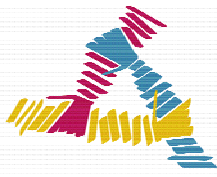




European Year of Volunteering 2011



# Volonteuropa Reviews: The Value of Volunteering

**Tamara Flanagan and Piotr Sadowski**

**London, 18 February 2011**





## Foreword

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“The value of volunteering encompasses the provision of services and advocacy, the desire to contribute to the common good and to help shape European society.”

Volonteurope<sup>1</sup> first made this statement in 1981, when it was established in the Netherlands. This statement holds as true today, 30 years later, as it did in 1981.

The current year 2011 is the European Year of Volunteering (EYV 2011), realised through efforts of the EYV 2011 Alliance<sup>2</sup>, of which Volonteurope was one of the original founding members.

With EYV 2011 firmly underway, Volonteurope is contributing to the calls from Europe’s civil society to national and EU institutions to take volunteering and social action seriously and recognise its value as a strategic response in economic and social terms, and as a driver of civic engagement.

Throughout the three decades of its existence, Volonteurope has been campaigning for the recognition of the contribution of voluntary action to promoting Active Citizenship, social cohesion, combating poverty and social exclusion. Over the years, we have also shown that volunteering and social action can help to bring people back into their communities and sometimes help them to acquire jobs, thanks to new skills and confidence gained as a result of volunteering.

By bringing communities together, volunteering proves to be one of the most visible expressions of solidarity, a value upon which the EU has been built. It leads to positive changes in people’s lives, increasing a person’s sense of pride and belonging, and impacting positively on their health and well-being. While it also makes a significant economic contribution, its social value can be even greater: where volunteering activities are present, there is a higher percentage of growth. Such activities, replicated throughout the EU, have the capacity to generate social capital, innovative solutions and respond to newly-emerging policy needs.

There are currently more than 100 million Europeans engaged in voluntary effort and volunteer-involving civil society organisations (CSOs) in Europe are at the forefront of creating opportunities for those Active Citizens. During EYV 2011, CSOs have a unique opportunity to showcase the immense value of volunteering and mobilise new volunteers.

At the same time, faced with the current economic climate, CSOs need to warn about the problem of institutionalising volunteering as a ‘stopgap’ remedy to the challenges associated with financial cutbacks. Rather, CSOs across Europe can use EYV 2011 to call on national and EU institutions to take volunteering seriously and recognise it as one of key ingredients in strategies for growth, stability and inclusion. To achieve the ambitious

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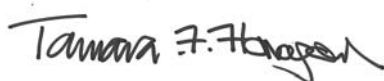
<sup>1</sup> Volonteurope is an international network of hundreds of volunteer-involving agencies. It works with the non-profit, public and private sectors, and institutions, on promoting volunteering and Active Citizenship in Europe and beyond; [www.volonteurope.org](http://www.volonteurope.org)

<sup>2</sup> EYV 2011 Alliance is an informal grouping of currently 35 European networks that work in the field of volunteering; [www.eyv2011.eu](http://www.eyv2011.eu)

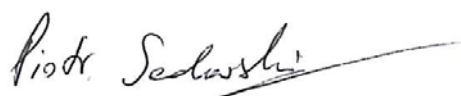
goals of a sustainable social market, smart, inclusive and green EU economy, as set out in the EU 2020 strategy, policy-makers have to recognise the value of volunteering and its capacity to increase the performance of the European economy, thereby contributing to delivering the EU 2020 objectives.

Institutions such as the European Commission already recognise that volunteering is beneficial to the individual volunteer, to communities and the society as a whole. It is a means for individuals and associations to address social, humanitarian, developmental or environmental needs and concerns. And, very importantly, volunteering does not replace professional, paid employment opportunities.<sup>3</sup> EYV 2011 presents an opportunity for volunteer-involving CSOs to work with EU institutions to ensure the awareness about these different traits of volunteering is raised across all Member States. It is now time for volunteering and social action to become recognised as driving forces that put European values into practice, by acknowledging, in policies, that they deliver outcomes indispensable for individual citizens, as well as the wider society.

This Review looks at the current debate on the value of volunteering in Europe and identifies key areas where volunteering brings positive changes to individuals, communities and economies. It is a 'work-in-progress': it is currently being used as the starting point for discussions with social actors, practitioners, volunteers and policy-makers during a series of Seminars on the Value of Volunteering, in Prague (22 February 2011) and London (3 March 2011). On the basis of the outcomes of these consultations, a 'Conclusions and Recommendations' section will be added and the final document will be submitted to the EYV 2011 Alliance 'Value of Volunteering' Working Group, to contribute to the writing of the Alliance's 'European Policy Agenda on Volunteering'. The 'Agenda' will be then presented to EU institutions as an outcome of the work of the Alliance and its contributions to achieving a lasting legacy of the Year.



