
**BIRGU European Volunteering Capital Candidate 2023
Jury Feedback | Brussels, 5 December 2021**

Although Birgu in Malta collaborates with the national annual award for volunteers, there is insufficient explanation about their own initiatives to reward and recognise volunteers. There is also a lack of information concerning how volunteers' competencies could be validated or recognised by the municipality and their role in supporting that process. The Training Initiatives Scheme to fund training for volunteers and organisations is a good idea but the municipality's role in this process is not explained.

There is a lack of clarity as to how Birgu actually puts into practice the national volunteering strategy it has endorsed. Although it is contributing to the research undertaken by the MCVS to measure the value of volunteering both at the national and municipality level, specific activities and methods referring to how this is done are missing. **The added value and importance of volunteering in the municipality – contributing to social inclusion, culture, sport, historical heritage, and animal welfare – are highlighted.** Furthermore, **the fact that the municipal authorities have one-to-one meetings with voluntary organisations operating in the municipality to maintain an open dialogue on matters that concern both the volunteers and the locality is considered positive by the jury.**

The enabling environment for volunteering developed by the municipality is only briefly explained. **Its collaboration with the national volunteering council and local volunteering organisations is a strength in Birgu's approach to volunteering support.** However, although the substantial significance of volunteering organisations in local strategies and policies in social services, sports, the environment, youth work, health and well-being, etc. is emphasised, the wider and broader details concerning what this means in practice are missing from the application.

Employee volunteering is encouraged and supported for the benefit of local volunteering organisations and the causes they assist. However, despite this forward-looking approach, the municipality does not support new and emerging non-formal volunteering. **It is also notable that the municipality does not fund volunteer organisations although it does help local organisations to identify suitable national and European funding and, in some cases, allows volunteers to use their time for co-financing of grants.** Nevertheless, the clear thinking, planning and strategy around this which is needed to ensure that local organisations are suitably resourced is not fully explained.

Social inclusion is an important issue in the municipality but, apart from the historic and cultural prerequisites for inclusion, more information about actual inclusion policies/practices would be welcome.

The strategy for the future growth of volunteering is aligned with the national strategy but lacks detail on the specificities for the actual needs on the ground in Birgu. **The jury welcomes the particular emphasis on “encouraging the work of umbrella organisations (platforms) and cooperation between such organisations” and the recognition and awareness that volunteering initiatives and voluntary activity are an essential part of citizenship.** Although Birgu demonstrates significant scope and willingness to spread the legacy of participation in the competition as widely as possible, more details on the envisaged legacy in the European Volunteering Capital Competition would have strengthened its candidacy.

About the competition

CEV launched the **European Volunteering Capital Competition to strengthen, inspire and celebrate volunteering** and the impact made by volunteers at the local level by giving recognition to municipalities that support and strengthen volunteering, especially through partnerships with stakeholders from different sectors such as volunteer centres, volunteer-involving organisations and the for-profit sector. The judging criteria are the recommendations in the Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe (PAVE), CEV's 5R policy recommendations and the planned engagement with the European Solidarity Corps.

The awarded municipality is chosen from the candidates by an **international jury** of key personalities connected with volunteering, representing civil society, the private, for-profit sector, as well as the EU institutions: Michel Lefranc (CEV Board), Jan Verdée (CEV Board), Lena Karnalova (CEV Board), George Thomson (CEV Board), Kieran McCarthy (Cork City Councillor & EU Committee of the Regions member), Krzysztof Pater (EESC Rapporteur on "Volunteers . Building the Future of Europe"), Predrag Fred Matic (MEP), Barbara Eglitis (Program officer SALTO European Solidarity Corps), Rares Craiut (Member of the Bureau of the Conference of INGOs, Council of Europe), Begona Barbera Garcia (Iberdrola Social Projects Manager, Employee Volunteering European Network (EVEN)), Monica Lallai (Business Development for Religious and Third Sector/Non Profit

Organizations Business Unit. Cattolica Assicurazioni Spa), Sawsan Chebli (Berlin State Secretary for Civic and International Affairs).

The previous winners are: Gdansk 2022 - Berlin 2021- Padova 2020 - Košice 2019 - Aarhus 2018 - Sligo 2017 London - 2016 Lisbon - 2015 and Barcelona- 2014.

The Centre for European Volunteering (CEV) is the European network of over 60 organisations dedicated to the promotion of, and support to, volunteers and volunteering in Europe at European, national or regional level. Through our network we work together to ensure that: the value of quality volunteering as an expression of Solidarity and European values is understood, supported and celebrated; policies & programmes, together with the European social environment, inspires, encourages and supports quality European Volunteering; Individuals and organisations that are active in the volunteering and civil society sphere share, learn and are inspired from one another in the framework of CEV . In this way we reach out to the many thousands of volunteers and volunteer organisations in Europe as a source of support bringing the European dimension to their work.