
D2.4 REPORT

European Volunteering Capital Candidates Community (EVCCC) Seminar

1 December 2025

[Ajuntament de Barcelona, Spain](#)

In Barcelona (Spain), the European Volunteering Capital Candidates Community (EVCCC) Seminar saw the participation of **181 participants**, including 74 males and 107 females.

Cristina Riba, the moderator, opened the event and welcomed everyone. She was followed by **Ms. Maria Eugènia Gay, Second Deputy Mayor of Barcelona for Social Rights, Culture, Education and Life Cycles** who also welcomed the participants and offered reflections on the 10th anniversary of the Catalan Volunteering Law. She reflected on the fact that this pioneering framework has been instrumental in shaping the understanding and support of volunteering in Catalonia and highlighted the anniversary's significance as a milestone, acknowledging volunteering as a crucial pillar of democracy and civic engagement, rather than simply a charitable activity.



1. Presentations

The session continued with presentations from:

MEP Diana Riba Giner, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT), European Parliament expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to celebrate International Volunteer Day in Barcelona—a city known for its strong tradition of social commitment and solidarity. She thanked the Centre for European Volunteering for recognising this work through the European Volunteering Capital initiative, highlighting that volunteering embodies the core values of the European project: care, inclusion, cohesion, and a shared sense of purpose. Drawing on her experience as a jury member, she praised the inspiring initiatives she encountered, emphasising their creativity and impact on communities across Europe. She stressed the importance of celebrating volunteering at a time when civil society organisations increasingly face political and social pressure, including discrediting campaigns, anti-NGO rhetoric, and attacks from far-right movements. In this difficult context, she reaffirmed the indispensable role of the third sector. She offered heartfelt appreciation to all organisations that uphold social cohesion through their dedicated work, turning solidarity from an abstract idea into meaningful action. Above all, she honoured volunteers, noting that volunteering is not merely offering time but committing to the common good. *“Volunteering reminds us that there are countless opportunities to take actions that make a difference, that there are gestures of support that build connections, humanise experiences, and inspire us to continue working together for a fairer society. Your work is proof that not only can we dream of a better world, but that we have the duty to build it day by day”,* she concluded.



This intervention was followed by statements from: **Jaume Romero**, Director General of Community Action, Associations and Volunteering, Generalitat of Catalonia; **Marta Solé** from the Provincial Council of Barcelona; **Pedro Aguilera**, Councillor for Citizen Participation from the City Council of Barcelona and **Míriam Bonet**, territorial coordinator in Barcelona from Federació Catalana de Voluntariat Social (FCVS).

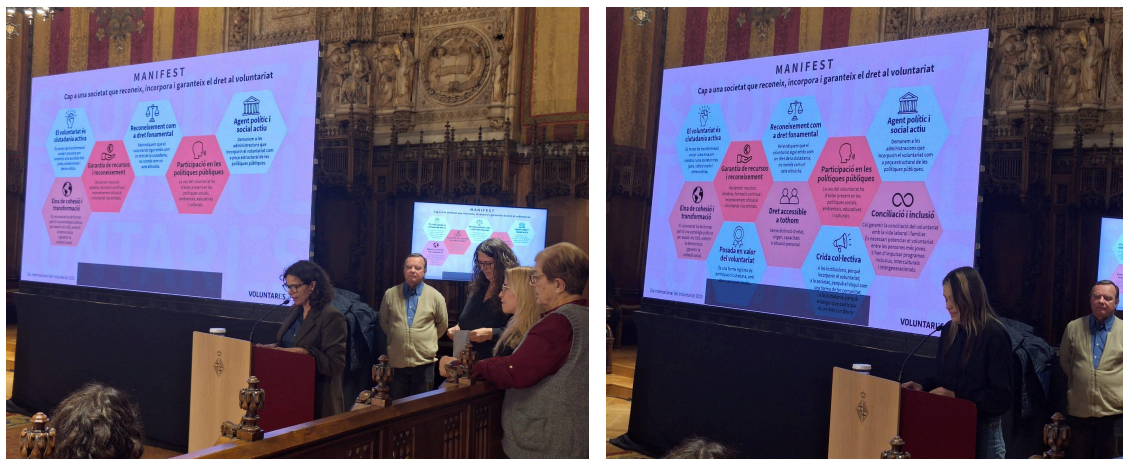
2. Barcelona, first European Volunteering Capital 2014

