

Civil Society Days 2022



Conference
on the Future
of Europe



European Economic
and Social Committee

Workshop 3 Volunteers for Prosperity

16 March 2022 | 10:00-12:00

Organised by:

Centre for European Volunteering (**CEV**) and **Volonteurope** in cooperation with the EESC's Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (**SOC**) and the EESC's Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion (**ECO**)

Report

This hybrid workshop focused on:

- Exploring how to better measure the value of volunteering for prosperity in Europe and thus have a stronger evidence base for current and future policies.
- Understanding the economic and social contribution of volunteering to the recovery process and increased prosperity.
- Reflecting on volunteering that is focused on democracy and active citizenship, as an expression of European values contributing to future prosperity in Europe, including the active inclusion of established and growing migrant populations.

The workshop included contributions from 11 speakers and was moderated by **Volonteurope Secretary General Piotr Sadowski** who gave an opening introduction talking more broadly about the contribution of volunteers and the value of the voluntary sector to civil society. Following this, **EESC member Krzysztof Pater** presented the EESC Opinion on "*Volunteers - Citizens Building the future of*



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Europe" and on the importance of the proposed European Year of Volunteers 2025. **EESC Member Andris Gobiņš** shared his reaction to the Opinion and stressed the significance of the EY2025 proposal and the potential that it gives to further empower volunteers as a way of paying tribute to the millions of volunteers who have demonstrated their significant social role, especially in recent months and a way of further promoting the idea of volunteering showing that this is an inclusive, universal activity that involves people from all groups and backgrounds **regardless of their age** and place in society.

Following this, **CEV Director Gabriella Civico presented the "Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030"** (BEV2030) which, adopted by CEV and endorsed by other stakeholders, highlights the five pillars which should be at the heart of volunteering policy in Europe if we are to truly appreciate and support the sector and its potential for prosperity. George Thomson, CEV Vice President shared some examples of how the ideas in the Blueprint are put into practice at the local level particularly illustrated in the cases of the most recent, current and next European Volunteering Capitals, namely: Berlin, Gdansk, and Trondheim.

After a short break, the panel discussion on Intergenerational Volunteering and Older people volunteering took place. Presentations were made from:

- **Frances Brace (Grandmentor Volunteer) and Tekle Berihu (Migrant Mentee)** (attending online), who are both involved in the "Grandmentors" intergenerational volunteering programme, coordinated by Volonteurope's UK member, Volunteering Matters. Frances and Tekle focused on the experience of volunteering and mentoring as something that can enrich one's life, especially in situations where one of the persons involved in the mentoring relationship has gone through difficult experiences and is starting afresh, whilst the other person has a wealth of experiences which they can offer as a mentor to the other person.
- **Jacques Van Egten**, President, CESES (European Network of Senior Experts), who joined online, described the mentoring programme in his network and reiterated the importance of focusing on senior volunteers as a tremendous asset base. He also referred to the experiences of intergenerational mentoring and how important it is for strengthening solidarity and empathy between different people.
- **Marta Hauser**, contributing to the discussion online, who is in charge of the "**Family Volunteering**" programme in Croatia, spoke about her experiences as an expert associate on the promotion and analysis of public policies. Furthermore, representing CEV's member, Croatian Volunteer Development Centre, she shared many capacity-building conclusions from their Erasmus plus project focusing on family and intergenerational volunteering
- **Philippe Seidel**, from Age Platform EU, who was physically present in the plenary room, gave an overview of the of the recently published AGE barometer.



Overall conclusions:

- 1) **The European Commission should take action to declare 2025 the European Year of Volunteers**
- 2) **The contribution of volunteers should be embraced as a key part of the cross-sector and cross-field “team effort” and as a trusted partner for social cohesion and shared prosperity.**
- 3) **We need to develop volunteering policy on EU level**, there is volunteering policy but mainly for youth rather than for all generations. Volunteering is not free of charge; we need a much more proactive standpoint regarding the important impact of volunteering on shared prosperity in society by policymakers at all levels from local to European.

Transparent and democratically distributed state funding to democratic and inclusive volunteering initiatives with clear and transparent procedures is essential for quality volunteering that responds to long term challenges in social cohesion, safety, security and prosperity for all. Declaring EYVolunteers2025 would highlight the importance of volunteering to health and well-being in Europe and the role of volunteers in the recovery and the future prosperity of Europe. It would focus on the people who volunteer and will shine the spotlight on the essential collective actions of volunteers leading to increased prosperity and health and well-being in Europe.

