sector has been thrust into the prime role of basic social service provision with reduced State provision. The voluntary sector (non-profit) is now a major source of economic growth contributing 2.7% of GDP to national economies across the EU and a source of social capital. These are important achievements. But we need to find a coherent way to celebrate and support voluntary action, promote participation and empowerment, at the same time as rejecting regressive attacks on the European social model and the role of the State.

Let's make sure we use the year to celebrate, engage and take action! – By giving a voice to volunteers, celebrating solidarity and voluntary action, highlighting our achievements and concerns, empowering people experiencing poverty and by building new and stronger alliances in the fight against poverty.

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# 2011 European Year on Volunteering – a space for anti-poverty organizations to engage

BY TANYA BASARAB, DEVELOPMENT OFFICER FOR EAPN

## 2010–2011: From Poverty to Volunteering

The institutional pages have suddenly changed from combating poverty to celebrating volunteering in January 2011. Both issues are highly pertinent to anti-poverty organizations. Volunteering is a personal and collective commitment of people to their communities and fighting poverty is the reason why many people dedicate countless volunteer time to anti-poverty organizations and their actions. The EU has developed some tools to encourage and support national and transnational volunteering, but these tools are not enough to empower people living in poverty and social exclusion to get engaged. NGOs also have a lot of expectations for a more enabling volunteer infrastructure, more recognition and more celebration of volunteering in society. One decade since the UN International Year on Volunteers (IYV), the EU has designated 2011 as the European Year on Volunteering. In parallel to this, the UN has decided to mark IYV+10, in order to highlight the importance volunteers contribute to society.

### EYV 2011: 4 objectives

- recognise and raise awareness on the value of volunteering,
- celebrate volunteer efforts,
- empower people and volunteer organisations, and
- work towards the creation of an enabling environment for volunteering, including a volunteering infrastructure in the EU.

## European NGO networks together in the EYV 2011 Alliance

EAPN joined in 2010 the EYV 2011 Alliance of European NGO networks working on volunteering. This Alliance is hosted by the European Volunteer Centre (CEV) to build NGO engagement with the European Year. Throughout the year, the 35 Alliance members will be working on a post-2011 agenda to celebrate and recognise volunteering in Europe.

Policy recommendations on six areas of future challenges will be handed to decision-makers at the closing conference of the year:

- Quality volunteering
- Legal framework of volunteering
- Towards an enabling volunteering infrastructure in Europe
- Tools of recognition
- The value of volunteering
- Employee volunteering.



De Zuidpoort, association where people experiencing poverty take the floor in Gent (Belgium), 2010.

## EAPN's engagement with the EYV 2011

EAPN's first engagement with the EYV 2011 was at the December CEV conference on *Volunteering as a means of empowerment and social inclusion*, which concluded with the Declaration of four objectives.

## Getting involved at national level

The EYV2011 Tour has already taken place in Brussels, Vienna, Lisbon and Luxembourg and Tallinn. Athens and Nicosia are to follow soon.

**Check the Calendar** on the European Commission's website <http://europa.eu/volunteering/> to see when it is happening in your country and how you can engage with it.

Finally, at the end of the year, a **Yearbook** of what has happened throughout the year will be published, including stories, events, reports and useful documents. If you would like to be in the Yearbook, just contribute to the EYV2011 Alliance during the year!

These are some of the key events planned and spaces for engaging with the EYV2011 at European and national level. Anti-poverty organizations have a lot to say in the debate on volunteering and some of EAPN's members have already been very active at EU or national level. Let's pass on the message!

### The management and funding of the year

The EU budget for the year is about 8 million (half of the amount dedicated to the EU Year 2010), complemented by member States' own budgets. National Coordination Bodies (NCB) have been established by each Member State to help involve all partners in the actions planned for the year. In contrast to the 2010 EU Year, these NCBs have been more open and pro-active to working in partnership with NGOs.

## Main activities planned for the year<sup>1</sup>

**EYV2011 Tour** Volunteers tour EU countries over a one-year period, showcasing their work and engaging with policy makers and the public at each step/city of the tour.

**EYV Relay 27** "Relay" volunteer reporters will follow the work of 54 volunteering organisations and produce audio, video and written reports to be broadcast by the media. At the end of the year, the combined reports will be compiled to form a broadcast-quality documentary about the European Year and its tour.

**Four thematic conferences** highlighting key issues related to volunteering:

- 8<sup>th</sup> January in Budapest: Recognition of Volunteering
- May/June: Celebrating volunteers and their valuable contribution
- October: Empowering volunteering organizations
- December: Closing conference on future challenges.

## EYV 2011 Alliance online tools

**The newsletter: EYV Flow:** monthly online publication that includes positions and activities of the members of the Alliance with regards to volunteering and provides useful updates on the institutional partners' initiatives and the activities on the Year.

**Question of the month:** is a section where members can ask questions related to volunteering and website visitors can vote or answer it.

**The Online Marketplace:** [www.eyv2011.eu/online-marketplace](http://www.eyv2011.eu/online-marketplace). The EYV 2011 Marketplace enables those who work alongside volunteers to find partners for common projects in the framework of the Year. It also enables organisations to offer volunteering opportunities and for people to search for suitable volunteering experiences.