**Tamara Flanagan**  
*Volonteurope Board Member*



**Piotr Sadowski**  
*Volonteurope General Secretary*

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<sup>3</sup> European Commission (2009), *Commission Staff Working Document European Year of Volunteering 2011* [COM(2009)254], <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SEC:2009:0725:FIN:EN:PDF>

## Volunteering promoting economic growth through generating social capital

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While the economic value of volunteering is immense, the social value of volunteer effort can be even greater. Across the whole of Europe volunteers are, on a daily basis, delivering change and tackling many problems that face today's society. For many people, particularly those coming from disadvantaged groups, volunteering can develop confidence and motivation to do something positive with their lives – including acquiring new skills, re-engaging with their community and often gaining employment.

In their study entitled 'Social Capital and Economic Growth'<sup>4</sup>, building on the work of Robert Putnam, Sjoerd Beugelsdijk and Ton van Schaik from Tilburg University found that social capital in terms of active group membership is positively related to economic growth in Europe. Where volunteering activities are present, there is a higher percentage of growth: such activities, replicated throughout the EU, generate social capital. High levels of social capital lead to the creation of stable and flourishing environments and have a direct positive relationship to levels of growth in European regions<sup>5</sup>. The Committee of the Regions<sup>6</sup> also recognises the benefits of social capital generated through volunteering. It fully accepts that social capital can also be seen as mutually reinforcing and producing beneficial effects on the economic growth, as well as in other crucial areas such as social control, inclusion, health, governance, institutions, democratic empowerment<sup>7</sup>.

Building on the contributions of its members, SOLIDAR<sup>8</sup>, in its 'Policy Paper: Volunteering and the European Year of Volunteering 2011', reflects on the value of volunteering in promoting social cohesion and creating social capital. It states that volunteering plays a crucial role in the promotion of integration and in the fight against social exclusion<sup>9</sup>. On the one hand, volunteers are the ones through which those at risk of social exclusion are engaged, and on the other hand, volunteering may provide people at the margin of the labour market and society such as poor, unemployed, elderly, migrants or people with disabilities, with ways to make a contribution to their society and their local neighbourhoods<sup>10</sup>.

In her paper 'Volunteering and Active Citizenship', Jill Healey, Head of National Volunteering and LINKS at VSO<sup>11</sup>, considers some of the issues around the concept of

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<sup>4</sup> Beugelsdijk and van Schaik, Tilburg University (2003), *Social Capital and Regional Economic Growth*, <http://www.sre.wu-wien.ac.at/ersa/ersaconfs/ersa03/cdrom/papers/518.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

<sup>6</sup> Committee of the Regions, *Opinion on 'The contribution of volunteering to economic and social cohesion*, Official Journal of the European Union, 2008/C 105/03  
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:105:0011:0015:EN:PDF>

<sup>7</sup> OECD (2001), *The Well-Being of Nations; the Role of Human and Social Capital, Executive Summary*, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/48/22/1870573.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> SOLIDAR is a European network of NGOs working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide, with 52 member organisations based in 25 countries; [www.solidar.org](http://www.solidar.org)

<sup>9</sup> EYV 2011 Alliance (2009), *The European Year of Volunteering Discussion Paper*, [www.cev.be/data/File/Alliance\\_discussion\\_paper\\_EYV\\_2011.pdf](http://www.cev.be/data/File/Alliance_discussion_paper_EYV_2011.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Eurodiaconia (2010), *Policy Paper on Volunteering*, [http://www.eurodiaconia.org/images/stories/Our\\_work/Volunteering\\_Policy\\_Paper.pdf](http://www.eurodiaconia.org/images/stories/Our_work/Volunteering_Policy_Paper.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> VSO is the world's leading independent international development organisation that works through volunteers to fight poverty and social exclusion; [www.vso.org.uk](http://www.vso.org.uk)

volunteering as 'active citizenship' and how citizen engagement can contribute to the changes that agencies are trying to make. Even though the paper is written from an international development perspective, the author recognises that the challenges and issues are not restricted to this context only. Healey looks at volunteering and active citizenship as strengthening individuals and communities to participate – e.g. in their communities, in wider society, in international development. It is about promoting the voice of people, giving people greater control over the actions that affect their communities and at the same time enhancing responsiveness of those in decision-making and policy-making positions to ensure that their decisions and actions address issues of inequality, exclusion and poverty.

