

CEV Conference “Helping Hands” – Hope for Europe!

8-9 october 2015, Permanent Representation of Luxembourg, Brussels

On behalf of Lisbon Municipality, we would like to thank the European Volunteer Center for the invitation. We are very glad to be here and share our experience with you.

Lisbon Municipality – Volunteering

I will make a brief introduction on the municipality’s work on volunteering. It is important for two reasons:

- a. This is our core work and our starting point to become the 2nd European Volunteering Capital,
- b. It will introduce the impacts of this initiative in a city like Lisbon.

Our mission is to contribute to citizen participation.

Our objectives are to promote reflection, sharing and dissemination of good practice in volunteering, to contribute to the visibility and recognition of volunteering, to encourage closer cooperation between institutions promoting volunteering and to increase the number of volunteers with access to training in volunteering.

Main projects

With a municipal scope, the constitution of the Local Volunteering Banks were an orientation from the National Council for the Promotion of Volunteering and their main function is to mediate between volunteers and volunteering promoting organizations.

Although the Lisbon Municipality runs the **Volunteering Bank** from 2003, we would say that our starting point was during 2011. With all the European Year of Volunteers events happening, a new attention was given to this matter in different ways.

At the end of 2011 we had around 1000 volunteers registered. At the end of 2014 we had 2382. European Volunteer Capital reinforced this growth tendency – from January we had 517 registrations representing a 20% growth of the total number of registrations. We also registered 38 new volunteering promoting organizations, within a total of 200. This reveals the growing awareness of Lisbon’s citizens to participate through volunteering.

Since 2012, and due to this social and institutional attention towards volunteering, we felt the need to broaden our intervention. Many challenges were brought to us and we tried to face them with new projects, both internally and with partnerships with other entities.

One of our main projects is the **Municipality Volunteer Program**, the framework for volunteer participation in interventions developed by services of the City of Lisbon. From the beginning of 2013 we had the collaboration of 341 volunteers and 300 are actually collaborating in the municipality’s services. This program has a very good permanency rate and a great impact in the quality of the services and in their approach to citizens. It’s implementation started from

the cultural department but it's now implemented in a great variety of services providing volunteering opportunities in various areas: environment, health, sports, education, social rights... This variety of domains and their growing impact in the city has been a great contribution to the visibility and impact of European Volunteering Capital.

Our **Training Program** started with the Municipality Volunteer Program as all volunteers have to assist to a general training on volunteering and a specific training from the services they are going to collaborate with. Our goal is to start a training program for volunteering promoting organizations aiming to improve the volunteering processes in organizations.

As said before, these are our core projects that are linked to each other. They have contributed and have been benefiting from a great contribution from the European Volunteering Capital.

Lisbon – European Volunteering Capital

Our objectives for Lisbon, as the European Volunteering Capital in 2015 are to:

- Promote volunteering in Lisbon;
- Contribute to the visibility and recognition of volunteering at local, national and international level;
- Support sustainable partnerships for volunteering in Lisbon;
- Work towards the improved and continued implementation of the recommendations of the Policy Agenda on Volunteering in Europe (P.A.V.E) in Lisbon;
- Contribute to strengthening the visibility and “brand awareness” of the EVC.

We knew that we had still so much to improve in our projects but we wanted to give an extra strength to our partnerships and an opportunity for the participation of everyone who wanted to take part of this initiative. From the beginning it was clear that this initiative had to be opened to participation.

The **participant organizations** are all the organizations that presented projects by their own initiative. Linked to the idea of participation, the idea of Lisbon, European Volunteering Capital was appropriated by the city and brought the opportunity to associate actions and events on volunteering to a common agenda. Until now we had over 78 participant organizations and around 200 volunteering actions and events associated to the European Volunteering Capital.

Three strategic axes were defined.

On relation to **quality**, and aiming the best quality on volunteering processes, we focused on widening the awareness on basic principles and conditions for volunteering participation and getting an agreement on these principles. The Volunteer Market was an initiative that took place on the 18th and the 19th of September aiming to promote volunteering opportunities from volunteering promoting entities. There were present 30 social entities and there was a parallel workshop program.

The participated tool on volunteer management, the Volunteer Management Guide, was built from the contribution of 15 entities and is to be presented in November.

About volunteering **recognition** one of our main objectives was to put volunteering in a central position. So we tried to bring volunteering and European Volunteering Capital to many seminars and events. Volunteering is the widest range of intervention so this was not very difficult to do and it happened almost naturally.

Besides all the workshops, seminars, the media coverage, we wanted to work on the formal recognition of learning developed through volunteering. On the 12nd October took place the last meeting of a workgroup focused on the conception of a mechanism for this recognition to be presented in December.

Also in November, one of the members of the Organization Committee, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, is organizing an International conference on the role of volunteering in the future, discussing the main issues of our concern on relation to the value(s) of volunteering.

We would like that being elected the European Volunteering Capital 2015 would open the way to the improvement of the **institutional framework** for volunteering, namely through the implementation of Programa + Voluntariado which is giving financial support for volunteering projects to be implemented until the first trimester of 2016. Furthermore, the learning recognition mechanism already mentioned may bring relevant know-how for improvements related to the organizational framework of volunteering organisations. It may also have impact at policy level at national scope and beyond.

The Intermunicipal Meeting on Volunteering, taking place on the 22nd October will be an important moment for a reflection about the local volunteering structures.

It is October and we feel we have a long way until the 5th of December. So much has been done but still there is so much to be done and we know we will say there is so much more we could have done!

It has been a great challenge and a growing opportunity for Lisbon Municipality to be the European Volunteering Capital!