**The Resource Library:** Gathers research, reports and positions on volunteering related to the topics of the six working groups from the Alliance members and other actors. Take a look and learn what the debate is around!

**Volunteer commitment, the press kit, funding opportunities** are other tools available on the website of the EYV Alliance 2011: [www.eyv2011.eu](http://www.eyv2011.eu). If you would like to commit time to volunteering, share this commitment on the website of the EYV Alliance!

**Extraordinary stories of ordinary people:** If you would like to share a volunteer story with peers across Europe, get in touch with the EYV 2011 Alliance!

<sup>1</sup> As specified on the European Commission's website.

# Volunteering and the fight against poverty and social exclusion – towards an EAPN Position

BY GRACIELA MALGESINI, CHAIR OF EAPN'S SOCIAL INCLUSION WORKING GROUP

**Volunteering is the most fundamental act of citizenship and philanthropy in our society. It is offering time, energy and skills of one's own free will. By caring and contributing to change, volunteers decrease suffering and disparity, while they gain skills, self-esteem, and change their lives. People volunteer to improve the lives of others and, in return, enhance their own.**

According to the European Parliament, volunteering can be viewed as an antidote to some of the negative effects of globalization, as citizens are then not simply consumers but can act as a catalyst for change, by influencing local action to improve their economic situation and improve their community's quality of life. In doing so, they can promote a sense of place and a sense of connectedness.



Participation Congress, Madrid, EAPN Spain, 2010.

Volunteers have an important role to play in bringing **ownership of the services** by the community. They can provide care that is **user-focused, holistic and responsive** to the community's needs. Former users can also provide a user voice and expertise for example. Local volunteers can help build **community cohesion** as they bring innovative perspectives to the service and can provide a source of local knowledge about the community. They can create **self-help** groups and develop **collective action** aimed at securing or preventing change.

## Volunteering contributes to social inclusion and economic growth

Volunteering is a source of economic growth. The Comparative Non-Profit Sector project revealed that the voluntary sector contributes to an estimated 2-7% to the GDP of our national economies.

Volunteering is also a creator of social capital, a pathway to integration and employment, and a positive outcome in itself. It is also a mechanism for improving cohesion and reducing eco-

nomie, social and environmental inequalities. In fostering opportunities for individuals to be agents of change, particularly those traditionally most excluded from the processes and decisions that affect their lives, volunteering fosters empowerment and broad-based ownership. Through it, the most disadvantaged build a web of social networks that contributes to the growth of social capital, essential for stable and cohesive communities and a permanent resource for development.

Volunteering provides people that are at risk of poverty and being socially excluded with ways to be connected to society: unemployed people, the retired and elderly, people with disabilities, migrants, single parents...

Both international and local volunteering provide opportunities for intercultural learning

which is key in the fight against xenophobia, racism and discrimination and building more cohesive societies.

However, there are also risks. The crisis and austerity cuts pose a serious threat to the welfare state across the EU. Volunteering, in some countries, is being abused and proposed as

a means of providing cheaper social services, undermining public sector jobs and services. In other countries, people experiencing poverty are obliged to volunteer as part of enforced activation strategies.

**EAPN is currently working on a position paper on the role of volunteering as a means of empowerment and social inclusion, exploring the risks and opportunities of volunteering in the fight against poverty in the current crisis context.**

## EAPN's principles

Fighting poverty and social exclusion is a complex process involving different actors ranging from governments and the European Union institutions to civil society organisations, companies as 'corporate citizens' and individuals. The role of volunteers is crucial in preventing the causes and consequences of poverty and social exclusion – but this potential is far from being tapped into.

EAPN has signed the 'CEV Brussels Declaration'<sup>1</sup> which stimulates actions amongst all key

stakeholders to:

- 1) Boost the contribution of volunteers and volunteer organisations to promoting empowerment and social inclusion: Volunteering "with" people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.
- 2) Enhance the inclusiveness of volunteering and its potential to be a means of empowerment; social inclusion and active citizenship – Promoting volunteering "of" people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.
- 3) Ensure that volunteering is a right for all: providing and encouraging an enabling legal environment for the active participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.
- 4) Recognise and boost the potential of volunteering as a way to acquire skills and to enhance employability.<sup>2</sup>

## EAPN's concerns

**Regarding employment:** volunteering can be a stepping stone to employment, but never a replacement; it should never be used as a cheap substitute for paid work, especially when public sector services are being cut in many member States.

**Regarding the lack of a clear legal framework on volunteering:** in certain member States and especially at the EU level, this is a crucial problem for the development of volunteering. This problem concretely translates, for many civil society and volunteer organisations, in disadvantages in terms of taxation, insurance and reimbursement of expenses, with a volunteer sector not legally identified.

**Regarding the lack of recognition of volunteer work:** misguidance, bureaucracy and lack of transparency in procedures sometimes adversely affect volunteers. Volunteers who are not personally thanked for their contribution soon lose motivation and the organization risks losing quality volunteers with skills to offer. Menial or highly repetitive activities may also complete a frustrating picture. Many volunteers experience the burn out syndrome, a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in situations that are emotionally demanding. They burn out when their work has no meaning and stress continuously outweighs support and rewards, and when they do not feel they are an important part of the organization.

**2011 should help to put volunteering high on the political agenda of Member States, as a cornerstone of the fight against poverty and social exclusion.**

<sup>1</sup> See article page 10 on CEV.

