



The opening of the conference



Mr. Sørensen introduced the keynote speakers

NEWSLETTER May 23-24. 2011

On May 23. and 24. 2011, 330 representatives, from different parts of the volunteering sector in Europe, met at the Hotel Crowne Plaza and at the EESC for the “2nd EU-level thematic conference for the European Year of Volunteering 2011”.

*The conference was the second in a series of 4, with 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 happen 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 2nd conference was a joint event between 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 through the keynote speakers.

The keynote addresses of the first day were offered by: *Mr. Claus Sørensen Director-General for Communication, European Commission, Ms. Vivian Reading Vice President of the EC, Mr Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament and Mr. Zoltan Hernyes Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Kingdom of Belgium at the Hungarian Embassy*

The keynote addresses of the second day were offered by: *Ms. Ylva Tivéus, Director for Citizens at the EC, Mr. Seán Kelly MEP, Mr. Staffan Nilsson, President of the EESC, Ms Gabriella Civico Project Manager for the EYV 2011 Alliance*

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

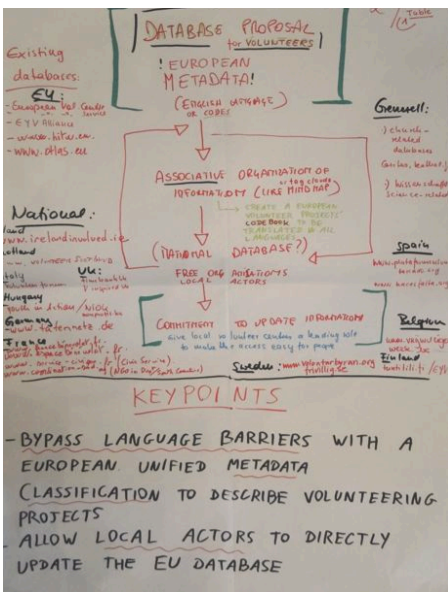
- *What works well in the volunteering sector?*
- *What are the conditions that support this?*
- *What are the challenges or barriers?*
- *What are the areas that need to be developed or improved to create even better conditions for volunteering in the future?*

"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



Second day workshops



Harvest from a workshop on databases



Opening address by Mr. Sørensen

Conclusions:

During the conference there were 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 European Commission and the EESC have already taken several initiatives addressing some of the above questions and that there is a good alignment with the “bottom up” impulses from the conference.

Monday May 23, 2011

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

Opening address by Mr. Claus H. Sørensen,
Director-General for Communication, European Commission.

In introducing the purpose of the conference Mr. Sørensen mentioned that while volunteering gets recognition in some countries it meets with difficulties in others. The purpose of the conference is 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.

There are more than 100 million people volunteering in Europe i.e. more people than in the biggest Member State.

Mr. 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.



Mr. Kleinschmager introduced the first conversation

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

“Check-in”

Mr. Matthieu Kleinschmager introduced the programme and hosted the first conversation. Sitting at small tables with five other people, 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 on 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 synergy together.

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



Checking in

Café Conversation 1 & 2:

The next conversations continued at the small tables but allowed people to move to different tables between the two rounds. Mr. Martin Buechele hosted the conversation. The questions participants were asked to explore were:

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 following key conditions or enablers were surfaced:

- **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, information available, one-stop shop.
- **A good legal framework**, e.g. common definitions, rules and conditions.



Conversation on enabling conditions



Results from the conversations were reported back

- **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 business.
- **Financial conditions** e.g. reimbursement of expenses, taxation rules etc.
- **Creative solutions using new technology.**

Café Conversation 3:

The next question discussed was:

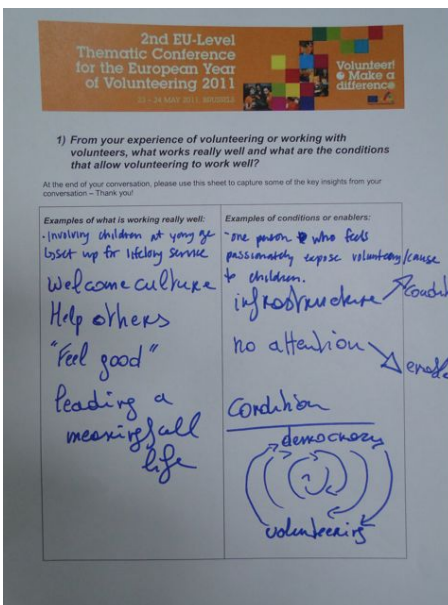
What are the barriers or challenges we meet in volunteering?

The following factors were seen as challenges:

- **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 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.



Results were shared ..



.. and documented

Collective mind map:

The essences of the previous conversations were captured in a collective mind-map, which was conducted by Mr. Toke Paludan Møller and mind-mapped by Mr. Matthieu Kleinschmager.



