



*The opening of the conference*

## NEWSLETTER 23-24 May 2011

*On 23 and 24 May 2011, 300 representatives, from different parts of the volunteering sector in the EU, met at the Hotel Crowne Plaza and at the EESC for the “2<sup>nd</sup> EU-level thematic conference for the European Year of Volunteering 2011”.*

*This second conference had the specific purpose of **looking at the world of volunteering through the eyes of the individual volunteer and to gather experiences from the field of volunteering.***

The third and fourth conferences will take place in Athens in November and Warsaw in December of 2011.

True to the purpose, the format of the conference was highly participatory, which allowed participants to share experiences of volunteering, develop connections and networks, as well as explore possible next steps to support the further development of volunteering in Europe.

The conference was a joint event of the European Commission (EC), the European Parliament (EP), and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). The support for the conference and for volunteering was clearly demonstrated by the keynote speakers.

***"When the story of these times gets written, we want it to say that we did all we could, and it was more than anyone could have imagined."***

***Bono from U2***

The keynote addresses of the first day were given by Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament, Viviane Reding, Vice-President of the European Commission, and Zoltán Hernyes, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Hungary to the Kingdom of Belgium. Claus Sørensen, Director-General for Communication, European Commission, opened the conference and introduced the key note speakers.

The keynote addresses of the second day were given by Seán Kelly MEP, Staffan Nilsson, President of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), and Gabriella Civico, Project Manager for the EYV 2011 Alliance. Ylva Tivéus, Director for Citizens at the EC moderated the closing plenary session and made the closing speech,

The keynotes were interwoven with conversations among the participants. The conversations explored and provided input on the following topics:

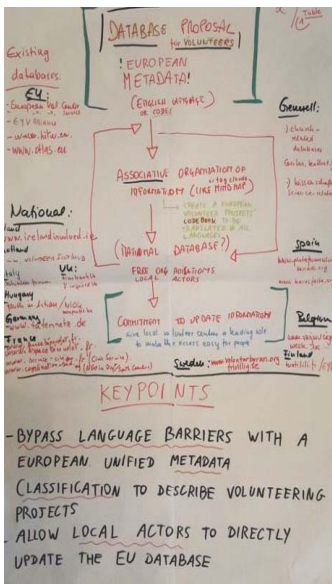
- *What works well in the volunteering sector?*
- *What are the conditions that support this?*
- *What are the challenges or barriers?*
- *What are the areas that need to be developed or improved to create even better conditions for volunteering in the future?*



## Main Themes



Second day workshops



Harvest from a workshop on databases

During the conference the participants identified several recurring themes and topics that were seen as important or necessary, e.g.

- A need for recognition of education, training and skills acquisition gained through volunteering.
- A legal framework that could make volunteering easier and also create more coherent rules across Europe
- Improved and sustained funding for volunteer organisations.
- Better use of on-line tools, web based platforms and awards schemes etc. to connect and to share best practice.
- A wish for more diversity in the volunteer workforce
- Creation of a valid and recognised system for both evaluation and measuring impact of volunteering
- Partnerships and cooperation across sectors for example through employee volunteering schemes.
- Making volunteering more known or visible e.g. by active use of media.
- Encouraging volunteering as a factor in Active Ageing.
- Having relevant data, statistics, research etc. available in order to support evidence based policy making and better recognition of the contribution of volunteering.

The discussions showed that different stakeholders including the EC and the EESC have already taken several initiatives addressing some the above questions and that there is a good alignment with the “bottom up” impulses from the conference.

## Monday 23 May 2011

Theme of the day: **Connecting and building shared ground.**

### Opening

In introducing the purpose of the conference Claus Sørensen mentioned that while volunteering gets recognition in some countries it meets with difficulties in others. The purpose of the conference was to get more ideas and find solutions to the existing challenges. He called for awareness of when solutions need to be found on a national level and when they must be solved on a European level.

Claus Sørensen mentioned that volunteer work is the glue that keeps society together. People contribute in good will, without looking for benefit and offer help to people who need it.



Opening address by Mr. Sørensen





Mr. Kleinschmager introduced the first conversation



Checking in



Conversation on enabling conditions

He then encouraged participants to discuss challenges, identify issues and offer their diverse opinions and ideas.

### “Check-in”

The participants were asked to reflect on the following question:

***Why did I choose to be here today?  
And what makes volunteering special?***

A variety of reasons and sentiments were expressed e.g.

*“Volunteer work is a mission, a motivation coming from inside, but at the same time we need to be competent.”*

*“I want volunteer work to be recognised.”*

*“The voice of European citizens can make a difference. Our voice needs to be heard at the highest level. Volunteering can create an independent voice that government will listen to e.g. when advocating for vulnerable young people.”*

*“The inner experience to imbue the spirit of volunteerism and work for a truly participatory democracy”*

Some people expressed a desire to share and learn from each other, meeting other volunteers and creating synergies together.