<sup>2</sup> [CEV Brussels Declaration on the role of volunteering as a means of empowerment and social inclusion.](#)

# Portugal: Being a volunteer versus promoting volunteering

BY SANDRA ARAÚJO, EAPN PORTUGAL

Social economy in Europe currently represents about 8% of employers (companies and organisations) and 10% of jobs. An average of 25% of the European citizens are linked to social economy, in all its varied aspects.

Social economy is recognized for combining economic efficiency with social entrepreneurship. Its diversity, strength and knowledge are essential to improve and preserve citizens' lives, especially for the most disadvantaged.

In Portugal, social NGOs (estimated to be over 4500) contribute to 5% of the GDP, employ 270,000 people and involve thousands of volunteers.

These organisations that are part of what is known as 'the Third Sector' promote social cohesion and equal opportunities. Their role is also and notably to conciliate quality employment with job creation for all, including the most vulnerable.

Social volunteering is one way of putting one's knowledge, time and determination at the service of others. A volunteer contributes to the social and professional inclusion of people, who, for various reasons, find themselves far away disconnected or excluded from social and/or professional life at a certain moment in their life.

## Volunteering must never excuse public authorities from their responsibilities

However, the increasing demand for quality means that guidelines need to be developed for the use and role of volunteers. Volunteering should not be used as an excuse to increase the risk of a 'poverty trap'; to reduce the importance of active citizenship or to excuse public authorities from their responsibilities in promoting social justice.

Volunteering is one way of exercising civic rights, working with people's abilities and desire for change, to ensure that all citizens are empowered to build together a better future for themselves and for those that depend on them.



Volunteering in Portugal through World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF), 2009.

## The 2011 European Year of Volunteering in Portugal

The main objective of the 2011 European Year of Volunteering is to encourage and support the efforts of the European Union, the Member States and the local and regional authorities to improve conditions within civil society favourable to volunteering in the EU and increase the visibility of voluntary activities.

Each Member State has designated a National coordination Body (NBC) responsible for the organisation of and participation in the European Year. The Portuguese NBC is the Conselho Nacional de Promoção do Voluntariado (National Council for Promoting Volunteering).

EAPN Portugal has always been very active in relation to European Years, initiating and/or giving visibility to related activities. In 2011, one of the key goals of its work programme is to promote the active citizenship of the Portuguese civil society. With this in view, EAPN Portugal will be organising a number of activities<sup>1</sup> celebrating the Year in all districts of the country, highlighting the vision that EAPN Portugal has of 'being a volunteer'.

All EAPN Portugal's activities concur towards the same aim: to deliver the message that each of us, individually or collectively, has the duty to be an actor in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

## Volunteering in Portugal

A study carried out in 2010<sup>2</sup>, revealed the following information on volunteers' profiles and motivations:

- Volunteers usually get in contact with the organisations through relatives and friends (39,8%) and through parishes (29,7%).
- They are usually motivated by altruism (50%) and by personal accomplishment (33,7%).
- 78,4% are regular volunteers, collaborating with an organisation at least once a week.
- 56,8% of the organisations have 1 to 10 female volunteers and 56,6% have 1 to 10 male volunteers.
- 56,5% of the volunteers are aged 56+ (56-65 years old) and 41,6% are already retired. 10,9% are students; 28,1% have a professional activity and 7,3% are unemployed.

1) Such as information, training and awareness-raising activities aimed at civil society in general, as well as specific groups such as schools, universities, NGOs, enterprises, etc. More information on [www.eapn.pt](http://www.eapn.pt).

2) ENTRAJUDA, *Alguns dados relativos ao Voluntariado em Portugal*, Jan 2011. (In partnership with the Portuguese Food banks, the ENTRAJUDA and the Portuguese Catholic University, through the Centre of Studies and Opinion Surveys – CESOP and the Centre of Studies in Social Service and Sociology – CESSS).

# The UK Government: Big Society and Volunteering

BY COLIN HAMPTON, EAPN MEMBER AND NATIONAL UNEMPLOYED CENTRES EXECUTIVE MEMBER

The Conservative government came to office in the UK in May 2010 with the major policy initiative, 'the Big Society'. Whilst many were uncertain what it would mean in practice, its roots were clearly ideological. Most Conservatives are clear in their opposition to so-called 'big government', looking to reduce public spending (excluding military) and shrinking the role of the State.

In the past, in the UK, this has left the Conservatives tainted with the label of the 'nasty party', showing little consideration to those vulnerable to cuts and benefiting from government spending. 'Big Society' is their remedy and alternative to 'Big Government'.

In other words, the vacuum left by the further rolling back of the welfare State is to be filled by a mixture of community initiatives, mutual societies and co-operatives underpinned by greater self reliance and neighbourhood altruism. This view of 'Big Society' sees volunteering as crucial to filling the gap left by the withdrawal of statutory service provision and the loss of the jobs carried out by those previously employed in these sectors. The policy has been sold on the basis of painting a picture of statutory provision as being remote and unresponsive to change and its service users. Big Society, in contrast, is 'empowering' and 'of the community' allowing users a greater role in framing services. 'People, not government, know best' is their mantra.

