



European Volunteer Centre (CEV) Symposium

Torre da Aguilha, 19th of October 2012

Representative of his Excellency Minister of Solidarity and Social Security

Excellency President of Cascais Municipality, Dr. Carlos Careers

Excellency President of the European Volunteer Centre, Eva Hambach

Dear affiliated representatives of CEV organizations

Dear participants

It is with great joy that the Portuguese Confederation of Volunteers (CPV) welcomes the Assembly and the Autumn Symposium of CEV. CEV trusted in our young confederation to help in the organization of such important events. By doing so, CEV contributed to the development of our institutional maturity. We started just 6 years ago as an initiative of several national volunteer institutions.

CPV aims to represent Portuguese volunteering, to preserve its identity, to contribute to its updating and to bring together the efforts of many volunteer organizations in the country.

The existence of the CPV helps us to diminish one of the dangers that always hover in the life of institutions: the temptation of institutions to close on themselves and, by this, not fulfilling such noble mission of citizenship. It also avoids individualism and competitive attitudes between institutions. On the other hand, it facilitates the establishment and enhancement of inter-institutional meeting spaces for reflection, dialogue and negotiation. CPV also starts up networks linked to common places and to common projects fostering the development of the associative and social fabric.

In Portugal, volunteer work is a part of the non-profit third sector but it's not an exclusive of this sector. It's not confined to the third sector because it also happens in the public and private sectors: it happens in prisons, in the support to the elderly or in health facilities.



The third sector is not its exclusive holder as volunteer work happens in close cooperation with paid work. Thus, the CPV does not represent, in any way, the third sector organizations in its multiple dimensions. It only represents the perspective of volunteering that integrates these organizations that, in general, promote it. On the other hand, CPV collaborates closely with the National Council for the Promotion of Volunteering, which is the dialogue space for the government's representatives, the Autonomous Regions and Local Authorities.

In line with the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, this symposium will give an interesting contribution to the achievement of the European Year objectives.

Several competent experts were invited to animate the sessions and they offer a guarantee of success to this symposium. I would like to thank to all who, with his/her knowledge and experience, will intervene in the different panels. I wish not to replace them, but allow me to leave some ideas: the integration of training and empowerment activities in leisure culture; recreational activities and training with good receptibility in new training spaces; performance of voluntary activities that benefit the organizations promoting volunteering, other volunteers and seniors volunteers; access to new technologies that enable a better access to knowledge and to multiple services. The purpose of these suggestions is to avoid giving elderly a passive role, allowing them to play an active role in society claiming their rights and duties.

We welcome this Symposium at a stage of our history marked by severe difficulties and uncertainties of an economic and social nature. It is important that this Symposium occurs because in such circumstances it is expected that the volunteer enhances his/her commitment to contribute to needs analysis and the search for solutions.

Volunteering cannot solve the country's problems but can actively participate in the solution process, anticipating problems and



enhancing solutions in many cases. I take this opportunity to share three key challenges for the coming years: the care of the poor and the excluded people, the search for solutions to the unemployment problems and advocacy towards political power. I award high importance to social care due to poverty and exclusion situations, as well as to the risk of decline of public social protection scheme.

For a nationwide coverage of social support network, we consider that volunteering institutions are needed but also social proximity volunteering groups. There is in Portugal a secular tradition in this type of volunteering, more or less formal, largely widespread and it is important to upkeep and to develop.

The second challenge is about the fight against unemployment. As this is a major social and economic issue, it is justified to assign it the highest priority as a means to help to solve social problems. The limitations imposed on the state and the market reinforce this priority, that also should be dealt with within the social economy framework.

The third challenge regards the intervention towards political power. The daily and direct contact of volunteers with social problems and also the limitations that the state faces demands a systematic approach to the implementation of measures to prevent and mitigate the most serious situations. This intervention should be revised towards a methodology of proposal, influence and partnership.

To address these challenges, some conditions are necessary. I highlight only three: the creation of voluntary groups in the largest possible number of locations; the qualification of volunteers, and a volunteer's framework. The framework aims, in particular, to support and to facilitate the relationship with the political powers and other entities, to effectively recognize volunteering, and also to better understand social problems and contribute to its solutions.

CPV will do everything in its power to ensure that volunteers and their organizations combine their efforts in fulfilling their mission, to



intensify common qualification and to expand volunteering across the country and in all areas of activity. —

Once again our thanks to all those who have prepared this meeting and that will be mentioned in proper time. Personally, as president of CPV, I want to express my gratitude to our colleague João Teixeira who due to his tireless efforts allowed this CEV event to become a reality in Portugal.

Finally, I ask the representative of the Minister of Solidarity and Social Security to communicate our best wishes for quick recovery as well as CPV's desire to cooperate with the Portuguese government in order that effective conditions are created for volunteering representative organizations to carry out their mission and to increase their expression allowing citizens to find in volunteering a unique way to exercise their citizenship and thus consolidate the democratic state that we are and that we want Portugal to continue to be.

Eugénio Fonseca
(Presidente da Confederação Portuguesa de Voluntariado)