



EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK

POSITION PAPER

EAPN's position on Volunteering and the Fight Against Poverty

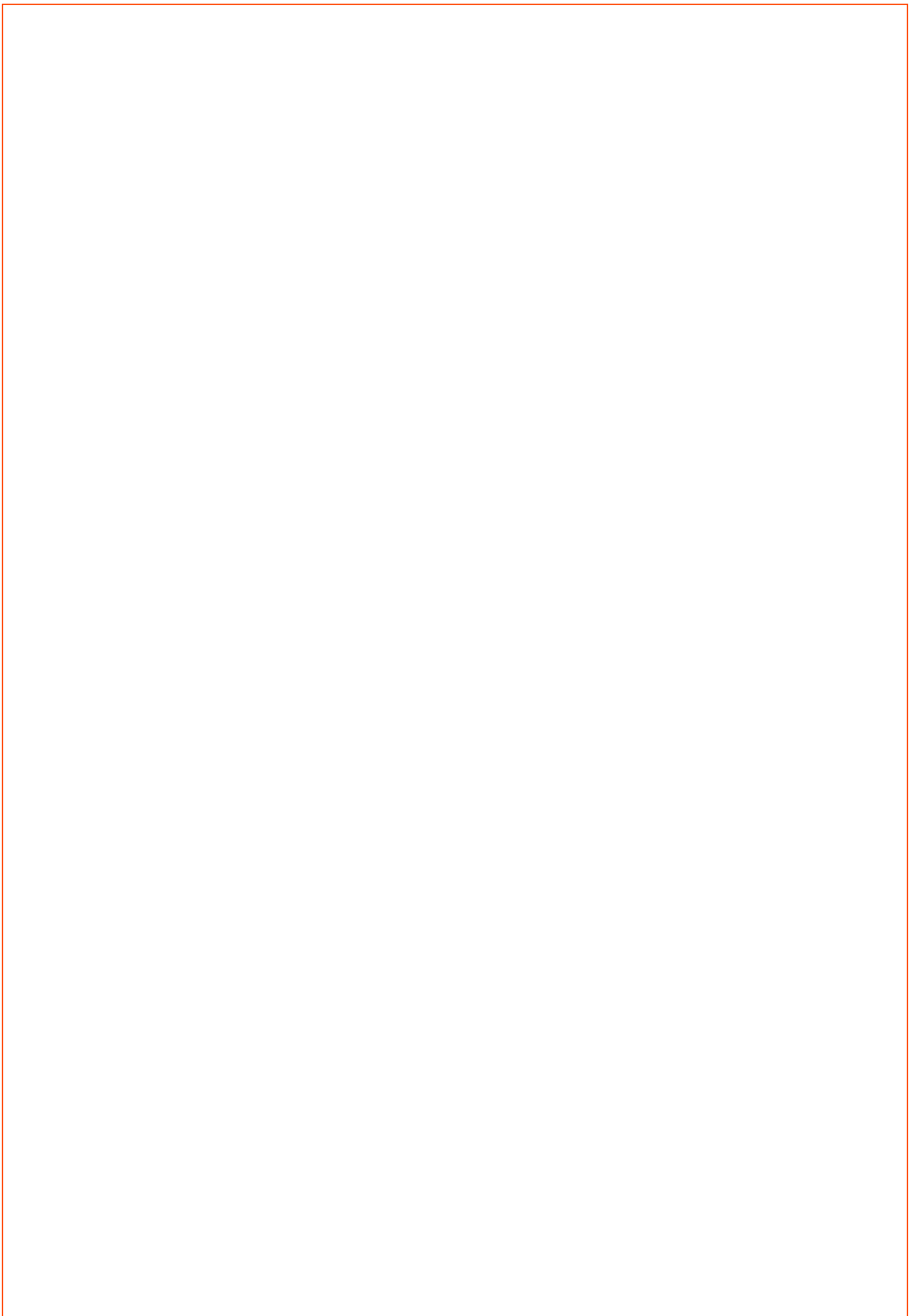
This position paper outlines EAPN's key concerns on volunteering as well as recommendations to all stakeholders, to the non-profit sector, to the European Commission, to Member States and to the business sector.

For EAPN, the 2011 European Year of Volunteering should involve raising awareness on the role of volunteering showing the different approaches across Member States, exploring the benefits and risks, and campaigning together to get answers to the common challenges currently on the table.

