



Brussels, December 2011

## *EUCIS-LLL KEY MESSAGES ON THE EUROPEAN YEAR 2011 ON VOLUNTEERING<sup>1</sup>*

### PREAMBLE

The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) brings together 25 European networks working in education and training. Together, they cover all sectors of education and training including networks for higher education, vocational education and training, adult education and popular education. Together they represent millions of students, school heads, parents, human resources professionals, teachers and trainers, reaching out to hundreds of millions learners all over Europe and beyond.

The value of volunteering is to be an **expression of active citizenship** that enriches democracy and contributes to develop solidarity and social cohesion, a value which is not only in great need in the current economic and social climate, but also one upon which the European Union has been built. Moreover, volunteering contributes to develop a sense of common identity and mutual understanding. **Volunteering is freely given**, but not cost free - it needs and deserves targeted support from all stakeholders - volunteer organisations, government at all levels, businesses and an enabling policy environment including a volunteering infrastructure<sup>2</sup>. Volunteering should not be instrumentalised nor used to replace paid work notably in public services and care systems.

Volunteering plays an **indispensable and capital role in lifelong learning**. In education and training, volunteers are parents, learners or educators of all ages willing to improve education and training systems. Volunteering enables volunteers to develop skills and competencies for personal, social and civic development that one could not have gained in traditional or professional systems. However, today these competences are seldom recognised by formal education, companies or institutions. Volunteers need to be supported if they express the wish to have the knowledge and skills acquired through volunteering periods recognised and validated. In this sense, educational providers have a specific role to play in terms of guidance and training.

The EU should capitalize on the outputs of the European Year 2011 on Volunteering and impulse better recognition, promotion and facilitation of volunteering in order to realize its full potential. We would also like to invite Member states to take into account the recommendations made during the EY2011 notably by the European Alliance<sup>3</sup>. Finally, we would like policy-makers to consider the following policy recommendations that are specific to our sector of activity.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **1/ Recognising volunteering as a tool to develop active citizenship, social inclusion and employability**

- ⇒ Encouraging the implementation of **European active citizenship education** in all member states and launching raising awareness campaigns on volunteering benefits, especially among young people. For instance, information on volunteering could be integrated into secondary and tertiary education curricula.

<sup>1</sup> These key messages are the result of the discussions that took place during the EUCIS-LLL conference on "The role, place and value given to volunteering in education and training" (9 May 2011, Krakow) and EUCIS-LLL working group on the social dimension of education and training.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.eyv2011.eu>

<sup>3</sup> EUCIS-LLL has also endorsed the EYV2011 Alliance Policy Agenda on Volunteering in Europe (P.A.V.E.) which provides recommendations for an effective European policy framework supporting and promoting volunteering.

- ⇒ Implementing specific actions and programmes that allow and facilitate **disadvantaged and elderly people** involvement in voluntary activities, which can offer them a wide “**window of opportunities**” to face / overcome their social exclusion.
- ⇒ Developing **research and data** on the financial and non-financial impact of volunteering and introduce appropriate measurement tools and comparable quantitative and qualitative indicators.
- ⇒ Capitalising on the EY2011 on volunteering and launching joint initiatives in relation to the EY2013 of Citizens.

## 2/ Develop a specific legal framework for volunteering by:

- ⇒ Developing a secure **legal status** for European volunteers and hosting organisations to further promote and facilitate volunteering across Europe.
- ⇒ Granting public coverage for **volunteers’ adequate social protection insurance** (health, accident and liability) and **training** expenses and implementing **fiscal advantages** for volunteer’s providers.
- ⇒ Removing **legal impediments** for volunteering, particularly with regard to cross-border travel and activities for volunteering purposes (e.g. visa free of charge).
- ⇒ Promoting **quality standards** for volunteering based on guidance, education and training support offered by hosting organisations.
- ⇒ Endorsing the initiative to establish a **European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of the Volunteer**<sup>4</sup>.

## 3/ Develop and recognise volunteers’ competences, skills and knowledge by:

- ⇒ Providing volunteer organisations with proper tools to **mentor, train and assess** the skills, competences and knowledge of their volunteers.
- ⇒ Promoting **recognition tools that are easy-to-use and transferable** across sectors. For instance, **portfolios** can be useful in order to help volunteers being aware of the skills, competences and knowledge they acquired. Such tools should include pedagogical and learning methodologies based on volunteers’ needs. This process can boost volunteers’ motivation and self esteem as well as employability.
- ⇒ Supporting the continued gathering of **good practice recognition tools** across the EU.
- ⇒ Developing and guarantying access to **validation or accreditation systems of prior learning** acquired through volunteering. The European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning<sup>5</sup> could serve as a basis of implementation.
- ⇒ Promoting measures to facilitate **employee volunteering** and encouraging employers to recognise volunteering experiences when recruiting and involving them together with social partners and civil society representatives in developing the above mentioned tools.

## 4/ Support a dynamic and sustainable voluntary sector by:

- ⇒ Ensuring **accessible, sustainable and flexible funding** to non-profit voluntary organisations, particularly core funding (i.e. material infrastructure) to sustain their work.
- ⇒ Improving the **accessibility of European project funding** from an information point of view as well as for the programmes’ management (i.e. simplicity of EVS application).
- ⇒ Removing unnecessary **administrative barriers and burdens** that limit the opportunities of civil society organisations to act sustainably on the European level.
- ⇒ Allowing volunteer time to be included as **contributions in kind** with a financial value as co-funding in all European funded programmes and call on Member States to do the same.
- ⇒ Supporting the **role of civil society organisations** as main coordinators of volunteer activities which guarantees a continuing exchange of ideas and good practice in volunteering and entitling them to participate in political decision-making processes at all levels.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.youthforum.org/images/stories/Documents/Participation/0455-11-Charter\\_RightsoftheVolunteer\\_Draft2.pdf](http://www.youthforum.org/images/stories/Documents/Participation/0455-11-Charter_RightsoftheVolunteer_Draft2.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4054\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4054_en.pdf)

- ⇒ Providing targeted support to **Stakeholder associations** working on a volunteer basis (e.g. parents, students) that face specific challenges in order to enrich the policy-making process.
- ⇒ Adopting a **European Statute for Associations**<sup>6</sup> that will give legal and institutional recognition to the engagement and to the activism of millions of citizens and associations across Europe.

#### 5/ Support the transnational dimension of volunteering

- ⇒ Exchanging **good practices** among actors and enhancing **cross-sectoral cooperation** among volunteer and civil society organisations offering volunteer services.
- ⇒ Giving **structural support** to transnational projects that allow **volunteers' mobility**, as a tool shaping European active citizenship.
- ⇒ Facilitating volunteering for **third country nationals** in the EU to support volunteer cross-border mobility (i.e. visa free of charge).
- ⇒ Exploring new forms of volunteering and promoting awareness for the possibilities of **virtual mobility**.
- ⇒ Disseminating **transnational volunteering information** and opportunities at the local level.
- ⇒ Developing and promoting a **European Volunteer Card**<sup>7</sup> which would recognise and support cross-border volunteering.



<sup>6</sup> European Alliance for the Statute of the European Association : <http://www.easea.eu/>

<sup>7</sup> Policy recommendation 2.3.1. of P.A.V.E.