Healey recognises the added value of volunteering in that it brings the focus back to the people on the ground as the 'agents of change', through a process that prioritises reciprocity and mutuality of learning. In the international development context, volunteers coming in 'from the outside' can be more readily accepted in communities than paid technical experts because they are seen to really care about the situation, they're not merely there to 'do a job', but are giving something to the community and approach their work from a position of wanting to create social change.

This social change can be also interpreted as a creation of social capital. Healey shows that authors such as Randel point out that governments look favourably on the components of social capital, because they are seen to strengthen communities, which governments see as resulting in less crime, stronger mutual support (therefore less reliance on welfare and public service provision) and greater security and community relations. Furthermore, Healey quotes Randel to say that the 'voluntary ethic' (including components such as trust, civility and reciprocity) is central to the production of social capital and international volunteering enables 'global social capital' to be built, because the volunteering experience is about building trust and working reciprocally in a way that goes beyond the normal community sphere. As much as in the international development context, Volonteurope also recognises the same values of social capital generated through volunteering taking place across the communities in Europe.

## Case study: Anne, the Netherlands

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Every year, Dutch charity Humanitas ([www.humanitas.nl](http://www.humanitas.nl)) mobilises 10,000 volunteers, - trained by the Humanitas Academy and supported by the organisation, to offer temporary help to those who are elderly, homeless, handicapped, seeking asylum or excluded from the society through other problems, such as indebtedness. Behind these activities lies a belief that people who learn to control their own lives are happier and have more self-esteem. Humanitas does not try to solve people's problems for them, as it creates dependency. Rather, it works with them, encouraging them to learn to help themselves.

Forty-five year old Anne, a divorced mother of twin boys, had debts of €22,500. She worked 30 hours a week and her salary was marginally too high for her to qualify for assistance – for example, exemption from taxation and help with membership fees for sports clubs. At the boys' school a social worker suggested they receive counselling, but Anne couldn't afford it. Nor could the boys participate in activities in and out of school. However, she was able to buy them new bikes and a computer on credit, although the interest was worryingly high. She wanted to give the boys a solid base for a good future – but how? She simply didn't know what to do next.

In the Netherlands, local government has a duty to assist people experiencing financial difficulty, with money and legal measures available for restructuring and clearing debts. However, Anne was reluctant to go to the Town Hall and ask for help. A Humanitas volunteer helped Anne to work through the application form and select documents to prove her status, and discussed with her possible questions she could expect at the Town Hall. After two sessions Anne had enough confidence to complete the application form herself.

Anne had accumulated a pile of letters – some opened and some not. Anne and the volunteer opened the envelopes and discussed what could be thrown away to reduce the pile. Anne considered the merit in filing letters at suitable intervals and the volunteer agreed to help her set a routine for as long as was needed. The volunteer then helped Anne to take an overview of expenses – detailing her outgoings and identifying the more and less expensive months – with a view to better grasping the problem. This has helped Anne to a position where she can start restructuring her debt. While she is restructuring her debt, Anne will have to live on a small income. The volunteer is helping Anne to develop relevant skills – for example, learning to say 'no' to 'offers you can't refuse'.

## Volunteering as a dynamic contribution to economies

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Research also shows that volunteer effort makes a direct economic contribution. The Centre for Civil Society Studies (CCSS) at Johns Hopkins University (JHU) has been researching the economic contributions of volunteering, across the world, for a number of years.

When the Centre's 'Comparative Non-profit Sector Project' revealed that not-for-profit institutions constitute a much larger source of economic contributions than previously suggested, the United Nations, with the help of the JHU CCSS, subsequently published, in December 2003, a 'Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts' which provides a comprehensive picture of the economic contributions of the voluntary sector. According to the JHU CCSS report, 'Measuring Civil Society and Volunteering: Initial Findings from Implementation of the UN Handbook on Non-profit Institutions'<sup>12</sup>, released on 25 September 2007, civil society sector contributes about as much to gross domestic product in a wide range of countries as do the construction and finance industries and twice as much as the utilities industry. The report shows that the economic contribution of the third sector accounts for, on average, 5-7% of the GDP. Compare this with the utilities industry at 2.3% of the GDP, construction at 5.1% and finance at 5.6%.