The reflections 11 years after winning the inaugural EV Capital title from **Ramon Nicolau**, current Federació Catalana de Voluntariat Social (FCVS) President; **Francina Alsina**, former Federació Catalana de Voluntariat Social (FCVS) 2014 President and **Carles Agustí**, former Barcelona Councillor for Citizen Participation in 2014 focussed on the legacy of the connections, relationships (locally and across Europe) and best practices in volunteering that had emerged from the EV Capital 2014 competition participation.



3. International Volunteer Day (IVD) 2025 Manifesto by FCVS

Jordi Balot from FCVS, **Miriam Martinez** from Centre Heura, **Isabel Castells** from Amics de la Gent Gran, **Ignasi Martínez** from Association Afibrocacat, **Marta Romay** from Foundation Migra studium, **Míriam Bonet** from Pere Claver grup, **Núria Pedrola & Dulce Selene** from Aspasim, **Elisa Gutiérrez** from Association Benestar i Desenvolupament-ABD, **Arnau Oliver** from Foundation Camins and **Marta Toro** from Association AFEV presented the [IVD 2025 Manifesto](#) published by FCVS.



The manifesto “Towards a society that recognizes, incorporates and guarantees the right to volunteering” defends volunteering as a citizen's right and a key agent of social transformation that must be integrated into public policies. The manifesto incorporates and guarantees the right to volunteer' in which it defends volunteering as a citizen's right and a key agent of social transformation that must be integrated into public policies. The document calls for more resources, recognition and participation to build a more just, inclusive and participatory society. They highlighted that volunteering is much more than a solidarity action. It is a living expression of active citizenship, a driver of social transformation and an essential tool for building a more just, cohesive and democratic society. On this International Volunteer Day, they raised their voices to claim the fundamental role of volunteers and to demand that volunteering ceases to be seen as an occasional altruistic action and is understood as a recognized fundamental right of citizenship and a structural part of public policies. It is time to take a step forward. They called on public administrations to consider volunteering as an active political and social agent of the first order, through:

- The guarantee of stable and sufficient resources for volunteer organizations.
- Continuous training and official recognition for volunteers.

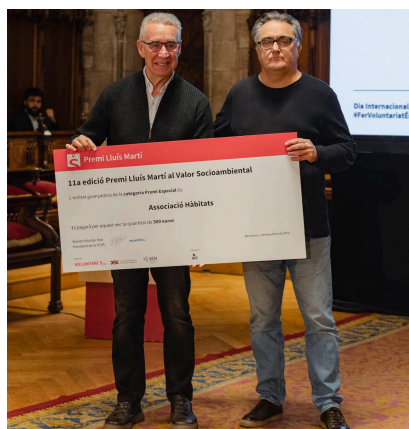
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- The incorporation of the voice of volunteers in the definition of social, environmental, educational and cultural policies.
 - The establishment of coordination mechanisms between institutions and entities.

Speakers underlined that volunteering cannot be an improvised response to the shortcomings of the system, but rather part of a public strategy to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, to strengthen democracy, to guarantee social cohesion and to transform the current, often exclusionary system. Volunteering must be a right accessible to everyone, regardless of age, origin, abilities or personal situations. It must:

- Promote policies that facilitate the reconciliation of work, family and volunteer life
- Promote volunteering among young people and disseminate the positive consequences for society of the tasks carried out by volunteers.
- Promote inclusive, intergenerational and intercultural volunteering programs.
- Eliminate barriers to access, especially in the digital realm, to ensure that everyone can participate.
- Recognizing volunteering as a legitimate form of citizen participation, with curricular and social value.

“Volunteering is not an annex to society. It is a way of making society. And today, more than ever, it is essential and indispensable” they concluded.

