



### The European Volunteer Capital Competition

The EV Capital Competition has experienced five distinct phases. Each new phase being developed after evaluation of the previous implementation period and consideration of the ambitions and possibilities for the future development of the initiative. The competition was launched in 2013 in the framework of the European Year of Citizens and as a follow up to EYV 2011. In this respect, it was important to link to the outcomes of EYV 2011 i.e. the Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe (PAVE) to the citizens who were volunteering at the local level. The EV Capital initiative was welcomed by Former European Commission Vice President Viviane Reding as it »clearly showed the strong link between European Years 2011 and 2013«.

The first call for applicants was announced in the Spring of 2013 with the deadline on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013. Four municipalities applied for the competition **Barcelona** (ES), **Guimarães** (PT), **Laval** (FR) and **Rennes** (FR). The applicants needed to explain and describe the volunteering policy and practice in the municipality. In particular: How they created an enabling and facilitating environment for volunteering; how they ensured quality in volunteering; How they recognise and value volunteers and volunteering.

Barcelona was the eventual winner, as selected by the international jury of volunteering experts. They reported a rich and valuable legacy to their winning year:

- **Visibility and recognition:** Self-esteem of volunteering within the local and regional organisations was strengthened and volunteers were more appreciated by citizens and also the media.
- **Growth and development:** The specific model of associations and volunteer engagement in Barcelona and more widely in Catalonia matured and developed.

»For the FCVS, the EVCapital nomination and the MarketPlace 2014 were a starting point and an important thrust for achieving the political support necessary for drafting the Law on Volunteering adopted in July 2015.«

- **Learning and skills:** Organisations and policymakers began to pay increased attention to volunteer training needs, the accreditation of skills and the representation of skills learnt through volunteering in CVs etc.

- **Communication:** »Nonprofit« is a news portal in English on the third sector and volunteering that is managed by Catalan non-profit organisations. The portal aims to be a meeting point for international non-profit and third-sector leaders, professionals and other interested stakeholders.

Following on the success of the first European Volunteering Capital competition, CEV launched the second edition of the competition seeking the 2015 winner in early 2014. There were three candidates: **Basel (CH)**, **Lisbon (PT)** and **Naples (IT)**. The jury selected Lisbon as the winner to hold the European Volunteering Capital 2015 title. The legacy of 2015 in Lisbon can be summarised as follows:

- **Municipal Volunteer Award:** Award that aims to distinguish the best project / action of volunteering, that contributes, in particular, to the promotion of volunteering in the city of Lisbon.
- **Municipal Volunteer Program:** Promoted by the Department of Social Development, gives people in Lisbon the opportunity to volunteer at the Lisbon City Council, promoting an approach to the various municipal services, to the residents and visitors of the City of Lisbon.
- **Mechanism for recognition of learning:** Multi-stakeholder volunteering collaboration that developed a mechanism for recognition of learning acquired through volunteering.
- **Inter - Municipality meetings:** Organised by the Municipal City Councils of Lisbon, Torres Vedras and Cascais and the Portuguese Confederation of Volunteering (CPV), and consider the main problems and solutions that Local Volunteer Banks in Portugal face when implementing their activities.
- **Small funds for volunteering projects:** In partnership with CSV, Lisbon City Council established the Program + Volunteering within the framework of the Lisbon EV Capital 2015 initiative. The Programme aims to financially support volunteer projects or actions that take place in the city of Lisbon and are implemented by legally constituted social and solidarity economy organisations, headquartered in the city of Lisbon or that implement relevant activity in the city.

**The third and fourth editions of the European Volunteering Capital competitions were launched in early 2015.** It was decided to launch the call for two years at the same time in order that future winning municipalities would have a full year to prepare for their year instead of the single month that had been the case in earlier rounds of the competition. **Candidate municipalities for the 2016 and 2017 competitions were the following:** Belfast (UK 2016, 2017); Bruges (BE 2016, 2017); Cagliari (IT 2016, 2017); Cascais (PT 2016); Edinburgh (UK 2016); London (UK 2016, 2017); Lucca (IT 2016); Perm (RU 2016, 2017); Rome (IT 2016); Sligo (IE 2017); Varese (IT 2016, 2017); Viterbo (IT 2016, 2017).