The JHU has been working in partnership with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and a Technical Experts Group (TEG) to develop the first-ever set of international guidelines for generating regular and reliable statistics on volunteering which will be comparable across countries and regions. In December 2008 the 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians approved a first draft of the ILO 'Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work'<sup>13</sup>, authorising additional testing, drafting and eventual publication of the 'Manual.

After additional testing and revision, the revised draft of the 'Manual' was approved by the TEG in October 2010. The TEG's comments were incorporated and final draft submitted to the ILO for approval. Publication is expected in early 2011. We call on the European Institutions to work closely with the ILO and liaise with the JHU CCSS, as well as volunteer-involving agencies in the Union, to ensure that volunteer effort is formally measured in terms of its contributions to economic growth in the EU, as part of the EU 2020 Strategy.

While recognising the economic contribution of volunteering, it is also important to stress that volunteering cannot be treated as job substitution. Eurodiaconia makes a strong remark on this, stating that we must recognise the risk that volunteers can be abused for cheap labour and replace paid staff. Volunteering should not be used as a form of job substitution to help run services cheaply. Funding and commissioning authorities must ensure the resources to avoid this. Furthermore, good management of volunteers requires giving quality training, professional supervision and guidance which cost time

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<sup>12</sup> Johns Hopkins University (September 2007), *Measuring Civil Society and Volunteering*, <http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/pdfs/ILO/MCS.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> ILO (2010), *Manual Quick Facts*, [http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/pdfs/ILO/ILO\\_Manual\\_QuickFacts\\_1.24.2010.pdf](http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/pdfs/ILO/ILO_Manual_QuickFacts_1.24.2010.pdf)



and resources and which should be distinguished between that of paid staff. Eurodiaconia also calls on managers to ensure a balance of paid staff and volunteers.<sup>14</sup>



"WE WON'T EXACTLY BE FIRING YOU, BRUBAKER. HOWEVER WE ARE SWITCHING TO AN ALL-VOLUNTEER WORK FORCE."

In June 2010, Ecorys<sup>15</sup> in partnership with CSV<sup>16</sup>, in the UK, were commissioned by the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA) to examine in financial terms the extent of volunteering activity which takes place either on, or because of, inland waterways. On 2 February 2011 Ecorys published the Final report to AINA, entitled 'Quantifying the Extent and Value of Volunteering and Inland Waterways'.

This report delivers very interesting findings, particularly important in the light of the debate on the value of volunteering carried out in Europe. Based on the estimates of the proportion of volunteering activity that is spent on unskilled, skilled or professionally skilled work, an equivalent financial value for volunteering time spent on or because of waterways can be generated using Heritage Lottery multipliers<sup>17</sup>. The report found that there are just over 11,000 volunteer days per month generated through involvement with inland waterways. The majority of these (around 70%) are spent on unskilled work; around 4% of days are spent undertaking professionally skilled work; and 26% on skilled

<sup>14</sup> Eurodiaconia (2010), *Policy Paper on Volunteering*,

[http://www.eurodiaconia.org/images/stories/Our\\_work/Volunteering\\_Policy\\_Paper.pdf](http://www.eurodiaconia.org/images/stories/Our_work/Volunteering_Policy_Paper.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Ecorys UK is part of ECORYS Group, an international provider of research, consulting and management services focused on the development, delivery and evaluation of public policy; [www.uk.ecorys.com](http://www.uk.ecorys.com)

<sup>16</sup> CSV is the UK's largest volunteering and training charity and its vision is of a society where everyone can participate to build healthy, enterprising, inclusive communities; [www.csv.org.uk](http://www.csv.org.uk)

<sup>17</sup> Heritage Lottery Fund in the UK recognises volunteer time as a non-cash contribution to the costs of projects. This applies to all of the Lottery's grant programmes and means that community and voluntary groups can, for example, apply to the Heritage grant programme for an award of up to £50,000 without having to make a contribution in cash. The Heritage Lottery has set three levels for costing volunteer time: unskilled tasks at up to £50 per day; skilled tasks at up to £150 per day; professional tasks at up to £350.

[http://www.hlf.org.uk/howtoapply/furtherresources/documents/thinking\\_about\\_volunteering.pdf](http://www.hlf.org.uk/howtoapply/furtherresources/documents/thinking_about_volunteering.pdf)

work. This generates an equivalent value of around £1 million of volunteer time undertaken on Britain's inland waterways each month. On an annual basis, this generates an estimate of around £10 million.