## A considerably smaller society...

Very few commentators have found the need to pick up a history book and discover why the welfare State came about in the UK. One of the main reasons is because the mutual societies and community self reliance failed to achieve comprehensive cover in health, care of the elderly and many of the areas of community service provision now that were sub-

sequently taken over by local government. Many were left with nothing and faced the harsh realities and indignity that accompanied a society without an organised, universal approach. Worse still, detractors to the 'Big Society' idea, point to its use as a smokescreen to unleash massive public spending cuts, making the poorest pay for the budget deficit caused by the banking crisis.

Without Big Society, the UK has a large voluntary and community sector. If these organisations thought they were to be the beneficiaries of this trumpeted 'new' approach, then it looks like they will have to think again. According to the Trade Union Congress (TUC), the UK voluntary sector is set to lose around £4.5 billion of funding in the new financial year. Brendan Barber, General Secretary of the TUC said "These savage, ideological cuts will impact on Britain's poorest, most vulnerable communities and undermine our civil society at a time when the country needs it more than ever before."

Liverpool City Council have resigned from a Big Society pilot project, due to cuts making their participation too difficult. Meanwhile, Dame Elisabeth Hoodless, head of Community Service Volunteers, said that these Council cuts would make volunteering harder!

There are, however, many vultures waiting to cash in on the outsourcing of public sector work. The privateers and huge 'third sector' organisations are looking to make a killing, and a profit, from the Big Society project. Coupled with the ever increasing clamour for 'workfare' for the unemployed, the idea that people should have work in return for the receipt of benefits, 'forced volunteering' is likely to be added to the altruistic variety. The concept of 'Big Society' may well have its supporters in affluent areas that have the resources to harness volunteering and develop enterprising initiatives - they will be the government's shining and exulted examples. For the many of us, living in under-resourced areas of deprivation, unemployment and expanding demand for services that are being cut, the fear is that we will be living in a considerably smaller society.



# Volunteering in Bulgaria – the Need for a Modern Vision

BY MARIA JELIAZKOVA, EAPN BULGARIA

Since 2001 (the UN Year of Volunteers), attempts to enforce national legislation have been undertaken by different NGOs, but there is still neither a normative framework, nor register or standards on volunteering. Meanwhile, some organizations like the Red Cross have elaborated their own internal statutes. One of the expected results of the Year is therefore to enforce or, at least, to build more consensus on the necessary legislation for the sector. EAPN Bulgaria has a long-term interest in volunteering, mainly due to Dr. Antoaneta Zlatkova<sup>1</sup>, who devoted a lot of time and efforts to promote debates on unpaid labor, including voluntary work. These debates have discussed three basic dilemmas in the current state of play:

## 1. Volunteering at stake

Plenty of grass-root spontaneous initiatives like self-help groups, local cooperation, individual and group activities in public good play an important role in different survival strategies against poverty and social exclusion and form a wide reservoir of volunteering. The National Civil Initiative Against the Arbitrariness of Natural Monopolies<sup>2</sup>, the civil society movement against the decisions of mobile operators providing public services, as well as their cartel agreements, and the different people that act as local ombudsmen in many localities, are just a few examples. However, the unbalanced dominance of 'zero-sum game' ideologies with their antisocial messages (like the official support for increasing inequalities and impoverishment, the overwhelming for-profit spirit of time, the growing insecurities, etc) generate further fragmentation in society and undermine cooperation and solidarity. Results of these are simultaneously the low relative share of volunteers in the country (1 in 10, the EU average being 1 in 3), the underestimation of the real voluntary activities and their value, the dangerous impacts on educational and socialization processes towards individualization and atomization of society, undermines commitment to universal services.

Bulgaria is following the common EU framework of the European Year 2011, aiming to disseminate information on volunteering and to mobilise efforts to attract more volunteers. The activities include active involvement in European-wide initiatives<sup>3</sup> as well internal events<sup>4</sup>. The National Coordinator for the European Year is the Ministry of Culture, partnering for different activities with the Ministry of Sport, Ministry of Education, Science and Youth and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

## 2. The questionable scope of volunteering

On top of the lack of a national legal framework, there is a clear trend to restrict the volunteering concept within the 19<sup>th</sup> century paradigm, i.e. to paternalistic and charity activities in specific crisis interventions, like help in situations of natural hazards, last resort for individual and family survival, fragmented measures for one-time aid or joint activities like cleaning green spots, etc., thus preserving the intellectual realm of Lenin's 'subotniks'<sup>5</sup>.

Due to this, the spontaneous initiatives cited above are not reflected as volunteering in the official debates and national statistics; they are



Volunteers for Tolerance and Human Rights Bulgaria. Three generations cooking together for mutual tolerance in "Petko Slavejkov" Home for Children Deprived of Parental Care in Sofia, Bulgaria.

hardly linked with the European Year on Volunteering and, to a large extent, remain officially unrecognized and undervalued. And it is difficult to reach a shared public vision on the need for a normative framework due to the danger that legislation could protect the interests of big organizations working with volunteers at the expense of self-help grass-root groups, spontaneous civic movements and authentic individual activities aimed at promoting the common good.

A clear distinction seems to exist between the NGO sector (with its internal fragmentation) and the spontaneous initiatives that are highly valued by the public. An important aim of the EY could be to alleviate the discrepancy between the 'organizational' (bureaucratic) point of view – in which volunteers usually undertake activities in big established organizations through well-known channels for crisis intervention – and the public point of view, for which voluntary activity for public good is what matters. In this regard, if charity and crisis intervention remain as important parts of volunteering, a modern vision should incorporate and subordinate them to the broader concept of altruism.

