

Joint Statement endorsed by Members of the European Parliament for IVY 2026 on recognising, supporting, and safeguarding volunteering and volunteers in the European Union - April 2026

Volunteering is a cornerstone of democratic participation, solidarity, and community resilience. It is a core expression of European values and enables people to shape their communities, strengthening social cohesion, supporting vulnerable groups, advancing environmental and social goals, and complementing public services and professional civil society organisations, especially in times of crisis. To reach a more enabling environment for volunteering in Europe, increased coordination at the EU level and across Member States regarding volunteering programmes, policies and data gathering is needed. It would serve to more accurately assess and measure the actual transformative effect and value of volunteering and volunteer exchanges. Policies and legal frameworks that facilitate transnational cooperation, like the European Cross-Border Association Directive (ECBA), and that serve to enable volunteers and their associations to operate and partner without obstacles throughout the EU and beyond are indispensable and should be prioritised.

As Members of the European Parliament, we acknowledge that the International Volunteer Year (IVY2026) and the 30th Anniversary of the EU youth volunteering and solidarity programmes offer a crucial opportunity and should be seized to better value, support and protect volunteers and volunteering activities.

1. Democracy & Civic Engagement

Volunteers contribute to build more resilient and cohesive democratic societies. They play an important role in connecting people and communities, building trust and inclusion and addressing needs that public services and solidarity workers alone cannot. Volunteering needs a strategic policy framework that acknowledges their contribution, empowers and mobilises volunteers, further contributing to ensure that the fundamental rights, values and principles, enshrined in the European Treaties are a reality. The EU Civil Society Strategy, the EU Democracy Shield, the EU Centre for Democratic Resilience and the EU Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness are among the EU policy frameworks allowing to further consider, give due attention to, and acknowledge the unique characteristics and roles of volunteers.

2. A lifelong-learning experience

Volunteering is an important opportunity for acquisition of skills and competences, for learning and personal development, adding to formal education, training and professional experience. To better support, never replace, public services and professional assistance, volunteers should have access to adequate training and information, including about their rights and duties, and their learning experiences should be acknowledged and validated as an integral part of their personal records of skills and competences. This should be promoted, among others, within the framework of the EU Skills Agenda, with reinforced commitments and capacities for validation of learning acquired whilst volunteering as part of a lifelong and life-wide learning approach.

3. Resilience & Well Being

Volunteering is a key resource for community resilience and a driver of value creation that is crucial for sustainable development as well as personal and community wellbeing. Collaboration enables a “whole of society approach”, facing threats together, and contributes to common, sustainable solutions to existing and future challenges, including disaster preparedness and risk reduction. The EU Preparedness Union Strategy and the Union Civil Protection Mechanism provide valuable frameworks to consider the essential roles of volunteers, acknowledging and supporting their distinctive and complementary capacity to address vulnerabilities at community level, including before crises emerge.

4. Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028-2034

Ensuring adequate, sustainable and transparent funding for volunteering is necessary to maintain stable organisational capacities and invest in volunteer training, coordination and infrastructure. In this regard, the future MFF should secure a strong and visible volunteering component within the Erasmus+ programme, including a dedicated strand building on the European Solidarity Corps, with adequate funding, and it should ensure that other elements of the Erasmus+ programme also consider the needs of volunteering and solidarity organisations. Other stable, long-term funding lines and operating grants for volunteer-involving and volunteer-infrastructure organisations should be ensured, particularly within AGORA EU, as a complement to dedicated EU instruments specifically supporting volunteering activities.

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