When discussing the economic value of volunteering it is also important to reflect on the value of contributions-in-kind committed to projects and initiatives. With the launch of EYV 2011 the EU acknowledges the economic contribution of civil society to the European integration process. In their 'Paper on economic value of volunteering and contribution-in-kind', members of the Civil Society Working Group on the Reform of European Funding Rules<sup>18</sup> point out that such acknowledgment is also made in the EU 2020 Strategy, where the 'Innovation Union' flagship initiative directly recognises and outlines the role of civil society organisations in tackling societal challenges. The authors show that such a contribution, however, is not properly acknowledged in European funding. They state that the current European financial regulation recognises the possibility for authorised officials to recognise contribution-in-kind (e.g. volunteers' time, pro-bono professionals' time or contributions-in-kind) as co-financing in funding applications. Sadly, this does not happen in practice because officials do not know how to measure the value of such contributions-in-kind and are risk averse so unlikely to sanction such co-finance.

The 'Paper' asks that EYV 2011 is used as an opportunity to change the regulation, making it mandatory for authorised officials to recognise contribution-in-kind as co-financing in applications. This recognition is also part of the discussions taking place within the 'Value of Volunteering' Working Group of the EYV 2011 Alliance, co-chaired by Tamara Flanagan and Agnes Uherezky (AVSO). The 'Paper' shows that the possibility to recognise contribution-in-kind as co-financing is already being used: the authors present case studies at European and national level from Wales, Germany, France, Italy and Denmark.

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<sup>18</sup> Structured Dialogue, Europe for Citizens, Directorate-General for Communication, European Commission

## Case study: Rieneck Castle, Germany

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Rieneck Castle is a 12<sup>th</sup> century castle near Würzburg in Bavaria. In 1959 the castle was rented by the Christian Scouts and bought by them in 1967. Today, the Scout and Guide Castle Rieneck belongs to the Association of Christian Scouts and Guides – it is their international training and meeting centre. It also works closely with the network of other European Scout and Guides centres.

In 2003 the castle was renovated thanks to the European Scouts Voluntary Programme, which engages Scouts engaged in voluntary service. Thanks to a German law related to historic monuments, the Scouts were able to access government aid to purchase the materials needed for the renovation.

The amount of aid was calculated as a match-funding amount established on the basis of the volunteer work. The work was counted at two rates, €13.00 for unskilled labour and €15.50 for specialist labour.



## Case study: Volunteer time as co-financing, Italy

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In recognition of the European Year of Volunteering the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, in charge of volunteering policy at national level and 2011 AEV National Coordinating Body, have recently allowed civil society organisations to use volunteer time as co funding up to 10% to match government grant in some specific programmes. This is the case of the yearly Call for innovative projects of the local voluntary organisations by the National Observatory for Volunteering, governed by the Italian Framework Law on Volunteering 266/1991.

## Case study: Volunteer time as co-financing, Wales

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Using volunteer time facilitates the involvement of civil society, transforming social action into public service solutions. In Wales, in particular a big effort has been made to ensure third sector organisations are able to provide services and the inclusion of volunteer time as match funding in Welsh national rules is highly significant in allowing smaller organisations close to vulnerable groups to be involved.

The Welsh project developed by the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) is a large, strategic project aimed at the third sector called the 'Engagement Gateway', which is partly matched by a pot of match-funding established by the Welsh Assembly Government and partly matched using in kind contributions (including volunteer time) from the organisations themselves.

It provides three tiers of funding:

- £0- £25,000 which is 100% pre-matched
- £25,000- £75,000 which is approximately 70% pre-matched
- £75,000 – £150,000 which is 59% pre-matched

The project has been designed to link those organisations providing support and working with individuals furthest from the labour market and enable them to provide routes into either mainstream activity or activities nearer the mainstream. The intention is to deliver a coherent approach to providing a labour market pre-engagement strategy and an open and transparent, but managed, process through which a wide range of organisations will be able to make a valid contribution to the Structural Funds programmes.

**The 'Active in Your Community' project by CSV Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme was successful in becoming an Approved Supplier for WCVA and responded successfully in 2010 to a contract to recruit over 100 older volunteers to get active in their community, gain qualifications and improve their employability. The project undertook to provide services in Bridgend and Rhondda Cynon Taf (former mining areas of high unemployment) It proposed to achieve 90% positive outputs including community engagement and 20% into further education and training. The cost of the project –some £100,897 over 18 months is met through £50,137 European funding and match funding of £50,760 from RSVP including £22,402 volunteer match based on 2 types of volunteer (project coordinator and 2 project administrators) as valued by the Welsh European Funding Office.**

## Volunteering as a pathway to integration and employment

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Volunteering helps to combat environmental problems, as well as poverty and social and labour market exclusion, often by equipping the unemployed (often amongst disadvantaged and marginalised groups) with new skills that help them secure jobs.