Lluís Martí Award was given to [Hàbitats Association](#) for the “Projecte Rius” and to ABD - Association Benestar i Desenvolupament for the “Projecte Jardí Fènix”. Hàbitats is a non-profit organisation created in 1997 with the mission of bringing people closer to the natural environment to promote the conservation of ecosystems, biodiversity and heritage. Its main pillars are education, volunteering and participation, from which the premise of the Organization arises: to know, share and conserve. ABD is a non-profit organisation that has been working for over 40 years to reduce inequalities and social and health vulnerability. Their mission is to transform lives and defend the rights of people in socially precarious situations by promoting personal autonomy and social coexistence.

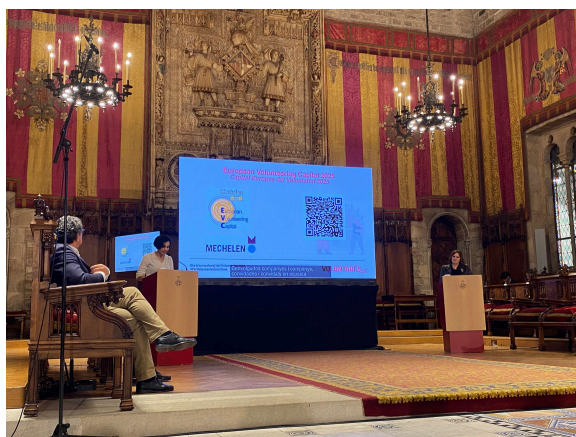


A choir from the [XAMFRÀ Association](#) performed at the event. The association is a social-educational foundation based in the Raval neighbourhood of Barcelona. Its core mission is to guarantee the universal right to artistic practice — using music, theatre and dance as tools for social inclusion, community building, and cultural participation. It was founded in 2004 under the umbrella of L'ARC Taller de Música Fundació Privada, originally to serve children and youth, but has since developed into a broad community organisation open to people of all ages and backgrounds. The organisation targets a wide and diverse audience: children and young people, families, women, people with disabilities, immigrants, people at risk of social exclusion — essentially, anyone interested in participating in artistic and community life. Its activities contribute to social cohesion, cultural inclusion, mutual understanding, and bridging divides in a multicultural urban neighbourhood.



4. European Volunteering Capital 2027 Winner Announcement

The CEV Director Gabriella Civico introduced the competition and emphasised that the European Volunteering Capital Competition (#EVCapital) recognises and rewards those municipalities that are doing well in supporting volunteers and volunteering in their communities. It serves as a source of inspiration and motivation for all municipalities across Europe to make even greater efforts to promote and celebrate volunteering. [The first European Volunteering Capital title](#) was awarded in 2014 to Barcelona, it shows the potential of volunteering development at the local level and connects present and future local volunteering actions, strategies, policies, and programmes to the European Context. It enables volunteers, volunteer-involving and volunteer infrastructure organisations to collaborate more closely with local policymakers in a common cause to strengthen, inspire and celebrate volunteers in their area.



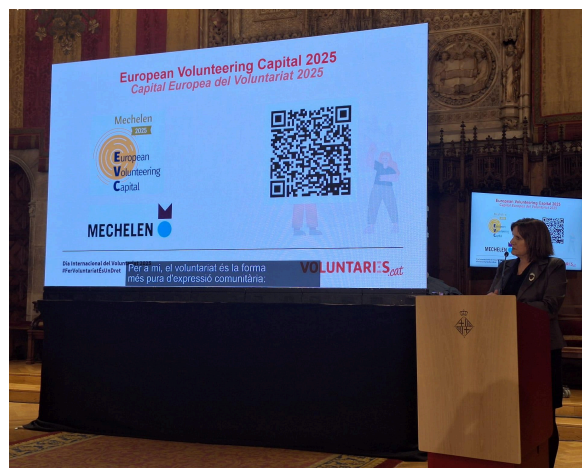
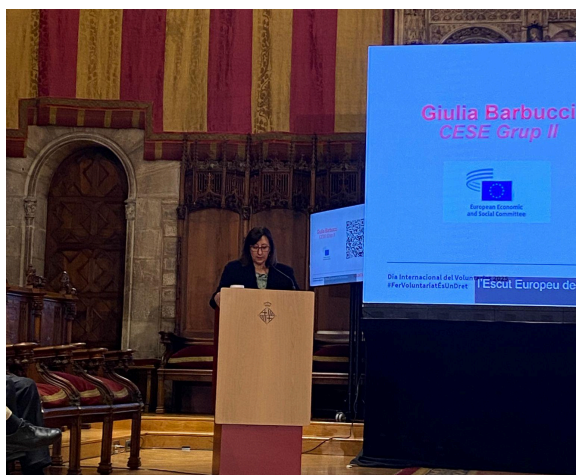
Deputy Mayor Rina Rabau Nkandu from Municipality of Mechelen (EV Capital 2025)