London was announced at the European Volunteering Capital 2016 and their year as the title holder also resulted in a significant legacy for volunteering in the city:

- **Two annual events were launched in EVC 2016:** »Run to the Good & The Big Recruit« are events that encourage cross sector working between businesses in London and the volunteering sector, and an event that supports the network of 28 volunteer centres across the City to mobilise increased numbers of volunteers.
- **European dimension to our work:** Improved connections with European counterparts and working regularly with CEV and other winning cities eg. collaboration on December 2016 European volunteering conference and the European Volunteer Centre (CEV) »Developing European Volunteering Strategies (DEVS)« Capacity Building conference 6 & 7 April 2017.
- **Leverage, recognition and engagement:** Existing regular events such as the Volunteer Awards and Speed Networking events were used to spread the message about the title and volunteers became aware what they have achieved with his prestigious accolade. Volunteer organisations have been able to use the title to leverage more success for impact, volunteer recruitment and retention, visibility and fundraising and even more business employees have been encouraged to volunteer.
- **Sharing of best practice:** 4 of Team London's most successful volunteering programmes were developed into »Blueprints« that are now freely available for volunteering stakeholders across Europe.

**Sligo** was the European Volunteering Capital 2017. The Opening Ceremony took place on 27 January 2017. Sligo also attracted a number of National Volunteering and volunteering-related events to the town and region in 2017. From the 10 -13 October EV Capital 2017 Sligo held an exhibition in the European Parliament, demonstrating the valuable contribution of volunteers and volunteering activities in Sligo. It was hosted by MEP Marian Harkin and the opening of the exhibition featured presentations from Commissioner Phil Hogan, Irish ambassador Helena Nolan and Sligo Cathoirleacht Seamus Kilgannon. There was also a volunteering seminar on 11 October in Brussels involving a delegation of c. 30 volunteers from different local organisations and policymakers from Sligo, as part of a study visit organised by Marian Harkin MEP. The closing ceremony took place in Sligo in December 2017 in conjunction with the Irish national volunteer awards.

The European Volunteering Capital 2018 was chosen between one of the **two candidate municipalities from Denmark: Aarhus and Ringkøbing-Skjern**. The ceremony awarding the candidacy certificates took place at the Permanent Representation of Denmark to the European Union in Brussels on 14 July 2016. Aarhus was chosen as the European Volunteering Capital 2018 and chose to focus during the year on four thematic tracks to further strengthen volunteering in their municipality:

- **Legacy:** Organisations and movements are a significant part of the foundation that has formed Denmark and the Danish voluntary culture – and thereby Aarhus Volunteer Capital 2018.
- **Diversity:** Regardless of age, ethnicity, background, employment, social conditions etc. everyone must be represented in Aarhus Volunteer Capital 2018.
- **Social Inclusion:** Among volunteers there is a lack of representation from the so-called socially disadvantaged citizens. But despite the challenges that this group is facing they have many resources to offer and these resources will be included in Aarhus Volunteer Capital 2018.
- **Cooperation:** Strive to increase and improve the cooperation between citizens and the municipality to make it easier to volunteer and create content for Aarhus Volunteer Capital 2018.

For the 2019 edition there were three candidate municipalities for the European Volunteering Capital 2019 title: **Augsburg (DE)**, **Cascais (PT)** and **Kosice (SK)**. **The winner, Kosice**, was announced at the closing Ceremony in Sligo in December 2017

For the 7th edition of the competition, launched in early 2018, a new application form and procedure was developed. The form was shorter and questions were grouped around the 5R policy priorities (Recognition, Real Value, Regulatory Framework, Resources, Refugees and Social Inclusion) rather than the EYV 2011 priorities and PAVE recommendations explicitly. It was also agreed to include scope for candidates to explain what they plan to do in a particular policy area if they are not currently addressing that issue. The two candidate municipalities for the European Volunteering Capital 2020 title were **Padova (IT)** and **Stirling (UK)**. The winning municipality (Padova) was announced at the closing ceremony for Aarhus in December 2018, based on the highest total score between all the judges.

The opening ceremony for **Padova, EV Capital 2020**, took place on 7th February with the presence of the President of Italy, Sergio Mattarella and Maria Elisabetta Casellati, President of the Italian Senate. They joined the Mayor of Padova, Sergio Giordani, The President of the Veneto Region, Luca Zaia, the President of CSV Padova, Emanuele Alecci and Stefano Tabo, President of CSVnet, to officially open Padova's year as European Volunteering Capital 2020. Some artists and authoritative voices - including Lella Costa, Luca Bassanese, Gherardo Colombo, Alex Zanardi - also contributed to the event that gathered more than 5,000 volunteers and civil society representatives, imagining the future of the communities they want to build together through volunteering. CEV Director Gabriella Civico also gave a presentation and delegations from Kosice and Berlin both attended.