## 3. Volunteering in a social-inclusion perspective

The restricted and fragmented concept on volunteering, pointed out above, decreases its added value and possible social impact. Volunteering could be an important resource for social inclusion if it is reconsidered and opened up to activities that aim at challenging bottle necks of growth, governance and development. Moreover, the lack of such activities has to a large extent produced the current crisis.

What we have in mind is the inability of current decision-making mechanisms to incorporate and use the existing social energy for participation, or, in other words, the erosion of participative democracy<sup>6</sup> and the stubborn inability to neutralize the deficiencies by enhancing participation in the decision-taking processes. As F. Vibert has pointed out "Democracy is a 'use it or lose it' opportunity"<sup>7</sup>.

Especially at local level, but not only, really promoting participation means to elaborate channels for the inclusion of different people – including the most excluded – in the decision-making processes and to recognize this as a valued voluntary activity for a common good.

This could provide new knowledge and pro-development perspectives by contesting what is in the collective interest of a democratic community or society. Such actions in public good are *per se* volunteering, impacting both in transparency and growing ownership of development. A modern vision of volunteering is highly necessary, based on widening and deepening the concept to better reflect 21<sup>st</sup>-century needs.

1) Mrs. Antoaneta Zlatkova was PhD in Economics and unemployed for more than 10 years. From 2004 till her death in February 2010, she was a volunteer in EAPN Bulgaria, actively participating in different activities. She took part in the 4th and 5th EU Meetings of PEP. After her death, her works were published in a book "Unpaid Labor and the Combat with Poverty", Sofia, 2010 (in English and Bulgarian).

2) Natural monopolies being companies providing electricity, water, heating, natural gas.

3) Such as the participation of voluntary organizations in the selection process of the EC, the EYV-TOUR, the presentation of personal histories of volunteers, international conferences, the EU competition for voluntary reporters, etc.

4) Such as: conferences, trainings, youth initiatives promoted by different NGOs like the Red Cross, Lale Foundation, National Alliance of Volunteers, etc.

5) 'Subotnik' and 'voskresnik' (from Russian words for Saturday and Sunday) were days of volunteer work following the Bolshevik seizure of power. The tradition is continued in modern Russia and some other former Soviet Republics. Subotniks are mostly organized for cleaning the streets of garbage, fixing public amenities, collecting recyclable material, and other community services. (source: Wikipedia).

6) This erosion is widely accepted and discussed. See for example Vibert, F., *The Rise of the Unelected*, Cambridge, 2007.

7) Op. cit., p. 56.

# Poland, willing to move on towards a strategic approach on volunteering

BY KAMILA PŁOWIEC, SECRETARY OF EAPN POLAND/WRZOS AND PIERRE KLEIN, VICE-CHAIR OF EAPN POLAND/ATD POLAND

Surveys indicate that the level of involvement of Polish citizens in voluntary activities is considerably lower than the average in the European Union, which amounts to 23%. Only 12.9% of Polish people, i.e. approx. 3.8 million, declared in November 2009 they had dedicated their time to work for a social organisation or an informal group over the last 12 months. The low level of involvement in voluntary activity in Poland is the most visible sign of specific barriers which hinder volunteering development. The European Year of Volunteering gives an opportunity to face these challenges.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has become the Polish National Coordinating Body (NCB) for the EYV 2011, competent for the issues related to public benefit activity and voluntary work.

Voluntary work is described as an "additional element shaping the image of the Polish Presidency" and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will also pursue activities related to volunteering development and promotion<sup>1</sup>.

An Intersectoral Working Group for the European Year of Volunteering was appointed in 2010, made of representatives of the public-administration institutions and non-governmental organisations active in the field of volunteering - both at general and sectoral levels<sup>2</sup>. The Group, of which EAPN Poland is also a member, has developed national priorities for the EYV and prepared the *National Work Programme for the European Year of Volunteering 2011 in Poland*. Poland's ambition is to benefit from the opportunity of having its European Presidency during the European Year of Volunteering, to move towards developing a strategic approach towards volunteering in Poland. Strategic documents (among others, on the human and social capital, education and the labour market), and work on the *Long-Term Policy for Volunteering Development in Poland* is planned. The closing conference of EYV2011 will help to promote these documents.



Young volunteers from ATD and MONAR, two members of EAPN Poland, preparing for an event during the EY 2010.

**EAPN Poland considers that there are a number of areas in which volunteering could be used to a greater extent, in Poland and across Europe, such as:**

- Employment (gaining new job competences by volunteers)
- Social welfare/social work (in the context of inclusion and social integration)
- Equalisation of opportunities (fighting social exclusion by international exchanges of people experiencing poverty and volunteers helping those people)
- Education (connection to *Lifelong Learning* and connection to the social inclusion of people which haven't participated in mainstream education).
- Increase of social mobility ('active ageing' - European Voluntary Service enlarged to elderly people)

- Development of information society (e-volunteering and e-inclusion)
- Foreign policy (humanitarian aid)
- Culture
- Sports volunteering (mainly in the context of Euro 2012)
- Business support (in the framework of Corporate Social Responsibility).