Collective mind-mapping session



The topics on the mind-map were prioritised



Ms. Reding

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 on revealing 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.
- ***Leave space for youth to bring in new ideas*** – 14 votes.
- ***Research and statistics*** – 13 votes.
- ***Make an easier process to get charitable status for organisations*** – 11 votes.
- ***Measuring the non-financial impact of volunteering*** – 10 votes.
- ***Use volunteering as key for integration of immigrants*** – 10 votes.

Keynote addresses

Mr. Claus H. Sørensen, introduced the three keynote speakers.

Keynote address by Ms. Viviane Reding

Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship

Ms. Reding reminded everyone that there are 100 million European volunteers, more than the people in the biggest member state. Every hour, every minute, someone is giving a helping hand in the communities or neighbourhoods. Quoting Mr. Barroso “Europe’s raison d’être is to empower Europeans” relates to why the European Year of volunteering (EYV) is so important

This Europe is not about politicians but about people reaching out giving their hands and heart and achieving much more. Volunteers embody the values on which EU is built; solidarity, compassion and a sense of community. Volunteering encourages citizens to become actors and doers, grass roots ambassadors of the Europe we want to create, translating the spirit of Europe into day-to-day action.

There are still many barriers to volunteering e.g. lack of time, information or affordability. This is where the institutions come in, to help eliminate legal constraints and to put volunteering on the map. In several Member States the legal and regulatory framework in this area is missing and overall there is a patchwork of rules, which makes cross border volunteering difficult or prevents unemployed people or people on early retirement to volunteer.



Mr. Buzek

In an economic crisis volunteering can be an opportunity for young people to show what they are capable of or for unemployed to gain new experience. There are numerous good examples. We have to make good examples known and celebrate the achievements.

Lastly Ms. Reding quoted Bono from U2: *"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."*

**Keynote address by Mr Jerzy Buzek,
President of the European Parliament**



Mr. Hernyès

All of us are from time to time volunteers. Our democratic society is based on volunteering. We have rights and privileges but also obligations towards our fellow citizens. Volunteering is a sign of solidarity. "There is no freedom without solidarity". Europe is not just based on a common market but on community. Volunteering requires more not less Europe and more integration.

Mr. Buzek underlined the following points:

There is a need to encourage participation in volunteering, especially among young people. We need to create incentives and better synergies between public-private partnerships.

In some countries volunteering does not receive the recognition it deserves, skills and competences acquired through volunteering need to be treated as a part of working career. There is a need for a common legal framework for the sector.

EU is the largest donor organisation. EU can offer assistance and not just money. It is important to find ways to connect experts to projects.

Mr. Buzek ended by quoting JFK *"ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country" ... "or for your fellow citizen"*

**Keynote address by Mr Zoltán Hernyès
Ambassador at the Hungarian Embassy**

Mr. Hernyès addressed how the objectives of the European Year 2010 "fight against poverty" and 2011 "volunteering" are related. He underlined that all European countries need to be involved and recognise volunteering. He also mentioned the need for a strategy for volunteering.

Mr. Hernyès then shared multiple examples of promoting volunteering in Hungary e.g. celebrities acting as ambassadors, a wide variety of local and national events, conferences, on-line platforms and a rock concert.

The EYV 2011 is a huge possibility to change the situation. The Hungarian Presidency is strongly committed to contribute to its success and ensure continuity.

Mr. Sørensen closed the day. A buffet followed at the Crowne Plaza.



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 some 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**

Mr. Joachim Ott, Acting Head of Unit for Citizens' Policy at the European Commission, hosted participants in a reflection on the first day before Mr. Møller and Mr. Buechele guided everyone through the process of creating the agenda for the workshops.

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 aging.*
7. *How do we provide feed-back to our volunteers.*
8. *How to promote volunteering?*
9. *Family friendly volunteering.*
10. *Beyond EYV 2011.*

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



Mr. Nilsson welcomed everyone to EESC



Reflections on the previous day



Mr. Marcus Held framed the day



Workgroups gathered around topics of shared interest

The European Economic & Social Committee

Workshop title: Corporate citizenship

Mr. Staffan Nilsson, President of the European Economic and Social Committee, welcomed everyone and introduced the role of the EESC and Mr. Marcus Held framed the session inviting topics that could challenge assumptions and point towards the future.

Mr. Kleinschmager then hosted a reflection on the previous day and introduced the process of creating the agenda for the workshops.

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 collective 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 business sector in funding NGOs?*
9. *Fiscal policy to encourage companies to support employability through volunteering.*

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 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. *In Europe, do we need a different word or name for volunteers?*



Mr. Pavel Trantina

8. People who give their time for free (they work during the day and during the night or on Sundays they do something else for other people). 2) 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.

Mr. Pavel Trantina, European Economic and Social Committee, coordinator for recognition of non-formal education at ESF project 'Keys for Life' was rapporteur for the workshop.



Ms Tivéus introduced the speakers

Concluding plenary session

Ms. Ylva Tivéus, Director for Citizens, European Commission chaired the closing session.