reflected on the honour of serving as the European Volunteering Capital 2025, emphasising that the title symbolised recognition of the thousands of volunteers whose selfless efforts strengthen society. She described volunteering as the purest form of community—rooted in solidarity, inclusion, and human connection—and expressed pride in having been able to spotlight volunteers throughout the year. She thanked the Centre for European Volunteering (CEV) for its continued investment in the power of volunteering, noting that civic engagement transcends borders and collectively guides Europe toward

greater solidarity. Looking ahead, she welcomed the upcoming International Year of Volunteers in 2026 as an opportunity to celebrate this global force even more strongly. Reflecting on the many inspiring people she encountered through the EVCapital journey, she wished Maia—and all future European Volunteering Capitals—great success and expressed her hope that the initiative will continue to grow in the years to come. Read her full speech [here](#).

Mafalda Roriz, Director of social development, sports and youth department & Susana Marinho, Compromissum - Maia Volunteer Centre Coordinator from Municipality of Maia (EV Capital 2026) presented the city's strategic vision for volunteering, emphasising that volunteering in Maia is not only a social practice but also a deliberate political priority. They explained that volunteering has become a strategic pillar for community development, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030, and is understood as a powerful expression of democratic participation and active citizenship. They outlined the establishment of Maia's Municipal Volunteering Centre — COMPROMISSUM — created in 2020 as a proximity-based structure that connects volunteers with community needs across schools, families, businesses and organisations. Maia's volunteering system operates within a robust legal framework, including updated municipal regulations guaranteeing rights, duties, insurance and transparency. She also highlighted the professional and digital nature of Maia's management model, supported by the Better Impact platform, which ensures high-quality volunteer coordination, communication and reporting. Volunteering in Maia spans a wide range of sectors — from youth, culture, health and social inclusion to civil protection, the environment, tourism and heritage — respecting the principle that everyone can engage regardless of age, skills or time. Public recognition has grown significantly, with Maia named Portuguese Capital of Volunteering 2025 and European Capital of Volunteering 2026, while the municipality invests consistently in insurance, training, digital tools, logistics and partnerships. They concluded by affirming Maia's commitment to collaborate with European cities that view volunteering as a transformative force. For the International Year of Volunteering 2026, they stressed that the focus should not simply be on increasing volunteer numbers, but on enhancing participation, inclusion and decision-making power

for volunteers who dedicate themselves to strengthening their communities. Find their full speech [here](#).



European Volunteering Capital 2027 Jury member Giulia Barbucci from the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), Group II expressed her pleasure at serving once again as a Jury Member and shared her enthusiasm for being part of the gathering. She underlined that the winner of the European Volunteering Capital 2027 will carry an especially important responsibility: continuing and strengthening the legacy of 2026, a year that will be historic for volunteering. She highlighted that 2026 will be an exceptional year, not only because Maia will hold the EVC title, but also because it has been declared the International Volunteer Year (IVY 2026) by the United Nations. At the same time, Europe will witness the establishment of the European Democracy Shield, where volunteers will play a central role in strengthening societal resilience and civic engagement. She also stressed that 2026 will mark the implementation of the EU Civil Society Strategy, whose three pillars—Fostering Engagement, Support and Protection, and Sustainable and Transparent Financing—will shape the future environment for volunteering across Europe. She noted that volunteering is likewise embedded in the European Commission’s Strategy on Preparedness, emphasising the indispensable contribution of volunteers and civil society organisations in responding to emerging societal challenges. She announced that the European Economic and Social Committee

