



Strengthening, Inspiring and Celebrating
VOLUNTEERING & SOLIDARITY since 1992!



PRESS RELEASE | Brussels, 29 November 2024 European Volunteering Capital 2026 WINNER

CEV is pleased to announce that ***Maia, Portugal***, has been awarded the title of “**European Volunteering Capital**” 2026.

In choosing Maia as the European Volunteering Capital 2026, the jury noted that the city is an outstanding example of harnessing volunteering for **inclusion, diversity and participation** of all its inhabitants, symbolising the European values of **connection, diversity and progress**.

The jury was impressed by the winner’s far-reaching initiatives to foster an inclusive society, spanning from local to international levels. These efforts align well with the **Blueprint for Volunteering 2030 (BEV2030)**. The jury was particularly impressed by their training centres, as well as their lively, engaging events which foster collaboration between the public and private sectors, and celebrate civic contributions. In addition, their digital efforts were seen as a shining example of how to creatively and strategically raise awareness of volunteering through social media.

This [video](#) highlights their dedication to volunteering and the spirit of solidarity, while successfully conveying both emotion and empathy.

The jury felt that the accomplishments of ***Ballina, Ireland*** and ***Rzeszów, Poland*** also deserve high recognition in their efforts to support and develop volunteering. Their progress in creating social awareness actions and making a positive impact with volunteering activities, as well as encouraging citizens to participate in their communities, was seen by the jury as a fundamental element of the overall support shown to volunteers and volunteering by the candidates.

The full jury feedback on the each of the EVCapital Candidates 2026 is available at this link:

<https://www.europeanvolunteercentre.org/ev-capital-2026>

CEV launched the European Volunteering Capital Competition to strengthen, inspire and celebrate volunteering and the impact made by volunteers at the local level by giving



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recognition to municipalities that support and strengthen volunteering, especially through partnerships with stakeholders from different sectors such as volunteer centres, volunteer-involving organisations and the for-profit sector.

The judging criteria are the extent of their strategies, policies, and programmes in connection to the Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030 and to the CEV Volunteering Policy Statements. Evidence about their engagement with, and support for, the European Solidarity Corps when the applicant comes from an eligible programme country is also required. Applicants are also asked to indicate if they are signatories of the Integrating Cities Charter.

The awarded municipality is chosen from the candidates by an **international jury of key personalities** connected with volunteering, representing civil society, the private, for-profit sector, as well as the EU institutions: Michel Lefranc (CEV Board), Daniele Antonozzi (CEV Board), Jan Verdée (CEV Board), Tine Radinja (Mayor of Škofja Loka, SL & EU Committee of the Regions member), Giulia Barbucci (EESC Member, Group II), Marc Angel (Member of the European Parliament, S&D), Barbara Eglitis (European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre), Piotr Sadowski (Vice-President of the Standing Committee the Conference of INGOs, Council of Europe), Begona Barbera Garcia (Iberdrola Social Projects Manager, Employee Volunteering European Network (EVEN), Sabrina Redolfi (Municipality of Trento, Director of Welfare and Social Cohesion Department).

The previous winners are: Mechelen 2025 - Trento 2024 - Trondheim 2023 - Gdansk 2022 - Berlin 2021 - Padova 2020 - Košice 2019 - Aarhus 2018 - Sligo 2017 - London 2016 - Lisbon 2015 - Barcelona 2014.

The Centre for European Volunteering (CEV) is the European network of over 60 organisations dedicated to the promotion of, and support to, volunteers and volunteering in Europe at European, national or regional level.

Through our network we work together to ensure that: the value of quality volunteering as an expression of Solidarity and European values is understood, supported and celebrated; policies & programmes, together with the European social environment, inspires, encourages and supports quality European Volunteering; Individuals and organisations that are active in the volunteering and civil society sphere share, learn and are inspired from one another in the framework of CEV. In this way we reach out to the many thousands of volunteers and volunteer organisations in Europe as a source of support bringing the European dimension to their work. For further information, please refer to our website [here](#).