Some were seeing the potential between business and community. *“To allow business and society to have a partnership, it is in the cross section that things can happen.”*

### “World Café” Conversation 1 & 2:

During the “world café” conversations, the participants were asked to answer the following questions:

***From your experience of volunteering or working with volunteers, what works really well and what are the conditions that allow volunteering to work well?***

The participants stressed the importance of the following key conditions or enablers to volunteering:

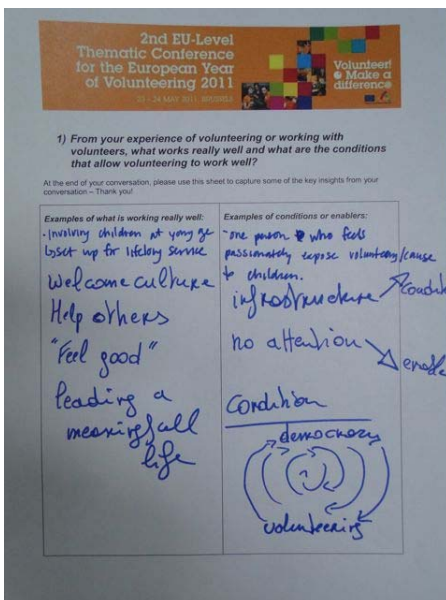
- **Motivational factors** for volunteers e.g. ability to gain new skills, competences and **recognition**, both formal and informal.
- **Good preparation** e.g. having the needed training & skills
- **A right match** between organisation and volunteer,
- **Good projects** including having concrete projects to work on that respond to a real need.
- **Good infrastructure** e.g. networks, umbrella organisations, availability of information, one-stop shop.
- **A good legal framework**, e.g. common definitions, rules and conditions.



Results from the conversations were reported back



Results were shared ..



.. and documented

- **A good organisational framework** in volunteering organisations e.g. a structure that allows influence, cooperation and co-responsibility, clarity of agreements and roles, code of conduct.
- **Partnerships**, e.g. between different networks, organisations, government or businesses.
- **Financial conditions** e.g. reimbursement of expenses, taxation rules etc.
- **Creative solutions using new technology**.

### "World Café" Conversation 3:

The next question discussed was:

#### **What are the barriers or challenges we meet in volunteering?**

The following factors were seen as challenges by the participants:

- **Communication & information** e.g. availability, promotion, use of social media.
- **Measurement of benefits**.
- **Motivation** e.g. to sustain motivation over time.
- **Training** e.g. different skills needed in different contexts.
- **Administration and red tape**.
- **Matching** the organisation and the volunteer.
- **The legal framework** to allow everyone to volunteer.
- **Public opinion or image**.
- **To find adequate time** between, work, study, social life etc.
- **Financial issues**, volunteering is not free of costs.
- **Diversity**, or the lack of it.
- **Language and cultural differences**.
- **Corruption and misuse**.
- **Bad management** e.g. unclear mission, objectives etc.
- **IT and web access**, or the lack of it.
- **Networking** e.g. not enough alliances between organisations national or international.
- **Relationship** e.g. between volunteers and Trade Unions, volunteers and paid workers.

### Collective mind map:

The essences of the previous conversations were captured in a collective mind-map.





Collective mind-mapping session



The topics on the mind-map were prioritised

The focus for the mind-map was:

***What areas do we need to focus on, or improve now to create even better conditions for volunteering?***

The results were voted and revealed the following top priorities.

- ***Education and training*** – 54 votes.
- ***Legal framework*** e.g. mobility and visa issues – 43 votes.
- ***Formally recognise volunteering*** as a contribution and skills acquisition – 41 votes.
- ***Financing / funding*** - 33 votes.
- ***Sharing best practices*** - 23 votes.
- ***On-line tools*** – 20 votes.
- ***Leaving space for youth to bring in new ideas*** – 14 votes.
- ***Research and statistics*** – 13 votes.
- ***Easier process for organisations to get charity status*** – 11 votes.
- ***Measuring the non-financial impact*** of volunteering – 10 votes.
- ***Using volunteering as key for the integration of immigrants*** – 10 votes.

## Keynote addresses

Keynote addresses were given by Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament, Viviane Reding, Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, and Zoltán Herynes, Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary.



Mr. Buzek



Ms. Reding



Mr. Herynes



Mr. Ott opened the workshop at the Crowne Plaza



Mr. Møller explained the work process



Work groups gathered around topics of interest

## Tuesday, 24 May 2011

Theme of the day: “**Moving issues forward and converging**”.

Participants had divided into two groups, one at the Crowne Plaza and one at the EESC, with well over 100 participants in each, to have an opportunity to work on concrete questions or issues.