The 2021 competition proceeded as for the previous year's edition. There were two applicant municipalities accepted as candidates, **Berlin (DE)** and **Strovolos (CY)** and as such, the EVCCC gained two new members. The activities of the EVCCC developed further in 2019

throughout the competition process. An event was organised as part of EU Regions Week for the second year running and applications for exchanges of young volunteers between EVCCC members to be funded by the European Solidarity Corps were made. Delegations from Candidate Municipalities also participated in the study visit in Košice facilitating further exchange of best practices and giving inspiration for new approaches to support volunteering at municipality level.

Berlin was announced as the winning municipality to be EV Capital 2021 at the EVCapital 2019 closing ceremony in Kosice on 9th December. As well as announcing the 2021 winner, handing over the title to Padova EV Capital 2020 and sharing all the memories of the EV Capital 2019 year & plans for the future, the evening was the occasion for the Slovakian Volunteer of the Year awards. Supported by CEV member CARDO, Slovak Aid, the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation, T-Systems Slovakia, US Steel and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic; the ceremony was an important occasion to recognise and reward volunteers not only in Kosice but from across Slovakia.

The European Volunteering Capital Competition primarily exists to »reward municipalities who are doing well to support their volunteers and volunteering and to motivate, inspire and encourage others to do better«. Candidates to be the European Volunteering Capital gain European-wide visibility for excellence in policies and programmes that support volunteers and volunteering. Candidates, and potential winners, are rewarded with recognition for existing practices, and for ambitious, credible and quality-focussed plans for future growth and development in the field of volunteering. Candidate municipalities play a key role in motivating, inspiring and encouraging other municipalities to improve their provision of supportive and facilitatory policies and programmes for quality volunteering. They also join a unique »community of practice« of municipalities (and other levels of local and regional authorities) that have expertise in, and a shared concern for, strengthening, inspiring and celebrating volunteering and solidarity, namely, the European Volunteering Capital Candidates Community (EVCCC). Candidates are able to strengthen volunteering in their area by connecting present and future local volunteering actions, strategies, policies and programmes to the European Context. The application and candidate process enables them to collaborate more closely with volunteers, volunteer-involving and volunteer infrastructure organisations in a common cause to strengthen, inspire and celebrate volunteers in their area.

Preparing an application to be the EV Capital requires a detailed analysis and assessment (»Audit«) of volunteer provision at the local level. This helps local authorities and their civil society and corporate partners to identify strengths and weaknesses of the approaches taken and search for possible alternative and innovative approaches in order to secure even greater impact. In this way, it also serves as a catalyst for improvements. The process enables stakeholders from different fields and sectors to come together and, using European standards as guidelines, be inspired by other practices and further develop local volunteering policy and practice frameworks and strategies. As an EV Capital candidate municipality,

and member of the EVCCC, it's possible to share best practice that will serve as inspiration for others across Europe and as such contribute greatly to the development of volunteering and solidarity in Europe.

If selected as the European Volunteering Capital municipalities have the opportunity, under the EV Capital framework, to organise different actions that will contribute to the growth and development of quality volunteering opportunities available and ensure greater impact of the volunteers on their communities. This will include a prestigious opening and closing ceremonies and, during the year as EV Capital, be able to take the lead on an application for an event in EURegionsWeek together with other members of the *»European Volunteering Capital Candidates Community«* (EVCCC). Through these activities, and maintaining close contact with the CEV secretariat providing timely and suitable information for online and other media, candidates and winners alike will be able to strengthen, inspire and celebrate volunteering locally and across Europe, ensuring a suitable legacy of the title and participation in the competition.

Other opportunities from participation in the competition relate to: participating in applying for funds for hosting and sending European Solidarity Corps Volunteers; Organising a study visit for interested stakeholders in order to gain a greater appreciation and understanding of the local volunteering policies and programmes and facilitate a shared learning experience for all participants; Liaising with CEV secretariat to consider possible hosting of a CEV event during the title year or in the following year as part of the legacy actions; Contribute to, and participate in, CEV events and other activities and opportunities that become available throughout the year; Participate in, and organise, other initiatives in the framework of the *»European Volunteering Capital Candidates Community«* (EVCCC), according to needs and interests.

The 2020 (Padova), 2021 (Berlin) and the 2022 European Volunteering Capitals will have the opportunity, under the EV Capital framework, to organise different actions that will contribute to the growth and development of quality volunteering opportunities available in their municipality and ensure even greater impact of the volunteers on their communities!

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