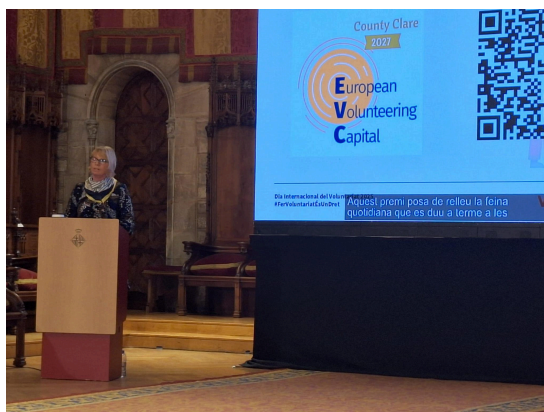
(EESC) will work closely with the European Commission to support the roll-out of the Civil Society Strategy, including through the organisation of the annual summit of the new Civil Society Platform. Additionally, 2026 will be a pivotal year for global advocacy, with the Global Call to Action for the Future of Volunteering to be launched during the IVY 2026 Opening Ceremony at the United Nations in New York. Read her full speech [here](#).

Gian Piero Farru (CEV Board), Mauro Pace Parascandalo (CEV Board), Lena Karnalova (CEV Board), Franci Zlatar (CEV Board), Tine Radinja (Mayor of Škofja Loka, Slovenia & EU Committee of the Regions Member), Giulia Barbucci (EESC Member, Group II), Diana Riba (MEP, Vice-chair of CULT Committee); Barbara Eglitis (EU - Programme Officer, European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre), Piotr Sadowski (Member of the Standing Committee of the Conference of INGOs, Council of Europe) and Bart Somers (Mayor of Mechelen, EVCapital2025) were not able to be present in person, but also sent their congratulations to the candidate.

The event finished with Gabriella announcing and congratulating **County Clare as the European Volunteering Capital 2027**.

Sharon Meaney, Manager of Clare Volunteer Centre accepted the award and expressed deep gratitude for being awarded the title of European Volunteering Capital 2027, thanking the Centre for European Volunteering for its ongoing commitment to strengthening volunteering across Europe. She emphasised that the award honours the everyday contributions of volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations throughout County Clare, highlighting how volunteering—particularly in rural Ireland—creates inclusion, belonging, and a compassionate, connected society. She underscored the critical role of collaboration in Clare's achievement, recognising the dedicated steering group, the Department of Rural, Community, Development and the Gaeltacht, and Clare County Council. Together, they share a vision of communities where volunteers are supported, valued, and empowered. Looking ahead to 2027, she welcomed the opportunity to deepen cooperation with European partners, exchange knowledge, and continue building volunteer capacity while safeguarding both formal and informal volunteering. She reaffirmed Clare's commitment to the CEV vision of volunteering as a force that

strengthens communities, promotes sustainability and inclusion, and contributes to a shared European future grounded in solidarity. She closed by extending an open invitation to all to visit County Clare during its European Volunteering Capital year. Read her full speech [here](#).



ANNEX 1

AGENDA

Moderated by: Cristina Riba (journalist at Catalan Public Television 3CAT)

18:00 – 18:15 Welcome to the Saló de Cent: City Council of Barcelona: Ms. Maria Eugènia Gay, Second Deputy Mayor for Social Rights, Culture, Education and Life Cycles

Presentations:

- European Parliament: MEP Diana Riba Giner, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT)
- Government of Catalonia, Civic and Community Action: Jaume Romero
- Provincial Council of Barcelona: Marta Solé
- City Council of Barcelona: Pedro Aguilera, Councillor for Citizen Participation
- Catalan Federation of Social Volunteering: Miriam Bonet, territorial coordinator in Barcelona

18:15 – 18:30 Barcelona, first European Volunteering Capital, 11 years later. Reflections, legacy & future outlook - Interviews and photo projection

- Francina Alsina, former FCVS president
- Ramon Nicolau, current FCVS president
- Carles Agustí, former Councillor for Citizen Participation, City of Barcelona

18:30 – 18:45

Reading of the Manifesto by the Catalan Federation of Social Volunteering

18:45 – 19:00

Lluís Martí Award Ceremony (Barcelona category)

19:00 – 19:15

Concert: Xamfrà Choir

19:15 – 19:45

European Volunteering Capitals Segment *(in English)*

Moderator: Gabriella Civico

- Municipality of Mechelen (EV Capital 2025): Deputy Mayor Rina Rabau Nkandu
- Municipality of Maia (EV Capital 2026): Mafalda Roriz & Susana Marinho
- EV Capital Candidate 2027 video, in English with Catalan subtitles
- Jury EV Capital 2027: Giulia Barbucci (EESC Group II)
- Announcement of the European Volunteering Capital 2027

19:45 – 21:00

Closing and networking cocktail

ANNEX 2 - Speeches

Rina Rabau Nkandu

Distinguished colleagues and fellow guests in this beautiful city of Barcelona.