A debate undertaken by policy-makers, NGOs, volunteers and academics during the 'Value of Volunteering' Conference in London on 2 November 2009<sup>19</sup>, showed that, with an increase in unemployment and the financial crisis, there has been a renewed policy emphasis in the EU on volunteering as a route to employment. The European Commission's original EU 2020 Strategy Consultation argued that having a job is probably the best safeguard against poverty and exclusion. Volonteurope, in its January 2010 response to this consultation, stated that while it agrees, it also points out that volunteering in itself ought to be recognised as an important outcome and mechanism for integration for many individuals who would otherwise not re-engage themselves in the life of their communities and remain socially excluded.

Oxfam, in its Briefing Paper 'Something for Nothing: Challenging negative attitudes to people living in poverty'<sup>20</sup>, reflects that, given the economic and social value of [volunteer work] to local communities – and the value of volunteering in terms of building an individual's skills and experiences – it seems obvious that Jobcentres and welfare-to-work policies should encourage and enable volunteering, and view it as a step towards paid employment. The 'Paper' shows that, in reality, there are many problems with the way that benefits and volunteering interact – and don't – and people on benefits can effectively end up being punished rather than rewarded for their contribution.

A report<sup>21</sup> prepared by the Economic and Social Research Council in November 2009 showed that volunteering can not only help people into jobs, but also offers them a possibility to change their lives for the better. It called for a more effective use of the European Social fund (ESF) to incentivise providers to offer voluntary activity as a pathway to integration, especially for groups of people furthest from the labour market. Volonteurope once again reflects that if the EU is to achieve the ambitious objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy, which involves creating a healthier workforce that empowers people in an inclusive society, then volunteering should be recognised as a valuable ingredient in all employment and social policies to be adopted by European institutions in the coming years. Any revisions of the ESF programme – both at EU and Member State level, including the mandatory recognition of volunteer time as eligible match-funding – should further strengthen the recognition of volunteering as a positive outcome. For the funds to reach those who are the most disadvantaged in the labour market, a more sophisticated targeting of European funding outputs is needed – such as voluntary activity.

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<sup>19</sup> The event was organised through a partnership between Volonteurope, CSV, Third Sector European Network and the Economic and Social Research Council.

<sup>20</sup> Oxfam (May 2010), *Something for Nothing: Challenging negative attitudes to people living in poverty*, [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/right\\_heard/downloads/bp\\_something\\_for\\_nothing\\_200510.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/right_heard/downloads/bp_something_for_nothing_200510.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> ESRC (November 2009), *The Value of Volunteering* [http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/The%20Value%20of%20Volunteering%20Publication\\_tcm6-34855.pdf](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/The%20Value%20of%20Volunteering%20Publication_tcm6-34855.pdf)

Volunteering is an expression of universal values and contributes to promoting acceptance, non-violence, mutual respect, peace building and it is crucial in addressing the Millennium Development Goals<sup>22</sup>. The European Volunteer Centre, CEV<sup>23</sup>, explains that volunteers provide assistance to refugees, engage in development policies and they are involved in programmes fostering migrants' integration through activities such as legal counselling, labour orientation, and humanitarian assistance<sup>24</sup>. One of Volonteurope's Greek members, PRAKSIS<sup>25</sup>, can provide a wealth of evidence of precisely that immense value that volunteers deliver in the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers in European communities. Amongst many of its services, PRAKSIS runs polyclinics, staffed by volunteers (doctors, nurses, social scientists, psychologists, career advisors and other specialists) for new migrant arrivals who are ineligible for Greek government support. The polyclinics are also open to all other socially-excluded groups, including the poor, homeless and the uninsured, street children, Roma, victims of trafficking and ex-prisoners.

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<sup>22</sup> UN Millennium Development Goals, <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>

<sup>23</sup> CEV is a European network of over 88 national, regional and local volunteer centres and volunteer support agencies across Europe, that together work to support and promote voluntary activity; [www.cev.be](http://www.cev.be)

<sup>24</sup> CEV (2006), *INVOLVE, Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration – final project report*, <http://www.cev.be/data/File/INVOLVEreportEN.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> PRAKSIS is an independent Greek NGO focusing primarily on the implementation of humanitarian and medical action programmes with the involvement of volunteers. It offers services to any socially-excluded group of people who do not have access to health services, social and/or legal support; [www.praksis.gr](http://www.praksis.gr)

## Case study: Fred, UK

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The CSV Media Clubhouse in Ipswich delivers the Eco Routes project<sup>26</sup>. It is funded by the Ecominds grant programme, managed by Mind as an award partner of the Big Lottery Fund in England. Mind is the leading mental health charity in England and Wales. The Clubhouse works in partnership with Greenways countryside project and Family Action to provide environmental volunteer opportunities for mental health service users with the support of unemployed young people to improve well-being.