For EAPN Poland, the connection between European Years 2010, 2011 and 2012 is crucial. Volunteering has an important role to play, both in the fight against poverty and social exclusion and in intergenerational integration, the topic of the year in 2012.

## Activities in Poland around EYV 2011

**02/2011** A grant competition for NGOs in order to promote EYV 2011 was open to organisations in the second part of February 2011.

**05/2011** International conference on the "Legal reality of the functioning of volunteering activities in Europe".

**09/2011** International conference on "e-volunteering".

**09/2011** The EYV 2011 Tour is one of the key projects in which Poland will participate. The pavilion will be in Warsaw from 1 to 14 September 2011. Coordinated together by NGOs and public administration representatives, the whole event will be divided into so-called thematic days. **9<sup>th</sup> September** will cover the topic of **poverty**. That day will be coordinated by Caritas.

**12/2011** A webpage on the EYV2011 Closing conference will soon be available. It will provide information and promote best practices under the EYV 2011. An online information campaign is also planned, notably aiming at young people, through social media.

1) Conclusions from the events taking place in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2011 and connected with the EYV 2011 will be included and mentioned on the forum of the EU-27 during official meetings under the calendar of the Polish presidency.

2) E.g. student volunteering, volunteering in hospices, senior volunteering, volunteering in the sports sector.



# The recognition of volunteering time as in-kind contribution in Structural Funds

BY BRIAN HARVEY, INDEPENDENT SOCIAL RESEARCHER

**Volunteers play a key role in the work of Non-Governmental Organisations in delivering social inclusion, both in the delivery of services, as active agents in the development of projects, and as representatives in the management structures or advocacy roles. The Structural Funds, 1083/2006, §56.2, permit the time and skills of volunteers to be considered as an in-kind contribution for matching funding for Structural Fund projects, as long as it is allowed by the regulation of each Member State and does not exceed the value of the grant given. But how far is this opportunity for supporting co-financing being used? What are the pros and the cons of using volunteer contributions in this way?**

The **Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund** are financial tools aiming at implementing the European cohesion policy, also referred to as the Regional policy of the European Union. These tools seek to reduce regional disparities in terms of income, wealth and opportunities. All European regions are eligible for funding under the policy's funds and programmes. Europe's poorer regions logically receive most of the support. The Structural Funds are made up of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). Together with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund make up the great bulk of EU funding, and the majority of total EU spending.

## A win-win situation?

Based on this, one would expect volunteers to make an important in-kind contribution to all Structural Fund projects run by social-inclusion NGOs. It looks like a win-win situation: volunteering is recognized, while social-inclusion NGOs can get round the problem of shortages of money. But is this the case?

Information from the European Training Centre in Paris, combined with the January 2011 round table discussion on the financial regulation review, indicate that in-kind volunteer contributions operate only in two European regions, Bavaria (where only one project is known) and Wales.

The system used to run in England, but ceased in 2007. Permission has been given in France, Bulgaria, Ireland and Italy, but we know of no examples of projects where this has happened. Is this another example of the Structural Funds falling far short of their potential?

## What we know...

According to the round table, in-kind contributions by volunteers "do not happen because, in practice, officials do not know how to measure the value of such contributions and avoid taking risks". This is what we know:

- In France, in-kind contributions by volunteers have been informally accepted in structural fund operations since 1999: it is up to NGOs to be honest in their estimates of in-kind volunteer contributions.
- The Italian government permitted in-kind contributions by NGO volunteers for purposes of social solidarity under the 1991 law on volunteering - but it was not put into effect until August 2010 and then limited to 10% of the match funding.
- Bulgaria permitted in-kind contributions under seven conditions under decree §62, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2007.
- In-kind contributions are permitted under five conditions under the eligibility rules in Ireland, §4.
- In England, volunteer time was used extensively for match funding over 2000-6, but this was discontinued in 2007. The time of volunteers was calculated according to levels of responsibility, ranging from administrator (£16,300 annually or £9.38 hourly), through a series of grades (e.g. researcher, coordinator) up to manager (£29,000 annually or £16.76 hourly), with hours recorded on timesheets. English voluntary organizations considered the termination to be a 'real loss' to the ESF programme. Apparently, officials in government departments found the concept of 'volunteer time' a difficult one to handle and administratively too complicated.
- We have a single example from Bavaria, where the rules for access to public funding permit the inclusion of volunteer in-kind contributions, an example being the renovation of Rieneck Castle, Würzburg, where volunteer labour by boy scouts in the European Scouts Voluntary Programme was permitted.

The most intensive use of the principle is evident in Wales. There, social-inclusion NGOs won the campaign to have in-kind contributions included in 2005, just in time for the current round of the structural funds in 2007. The Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) promotes and manages the involvement, through open tenders, of social-inclusion NGOs in both the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in a project called *The engagement gateway* under both the convergence and competitiveness programmes, both entitled *Increasing employment and tackling economic inactivity*, with a target of 32,000 participants. *The engagement gate-*

*way* provides grants ranging from £25,000 (≈ €29,230) to £150,000 (≈ €175,000) and volunteer in-kind contributions can count for a significant part of the matching contribution by the NGO. The value of in-kind volunteer contribution is measured, assessed and accounted for under rules similar to that in England but must be contributed by people who are only volunteers and may not include staff who contribute additional 'voluntary time'.