Dear friends involved in volunteering,

For the city of Mechelen, it was truly an honour to serve as the European Volunteering Capital in 2025. This title was never just a badge of pride for us. It was a profound recognition of the thousands of citizens who give their time and energy selflessly, and carry our societies moving forward in doing so.

Volunteering, to me, is the purest expression of community: people sharing their talents without asking something in return, building a society rooted in solidarity, inclusion, and genuine human connection. As alderwoman, it has been a true privilege to put our volunteers in the spotlight, not just throughout our journey towards and during our time as Volunteering Capital 2025, but in the days, months and years ahead as well.

I am grateful to the Centre for European Volunteering (CEV) for continuing to invest in the power of volunteering. Engagement does not stop at borders. Each volunteer moves the needle at their own pace, but together they guide the compass of Europe towards solidarity and helping those around us, people we know and people we don't know.

That is why I am very much looking forward to 2026, the International Year of Volunteers, a moment to celebrate this global force even more strongly.

Over the past year, I have had the pleasure of meeting many inspiring people from all across Europe, including those within the CEV, each showing how transformative volunteering can be.”

I wish Maia, but of course all the next European Volunteering Capitals every success, and I truly hope this beautiful initiative will continue to grow for many years to come.

Thank you.

Mafalda Sofia Roriz
Susana Marinho

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

It is an honour to be in Barcelona to share with you Maia’s journey and strategic vision in the field of volunteering – a vision that is social, but also clearly political.

In Maia, volunteering has established itself as a strategic pillar for the development of our community, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and with the Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030.

We believe that volunteering is not only an expression of solidarity: it is democratic participation, it is active citizenship, it is what gives strength to communities.

With this purpose in mind, in 2020 we created our Municipal Volunteering Centre – COMPROMISSUM. A proximity-based structure that connects those who want to help with those who need support, involving schools, families, businesses and organisations. Our strategy is grounded in a solid legal framework: we have a municipal regulation, published in the Diário da República and updated in 2024, which clearly defines the rights and duties of volunteers and organisations, guaranteeing compulsory insurance, programme agreements and institutional transparency.

Our management model is professionalised and follows a rigorous yet human-centred process: online registration, interview, initial and continuous training, issuing of the volunteer card with insurance, and close supervision. We use the digital platform Better Impact to manage volunteering efficiently: registrations, opportunity management, time recording, direct communication and reporting. This digitalisation enables a modern, transparent and professional approach, while keeping us close to volunteers and organisations.

Volunteering in Maia covers a very wide range of areas: youth, intergenerational projects, schools, scouting, health, social inclusion, the environment, culture, tourism, heritage, civil protection, science, and the associative sector, among many others. This diversity reflects a fundamental principle: there is room for everyone, regardless of age, skills or availability.

Public recognition has been increasing: Maia is the Portuguese Capital of Volunteering 2025 and will be the European Capital of Volunteering 2026.

Events such as the Volunteering Gala, the Volunteering Week and Fair, participation certificates and regular publications strengthen collective pride and the culture of volunteering. To ensure adequate resources, we invest around 150,000 euros per year in insurance, kits, software, training and logistics, in addition to the budget for events and public-private partnerships.

Looking to the future, as Maia becomes the European Capital of Volunteering 2026 – and with the fortunate coincidence of this year also being the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development – Maia intends to seize this opportunity to promote strategic changes based on three main pillars:

1. Giving a voice to Generation Z and Generation Alpha. We need young people not only to participate, but also to decide, innovate and lead.
2. Strengthening recognition and rights in volunteering. The skills acquired by volunteers must be recognised and valued; organisations need stable funding

models; and volunteers must have an active role in decision-making processes. We also aim to give greater visibility to informal volunteer groups, to value spontaneous volunteering, and to encourage corporate involvement through structured corporate volunteering programmes.