Fred joined the Eco Routes project at the end of June 2010. *Starting in April 2000 I suffered from eight years of severe physical health problems and mental health problems, says Fred. This has also left me with reduced physical stamina and fatigue.*

Fred eventually saw an advisor at Family Action who referred him to the project. *I used to work on a farm, so enjoy the outdoors and I also have always had an interest in nature and the environment, explains Fred. After joining the programme, Fred became an active driving force behind the smooth operational delivery of the Eco Routes project. In the early stages of the project Fred was always seen by staff as a responsible participant. In particular, his knowledge and understanding of farming certainly set him in good stead, supporting all aspects of the programme. Although a service user in the first instance, Fred soon became someone that staff would ask for assistance from, often within a volunteering capacity.*

When a vacancy arose within Family Action to develop the support provided on-site, Fred was an obvious candidate for the role. Although slightly nervous at first, Fred soon settled into the supportive role. *It has made me realise that there are other suitable employment roles for me, as going back to full-time farm work is not realistic, due to the long hours involved and the stress involved, reflects Fred. Through participating in the project I gained part-time employment working on the project. This has given me a lot more confidence in myself.*



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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.mediaclubhouse.org.uk/list-all-current-projects/28-eco-routes>

## Volunteering improving health and social care

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Amongst many of its benefits, volunteering helps to fight obesity and improves health and fitness, particularly amongst young people, as evidenced by a research in the UK<sup>27</sup> involving hundreds of volunteers. It also highlights that volunteering helps people cut down on alcohol consumption and smoking. Civic engagement reduces blood pressure, cholesterol level and lengthens volunteers' lives<sup>28</sup>. In supporting family doctors, volunteers reduce the number of prescriptions by 30% and hospital appointments by 35%<sup>29</sup>.

Drawing on the activity of its members, SOLIDAR acknowledges that volunteers play a crucial role in the promotion of integration and in the fight against social exclusion by being active, for instance, in the health and care sector. It confirms the recognition that the future of Social Services of General Interest, whether in areas such as education, culture or health, will depend on the active role played by voluntary and charity organisations<sup>30</sup>. In practice, volunteers may assist prisoners and drug users; help people living with HIV/AIDS through specialised counselling, telephone support lines and care; coach activities, organise holidays for people with disabilities or people affected by particular diseases, empowering and encouraging them to take control of their lives again; visit socially-isolated people<sup>31</sup>. At the same time, SOLIDAR clearly states that, in this context, volunteering is not a form of job substitution and should not be abused.

Volunteering also plays an important role in improving the quality of health and social care. Oxfam reflects on the actual value of volunteering experience giving an example of homelessness services<sup>32</sup>. It points out that the rise of 'user involvement' means that homeless people are increasingly involved in volunteering. It quotes Athol Halle, Chief Executive of Groundswell<sup>33</sup>, who says that 'volunteers who have experienced homelessness know how the system doesn't work, and how it leaves a person vulnerable and marginalised. Enabling people who have been homeless to volunteer with a homelessness project gives that person a chance to turn around a negative experience. But it also enables the service to improve, because [...] knowing how the system fails makes it possible to work out how the system needs to change'.

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<sup>27</sup> ICM Research commissioned by CSV Make a Difference Day and Barclays; Select Committee on Health – Third Report, 10 May 2004, [www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200304/cmselect/cmhealth/23/2302.htm](http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200304/cmselect/cmhealth/23/2302.htm)

<sup>28</sup> University of Michigan Research: James S. House, Karl R. Landis and Debra Umberson, *Social Relationships and Health*, Science, Reprint Series, Volume 241 (1988): pp. 540-545

<sup>29</sup> Pietroni P et al., (1991), *The Impact of a Volunteer Community Care Project in a Primary Health Care Setting*, Journal of Social Work Practice, 5(1), pp. 83-90