Closing address by Mr. Seán Kelly MEP

Mr. Kelly started by saying that the EC can put structures in place to support volunteering.

He referred to his background as a volunteer and mentioned that unless he had volunteered he might not have entered politics and been a MEP today.

The crisis has made everyone aware that life is about more than money and has also created more interest in volunteering. Volunteering is a deeply rooted principle in Europe; "deep down everybody wants to be a volunteer."

Mr. Kelly mentioned that the economic value of volunteering is enormous and referred to a report from Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore Maryland, which was illustrating this fact.

There are many people who do not know much about volunteering, but the tour connected to EVY, which goes from country to country is raising awareness of volunteering.

It is time to see which obstacles should be removed and to set targets for the future.



Mr. Kelly

Closing address by Mr Staffan Nilsson, President of the European Economic and Social Committee

Mr. Nilsson expressed his support for volunteering, based in his own experience of volunteering since a young age.

EESC wants to support setting up a more permanent structure to support the volunteer network. Focusing just one year on volunteering and the next year on something else is not sustainable.

The Commission can support by engaging stakeholders in some of the relevant questions e.g. groups of employers, Trade Unions or civil society. This can support accepting emotionally what governments can do by creating a framework.



Mr. Nilsson



Ms. Civico

To provide a framework the European Charter for Volunteering was introduced in 2006. The Commission has been engaged from the very beginning.

Mr. Nilsson hoped that this initiative would continue next year and said that the most important thing for this conference was to listen to the input and presentations of the participants.

**Closing address by Ms Gabriella Civico,
Project Manager for the EYV 2011 Alliance**

Ms Civico spoke on behalf of the EYV 2011 Alliance, which is an open, informal and growing group of currently 38 European networks active in volunteering funded by the European Commission, Bosch Stiftung, Fundación Telefónica and the 14 Alliance Steering Group members. She noted that the Alliance was especially happy that EYV 2011 could see a large event bringing mainly grassroots volunteers together adding that “a major strength of the contribution of volunteers is the diversity of people it brings together and we show this diversity here”.



Participants in closing session

The conference was reminded that the recognition of volunteering is a main focus of the EYV 2011 Alliance volunteering policy work and that the EYV 2011 Alliance website www.eyv2011.eu provides a Volunteer Commitments section as a way to give symbolic recognition to volunteering contributions during 2011.



Mr. Kleinschmager invited a reflection to sum up the event

Ms Civico informed the conference that there are other working groups looking at different aspects of volunteering such as the value of volunteering, volunteering infrastructure, quality of volunteering, and employee volunteering, not only limited to the corporate sector but looking at the public and non-profit sector as well. She continued to say that it is important to look at the legal barriers and frameworks across Europe that may prevent volunteering.

The aspiration is that anyone who wants to volunteer should be able to do so without obstacles. Ms. Civico suggested that as a response to the challenge to double the numbers of volunteers during 2011 every volunteer needs to invite just one more person to volunteer. Research shows that one of the main reasons people gave for not volunteering is that they had never been asked.

Lastly Ms. Civico expressed that she was glad to give the grass roots a voice and she looks forward to taking the results back to contribute to the wider European policy agenda on volunteering and encouraged everyone to stay connected through the network.



Last reflections were shared in a closing circle

Closing circle

Before the final closing of the conference Mr. Kleinschmager invited everyone 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;



Participants shared their impressions of the conference



Ms. Tivéus closed the conference

More information about the conference is available at:
<http://europa.eu/volunteering/en/conference/brussels-conference>

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, gratitude, synergy, trust, friends, legacy, pride and several “thank you’s”.

Closing Address by Ms. Ylva Tivéus,
Director for Citizens, European Commission chaired the closing session.

“The words spoken came true from your heart. Thank you for taking time to be with us and share your ideas”

Ms. Tivéus expressed that we have shared a fantastic moment together and have collected a lot of good ideas that will be documented and made available.

This is just the beginning of a long-term vision and mission, and we are just halfway through the EYV 2011. “The earlier conferences started the reflection and the aim of this conference was to give you a voice, to hear your concerns.”

The Commission and Ms. Reding under her mandate, will do everything to dismantle any obstacles to volunteering.

With the EYV there are many ambitions e.g. to raise the awareness and the amount of volunteers, to uncover the value of volunteering in economic terms etc. Voluntary work is not meant to replace paid work.

There are two more conferences planned. The next one is dedicated to civil society and NGOs to uncover their specific obstacles like cross border voluntary activities, recognition of education and training etc. There is already a committee in the Commission working on a skills passport.

The 4th conference in September will bring up all proposals and recommendations and conclusions from the working groups to the policy makers and there will be a Commission report on the implementation of the EYV.

“This is not a “one of” event. This is just the first year to increase recognition. This is an ongoing process and next year we will be twice as many. “

Ms. Tydeus 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!”

Quoting Bono from U2

“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.”