3. Promoting volunteering as an instrument of democracy. In a time marked by polarisation, volunteering creates trust, proximity and dialogue – essential elements for the democratic health of communities.

Maia wants to contribute to Europe with this vision – a vision that understands volunteering as a common good, a strategic resource for the future, and a pillar of more human, participatory and resilient communities.

We are ready to work side by side with all European cities that believe that volunteering is more than a gesture: it is a force for change.

For the International Year of Volunteering 2026, we advocate that the priority should not simply be “more volunteers”, but more participation, more inclusion and greater decision-making power for those who dedicate themselves to volunteering.

Thank you very much.

Giulia Barbucci

I am very glad to be a jury member once again and to be with you all here tonight. I feel that it is important to mention how the winner of the 2027 competition will play an important role in ensuring the legacy of 2026. 2026 will be a particularly memorable and special year for volunteering. We will of course be celebrating with Maia as the European Volunteering Capital 2026, but it will also be the International Volunteer Year as declared by the United Nations. It will also be the year when we see the European Democracy Shield in place. Volunteers play a key role in boosting societal resilience and citizens' engagement and will be a critical component of the European Democracy Shield.

The EU Civil Society Strategy will also be in place in 2026 and we all have a role to play in ensuring that volunteering benefits from the three key objectives of the strategy - Fostering Engagement; Support and Protection; Sustainable and Transparent Financing. All this will also go hand in hand with the European Commission's Strategy on Preparedness, where Volunteers and civil society organisations will have a key role to play. I am very pleased to share that the European Economic and Social Committee will be working closely with the European Commission to deliver the EU Civil Society Strategy, in particular in delivering the annual summit of the new Civil Society Platform. 2026 will also have seen worldwide efforts around the Global Call to Action for the Future of Volunteering that will be announced at the IVY 2026 Opening Ceremony in New York on December 5th.

I hope that the European Volunteering Capital 2027 will continue the steps to improve the Recognition of volunteering as well as ensuring increased Support and Safeguarding for volunteers including those active in humanitarian situations as well as in defending human rights. As the EESC we stand ready to support the 2027 winner, and Maia in the intervening period in 2026, that in these dangerous and increasingly polarised times we must do even more to help volunteering to be seen and recognised as a clear expression of the values of the European Union that must be at the heart of our democratic societies. As the new EESC President Seamus Bolland (from Ireland) has said "Preparedness is a new place for civil society". But let's dig deeper and see and hear about how volunteering support in County Clare goes beyond the role of volunteer organisations as Service Providers and watch their candidacy video.

Sharon Meaney

Distinguished colleagues and dear friends, it is a genuine honour to accept the title of European Volunteering Capital 2027 on behalf of the people of County Clare, Ireland. My heartfelt thanks go to the Centre for European Volunteering for this recognition and for the passion you bring to nurturing the spirit of volunteering across Europe.

This award shines a light on the everyday work carried out in communities across County Clare, by volunteers and by volunteer-involving organisations. Volunteering is more than service; it is the essence of community and the impact is not just local. The positive ripple

of volunteering spreads far beyond individual actions, shaping a more compassionate, connected society. In rural Ireland the spirit of volunteerism is a powerful force for inclusion and belonging.

The title of European Volunteering Capital 2027 also allows us to celebrate the collaboration and partnerships strengthened through our dedicated and hard-working steering group, proudly represented here today by our delegation in Barcelona. Together, they have committed to a vision of a society where volunteers are recognised, supported and truly valued, helping to build vibrant and sustainable communities; working closely with the Department of Rural, Community, Development and the Gaeltacht, and the local authority, Clare County Council, to ensure that this vision becomes a reality.

As we look toward 2027, we warmly welcome the opportunity to work even more closely with our European partners, to learn from you, to share what volunteering means to us in County Clare and to continue building capacity within our communities while protecting and supporting both formal and informal volunteering.

We are committed to weaving stronger bonds across Europe, living the CEV vision that volunteering strengthens the heart of our shared future, building communities that are cohesive, sustainable and inclusive and contributing to a society that fully recognises and celebrates the impact of volunteering. We look forward to welcoming you to County Clare.

Thank you.