<sup>30</sup> European Commission (2003), *Green Paper on Services of General Interest* [COM(2003) 270 Final] [http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2003/com2003\\_0270en01.pdf](http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2003/com2003_0270en01.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> EYV 2011 Alliance (2009), *The European Year of Volunteering Discussion Paper*, [www.cev.be/data/File/Alliance\\_discussion\\_paper\\_EYV\\_2011.pdf](http://www.cev.be/data/File/Alliance_discussion_paper_EYV_2011.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Oxfam (May 2010), *Something for Nothing: Challenging negative attitudes to people living in poverty*, [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/right\\_heard/downloads/bp\\_something\\_for\\_nothing\\_200510.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/right_heard/downloads/bp_something_for_nothing_200510.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> Groundswell is the UK's leading client involvement and self-help organisation working in the field of homelessness; [www.groundswell.org.uk/](http://www.groundswell.org.uk/)



## Case study: Sally Anne, UK

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The SAM Project<sup>34</sup>, delivered by the Media Clubhouse in Ipswich, is a three-year programme supported by the ESF that works to socially engage people recovering from mental health problems. It provides support for progress into voluntary and paid employment. The project works to integrate mental health service users into the local community through training, social and physical opportunities, using a holistic timetable of activities and courses. SAM provides a safe and supported environment for participants to develop the necessary skills required for future volunteering and employment.

Sally Anne joined the project having gone through years of mental health problems, losing her confidence, strength and considering committing suicide. Being part of SAM, Sally Anne has learnt new skills and found a positive application for them in her life. After completing the Web Design training she made her own Christmas cards. SAM used these cards and sent them out to all SAM members. As a result Sally Anne felt confident to try something else. She is the main instigator for 'Art on the Move', an exhibition to highlight how being creative can help people with their recovery and to challenge negative perceptions of mental health. She was fundamental in organising and publicising the exhibition, designing posters and flyers.

Being a member of SAM has helped Sally Anne to feel a part of something. She is now not as scared of talking to people. The project has had a positive effect on her relationships outside of SAM; she has made friends and socialises with them outside of the project. Sally Anne feels more able to speak up. Her concentration and focus have increased and her confidence and self-esteem have grown. She feels hopeful about the future.

In January 2010 the project team attended a seminar in Brussels. The seminar was attended by over 30 different participants, including Members of the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee, as well as the European Commission. Sally Anne spoke about her experiences with SAM. This was a real achievement for her in many ways. Prior to this trip she had hardly used public transport and yet she had made it to Brussels and felt confident enough to tell her story to a room full of strangers. This was something she couldn't have imagined doing six months earlier. In addition, in October 2010 Sally Anne, together with a SAM staff member and another volunteer, delivered an interactive workshop on the SAM concept to participants of the 19<sup>th</sup> Volonteurope Conference, in Athens. During the event Sally Anne was also recognised as a winner of the Active Citizens of Europe (ACE) Award 2010 for a European Volunteer, in recognition of her amazing journey and achievements.

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<sup>34</sup> [www.thesamproject.co.uk](http://www.thesamproject.co.uk)

## Questions

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This Review aims to draw on the opinions and expertise of a wide range of social actors, policy-makers and volunteers from across Europe and show the importance of recognising the role that volunteering plays in strategies for growth, stability and inclusion. Our objective is to convince policy-makers about the capacity of volunteering to increase the performance of the European economy, directly contributing to the goals of EU 2020 Strategy.

The following are some of the key questions that Volonteurope will ask during its series of seminars on 'The Value of Volunteering'. Those reading this Review are also encouraged to send their views and opinions on these questions to the authors of this document, who will ensure that the input is reflected in a 'Conclusions and Recommendations' section to be added in the coming months. The final document will then be submitted to the EYV 2011 Alliance 'Value of Volunteering' Working Group, to contribute to the writing of the Alliance's 'European Policy Agenda on Volunteering'. As explained in the Foreword to this Review, the 'Agenda' will be then presented to EU institutions as an outcome of the work of the Alliance and its contributions to achieving a lasting legacy of the Year.

- How can the volunteering infrastructure be developed and supported and the value of volunteering recognised?
- What are the ways in which Member State governments and EU institutions can include volunteering in their policies relating to health and social care, well-being, individual benefit, economic performance and integration?
- What role do volunteer-involving CSOs play in ensuring volunteering is taken seriously at policy-making level?
- What challenges are there for volunteer-involving CSOs?

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## Contact details for the authors

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**Tamara Flanagan**

T: +44 20 7643 1326

E: [tflanagan@csv.org.uk](mailto:tflanagan@csv.org.uk)

**Piotr Sadowski**

T: +44 20 7643 1329

E: [tflanagan@csv.org.uk](mailto:tflanagan@csv.org.uk)