### The Crowne Plaza

#### Workshop title: Volunteering through the eyes of the volunteer

The overall question for the workshop was:

***What do I care to explore now to move volunteering in Europe to its next level?***

The topics of the sessions posted and discussed were:

#### Workshops - Round 1

1. Migrant volunteering, e.g. using volunteering as a tool for integration.
2. Funding.
3. Including / training volunteers to match different contexts.
4. Use of new technologies to help volunteering.
5. How to make volunteering a natural step in EU citizens' lives.
6. Training of volunteers.
7. Management / partnership e.g. resources, framework, strategy.
8. Volunteering work vs. working for free.
9. Charter for the rights of volunteers.

#### Workshops - Round 2

1. Coordination of national online databases.
2. Funding (continued from the first session).
3. What motivates people to volunteer? E.g. recruit/retain.
4. Innovating ideas to keep up fresh volunteer work.
5. Acknowledging volunteer education and skills.
6. Volunteering as a means of active ageing.
7. How do we provide feed-back to volunteers.
8. How to promote volunteering?
9. Family friendly volunteering.
10. Beyond EYV 2011.

Gabriella Civico, Project Manager for the EYV 2011 Alliance was rapporteur for the workshop.





Mr. Nilsson welcomed everyone to EESC

## The European Economic & Social Committee

### Workshop title: Corporate citizenship

Staffan Nilsson, President of the European Economic and Social Committee, welcomed participants and described the role of the EESC..

The overall question for the workshop was:

***What do I want to explore now in the field of corporate citizenship to move volunteering forward?***

The topics of the sessions posted were:

#### Workshops - Round 1

1. Sharing best practices of corporate citizenship in volunteering and partnership collaboration.
2. How to get new employees involved in the employee volunteering program? How to get the top management creating such a program?
3. To create confidence between companies and NGOs. How to keep companies accountable?
4. How to match employee skills with not-for-profit requirements?
5. Building a process of volunteering with employers through employer participation.
6. How to create a better team spirit through the "volunteership" of colleagues?
7. Be careful not to use (free) volunteers instead of employees, but on the other hand volunteering by employees to associations can be valuable
8. The role of the business sector in funding NGOs?
9. Fiscal policy to encourage companies to support employability through volunteering.



Reflections on the previous day



Mr. Held framed the day

#### Workshops - Round 2

1. How to engage NGOs across Europe in the process of company volunteering?
2. Impact on employees of employee volunteering – are they volunteering afterwards?
3. How an employer supports employees who volunteer long-term?
4. Positive aspects of CSR to be shared in EU Member States' common framework.
5. Can consumers and consumer organisations make companies more prone to take up their role in the community?
6. Ethics in CSR employee volunteering.
7. Do we need a different word or name for volunteers in Europe?



Workgroups gathered around topics of shared interest



Mr. Trantina

8. *People who give their time for free (they work during the day while they do something else for other people during the night or on Sundays). People who work as volunteers.*

9. *What are the best ways of promoting corporate volunteering in the corporate world?*

10. *The role of the business sector in assessing and recognising the skills acquired by volunteers and then employing them.*

Pavel Trantina, Member of the EESC and coordinator for the recognition of non-formal education at the ESF project 'Keys for Life', was rapporteur for the workshop.



Mr. Kelly

## Concluding plenary session

Ylva Tivéus, Director for Citizens, European Commission chaired the closing session. Closing speeches were given by Seán Kelly MEP, Staffan Nilsson, President of the European Economic and Social Committee, and Gabriella Civico, Project Manager for the EYV 2011 Alliance.



Mr. Nilsson



Ms. Civico





*Participants in closing session*



*Mr. Kleinschmager invited a reflection to sum up the event*



*Participants shared their impressions of the conference*

### **Closing circle**

Before the final closing of the conference, the participants were invited to sum up their experience in one word. The question was:

**What am I taking back from our time together for myself or for my work?**

As the microphone circled from hand to hand, from the outer circle towards the centre, a variety of sentiments were expressed; between a few expressions of hope and doubt, there were a variety of expressions like, cooperation, commitment, new ideas or information, connection, professionalism, action, inspiration, understanding, recognition, vision, openness, solidarity, motivation, teamwork, commonality, compassion, reflection, listening, work, lateral thinking, chocolate, "ubuntu", partners, energy, Europe awareness, responsibility, empowerment, continuity, dignity, citizenship, enthusiasm, gratitude, synergy, trust, friends, legacy, pride and several "thank you's".

Ms. Tivéus acknowledged and thanked everyone who had worked to prepare the conference and thanked all the participants:

*"Thank you for your active participation! Thank you for being an inspiration to all of us!"*



*Ms. Tivéus closed the conference*



*Last reflections were shared in a closing circle*

**More information about the conference is available at:**

**<http://europa.eu/volunteering/en/conference/brussels-conference>**