The round table gave an example: In the project *Active in your community* (Bridgend and Rhondda Cynon Taf, former mining areas of high unemployment), a hundred older volunteers assisted a project in community engagement and further education and training. The cost of the project was £100,897 (≈ €118,000) of which £50,137 (≈ €58,620) was ESF; and £50,760 (≈ €59,350) from *Active in your community* which included £22,402 (≈ €26,200) volunteering in-kind for the hundred volunteers.

Out of 27 Member States, these are the only examples we know of the recognition of in-kind contributions. Do they join global grants and technical assistance as ways in which the structural funds could be much more effective instruments for social inclusion? If the European Union really wishes to mark *2011 European year of the volunteer*, it will amend the regulation to acknowledge in-kind contributions by volunteers in the structural funds in every Member State.

This recommendation will be considered in the paper being prepared by EAPN's Structural Fund Working Group on the role of volunteering in Structural Funds.

## References

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1) Brian Harvey notably brings his expertise to EAPN's Structural Funds working group and signed EAPN's *Structural Funds Manual 2009-2011*. See in EAPN Books on EAPN's website: [http://www.eapn.eu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=860:eapn-book-eapn-structural-funds-manual&catid=40:eapn-books&Itemid=84&lang=en](http://www.eapn.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=860:eapn-book-eapn-structural-funds-manual&catid=40:eapn-books&Itemid=84&lang=en).

# The 100 million Europeans volunteering deserve recognition

BY AURÉLIE STORME, COMMUNICATION AND MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OFFICER AT THE EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE (CEV)



*Volunteering England.*

More than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. A Eurobarometer survey in 2006 revealed that 3 out of 10 Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary capacity and that close to 80% of respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe.

## **Volunteering benefits to society as a whole**

There is a vast array of notions, definitions and traditions concerning volunteering. However, what is common throughout Europe is that wherever people engage together in activities to help each other, support those in need, preserve our environment, campaign for human rights, or to initiate actions to help ensure that everyone enjoys a decent life - both society as a whole and the individual volunteers benefit from it and social cohesion is significantly strengthened.

In this framework, CEV strives to:

- promote and win recognition for volunteering as an expression of active citizenship in Europe to the general public, the media, businesses and policy-makers on all relevant levels of government;
- promote and support the role of the volunteering infrastructure in advancing volunteering as an expression of active citizenship in Europe;
- promote innovation and good practice in the field of supporting and reinforcing volunteering, participation and active citizenship through exchange, structured dialogue and network-building.

The **European Volunteer Centre** – CEV – is the European network of 88 national, regional and local volunteer centres and volunteer development agencies in 34 countries reaching out to over 17,000 associations at the local level. CEV channels the collective priorities and concerns of its member organisations to the institutions of the European Union. It acts as a central forum for the exchange of policy, practice and information on volunteering and is recognised by the EU as a voice of volunteering in Europe. CEV was the initiator of the campaign for the European Year of Volunteering 2011.

## **A sound volunteering infrastructure is needed**

Taken together, the 100 million Europeans volunteering are the EU's biggest Member State and deserve recognition of their contribution day after day to our society.

This is one of the reasons why back in 2007, CEV, together with the other European networks of the "EYV 2011 Alliance", launched the campaign for the European Year of Volunteering 2011. The "EYV 2011 Alliance" project secretariat is now hosted by CEV, chosen by EYV 2011 Alliance members following its role as a critical contact point of the joint lobby effort.

CEV would like to use this unique momentum to strive for more attention of policy makers on the necessity of a sound volunteering infrastructure at all levels: nobody would imagine a well-developed society without the necessary



*THW volunteers helping citizens to escape the floods.*

transport, economic and legal infrastructure in place. The same should be true for volunteering: it is freely given but not cost free, and many more citizens are likely to get involved if they have organisations and structures at hand where they can do so. CEV also calls for an ongoing debate between policy makers at all levels on what works and what not in the promotion of volunteering. We discuss agriculture, the future of the Euro and common foreign policy in Brussels – why is the active engagement of citizens for our common European values of solidarity and social cohesion never a topic of major EU debates?

## **The CEV Brussels Declaration: volunteering is a means of empowerment and social inclusion!**

In particular, in view of the important role played by volunteering in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, CEV organised in December 2010 a conference aimed at making a bridge between the European Years 2010 and 2011, this way ensuring a legacy for the European Year for the fight against poverty and social exclusion. The conference resulted in the adoption of the "CEV Brussels Declaration on the role of volunteering as a means of

empowerment and social inclusion"<sup>1</sup>, which formulates 43 concrete recommendations to governments, civil society organisations, corporate actors and individuals, in order to better harness the voluntary sector in the common effort towards the eradication of poverty and social exclusion in our societies.

2011 will constitute a unique opportunity for CEV to further advocate the better promotion and recognition of volunteering in this field, as well as in all the other sectors where volunteering has a role to play, notably through its active involvement in the six thematic working groups of the EYV 2011 Alliance and in the work towards the development of a comprehensive European Policy Agenda for Volunteering.

Let's not forget: 2 out of 3 Europeans do not yet volunteer! 2011 should be a step to pave the way to empower more people to make a difference.

CEV's **vision** is a Europe in which volunteering is central in building a cohesive and inclusive society based on solidarity and active citizenship. Our **mission** is to create an enabling political, social and economic environment in Europe for the full potential of volunteering to be realised.



*Italian volunteer of the Think Future Volunteer project.*

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.cev.be/data/File/CEV\\_Brussels\\_Declaration.pdf](http://www.cev.be/data/File/CEV_Brussels_Declaration.pdf)

# Eurodiaconia: the multifaceted value of volunteering

BY CATHERINE STORRY, POLICY AND MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OFFICER



Resource centre for people with disabilities, 2011.

Every day, across Europe, Eurodiaconia members serve people with needs – whether they be mental health needs, debt counseling needs, medical or emotional needs, housing needs or many others. Today, meeting these needs through diaconial work is increasingly professionalized and a conservative estimate could be that there are over 600,000 professional staff working in Eurodiaconia's members today. However, these professionals are complemented by what we estimate as being over 500,000 volunteers. Every day, these people volunteer locally and internationally in diaconal social and health services, working for the common belief that all humans are created in the image of God with equal worth.

**Eurodiaconia believes that volunteering plays an important role in promoting the inclusion and integration of people who are excluded from society.** On one hand, volunteers are in particular the main agents when it comes to social inclusion through their engagement with those at risk of social exclusion. On the other hand, volunteering provides people that are at risk of being socially excluded with ways to contribute and connect to society such as those who are unemployed, retired and older people, people with disabilities, migrants and people experiencing poverty and other forms of extreme exclusion.

Volunteering can also be a tool of empowerment as skills and experience gained through volunteering facilitates getting people back

Eurodiaconia is a federation of organizations, institutions and churches providing social and health services from a Christian-value base. Currently, Eurodiaconia has 31 members in 21 European countries. Its work is focused in three core areas: 1) developing its praxis – social innovation, best practice exchange and increasing resources; 2) advocacy – working with institutional partners and other organizations to promote social justice - and 3) theological reflection on diaconia and its practical expression in the day to day work carried out by its members.

into education or employment and in general, tapping into people's potential. Volunteering activities are part of informal and non-formal learning for people at all ages and at all stages of their lives. It contributes to personal development and to learning life skills and competences, enlarging social contacts, building self-esteem and in doing so, enhancing employability which when it leads to quality work, can help bring people out poverty and social exclusion.

**As much as volunteering can bring a personal benefit to the volunteers, Eurodiaconia firmly believes that volunteers can also improve the quality of social and health services.** The activities that volunteers carry out in the various services not only can they benefit the user; they also benefit the paid staff and the wider community. Volunteers have an important role to play in bringing ownership of the services by the community. They can provide care that is user-focused, holistic and responsive to the community's needs.

**As if these reasons were not enough, we can't ignore the economic value of volunteering.** Volunteers are said to contribute to an estimated 2-7% to the GDP of our national economies! However in the midst of the financial crisis and severe austerity measures in the public sector across Europe, we are very aware of the risk of government taking advantage of volunteers for cheap labour, we need to be aware of this danger and this must be avoided! Social and health care services need decently paid professionals and they should not be replaced with volunteers!

**Eurodiaconia will pursue several political objectives during 2011.** We would like the EU to mainstream volunteering in EU policy by developing strategies to promote, recognise and support voluntary activities in Europe and see this represented in a White Paper on volunteering and active citizenship. We would also like to see the Social Open Method of Co-ordination used for ongoing exchange and benchmarking, to allow national governments to compare their policies and to exchange their experiences in promoting volunteer friendly policies. We also want to see an improvement in the legal environment for volunteers so that all people, regardless of their social or legal status are able to volunteer.

## Eurodiaconia planned activities for 2011

**Publication** on 'the State of Volunteering in Diaconia' - based on results of the research carried out on voluntary activities across our membership. The aim of this publication is to celebrate the work of volunteers in diaconia and to create a resource for our members to share best practices.

**Seminar** on sharing best practice of volunteering projects that promote social inclusion, with EDYN, (Ecumenical Diaconal Year Network),

**Eurodiaconia 2011 Award** - on projects that focus on volunteering and social inclusion. All entries will be showcased at the European Parliament in the autumn.

**Round-table discussion** on the legal obstacles faced by volunteers, particular in Germany.

Eurodiaconia has also been an active member on the **EYV2011 Alliance** since 2008 and several of its members are on working groups of the alliance working towards 'A European Policy Agenda on Volunteering.'

If you would like to know more about Eurodiaconia's work on please contact Catherine in the secretariat at [catherine.storry@eurodiaconia.org](mailto:catherine.storry@eurodiaconia.org) or look at our website [www.eurodiaconia.org/volunteering](http://www.eurodiaconia.org/volunteering).



Volunteer at the Centre for elderly, 2011.

# European Year of Volunteering

## Volunteer! Make a difference

[www.europa.eu/volunteering](http://www.europa.eu/volunteering)

The European Year of Volunteering 2011 aims to make it easier for people to volunteer, to improve the quality of volunteering, and to help policy-makers understand better the work done by millions of volunteers across the EU and address the challenges they face. During the Year there will be a wide range of activities that will take place in all 27 EU Member States, to raise awareness and celebrate the vital role that volunteers play in our everyday lives.



European Year of Volunteering 2011