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- What is volunteering?
- The contribution of volunteering
- The role of EAPN in the European Year of Volunteering
- EAPN's key concerns
- EAPN's key recommendations

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KEY MESSAGES

EAPN's key concerns

- The misuse of volunteering as job replacement
- The mandatory volunteering within the "Make Work Pay" policies
- The lack of a clear legal framework on volunteering
- The socio-economic barriers which prevent volunteering
- The glass ceilings within voluntary organizations

EAPN's key recommendations

To all stakeholders

- Volunteer "with" people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and to promote volunteering "of" people experiencing poverty and social exclusion – EAPN has signed the 'CEV Brussels Declaration', which stimulates actions amongst all key stakeholders.
- Develop better, innovative mechanisms to engage people experiencing poverty and social exclusion as volunteers, both in non-profit organizations as volunteers.
- To address the socio-economic barriers which prevent people experiencing poverty and social exclusion from volunteering.
- Address the socio-economic barriers which prevent people experiencing poverty and social exclusion from volunteering including the need to reimburse as appropriate the direct expenses that arise from volunteering.

To the non-profit sector and other stakeholders

- Challenge discrimination and promote diversity within the organizations and members by equal-opportunities monitoring.
- Increase the professional quality of volunteer management.

To the European Commission

- Promote voluntary-based organizations in the governance of EU2020.
- Draw up a code of guidance.
- Issue a White Paper on volunteering and active citizenship.
- Foster virtual volunteering to fight social and digital gap.
- Support transnational schemes in which volunteers, working with anti-poverty organisations, could gather, debate and make proposals to shared EU social problems.

To Member States

- Grant volunteers' rights and protection.
- Draw up specific guidelines, to prevent the misuse of volunteering as a cheap substitute for public services.
- Recognize and support the role of voluntary-based networks, alliances and civic platforms engaged in the fight against poverty and social exclusion as valid interlocutors.
- Focus on the effects of volunteering on the recipients of assistance, not just on the volunteers themselves.

To committed corporate business and foundations

Increase volunteering.

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1. Context

Volunteering is one of the most fundamental acts of citizenship and philanthropy in our society. It is offering time, energy and skills of one's own free will, without seeking financial compensation. By caring and contributing to change, volunteers decrease suffering and disparity, while they gain skills, self-esteem, and change their lives. People work to improve the lives of others, to promote the public good and, in return, enhance their own.

According to the European Parliament, volunteering can also be viewed as an antidote to some of the negative effects of globalisation where citizens are not simply consumers but where they can act as catalyst for change by organizing together to influence local action to improve their economic and social circumstances, improving the quality of life of their community. In doing so, they can promote a sense of place and a sense of connectedness.¹ Volunteers have an important role to play in bringing **ownership of the services** by the community. They can provide care that is **user-focused, holistic and responsive** to the community's needs.

For EAPN, volunteering can also support the empowerment of people experiencing poverty, both as representatives within anti-poverty organisations as well as users in NGO services, bringing their own voice and expertise to the fight against poverty. Local volunteers can help build **community cohesion** as they bring innovative perspectives to the service and can provide a source of local knowledge about the community.

*For 25% of the Europeans, success in life has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It's what you do for others. **More than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities.**² **63% of Europeans trust the actions of NGOs and charities in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.**³*

Volunteering is also a term which means different things to different communities, depending on its cultural, geographical and historical context. An approach to volunteering in the 21st Century – needs to encompass, and understand all the different forms – philanthropic, civil society engagement, participation and activism, advocacy and campaigning and empowerment developed through bureaucratic organized settings, but also informal, grass-root groupings for change.

The three key characteristics of volunteering are generally held to be: unpaid, undertaken by free will, and of benefit to others. However, these elements need to be seen in a spectrum. Volunteers are mainly unpaid, but often have expenses covered. It should be an activity of own choice, not subject to coercion or obligation. Volunteers engage in actions which may benefit themselves as well as benefiting others beyond immediate family and friends. However, the one common objective remains a **personal act of active citizenship to promote the public good**.

While far-reaching benefits of volunteerism are well known and widely acknowledged, it remains a little understood and undervalued resource. It also raises some important contradictions and

* First draft was written by Graciela Malgesini (Social Policy Officer, EAPN Spain). Very useful comments and inputs were made by EAPN members during the Social Inclusion Working Group meeting held in Brussels, 18th-19th February 2011, and afterwards by Sian Jones (EAPN Secretariat), Heather Roy (Eurodiaconia), Izabella Marton (EAPN Hungary), Fátima Veiga (EAPN Portugal), Paul Ginnell (EAPN Ireland), Fintan Farrell (EAPN Secretariat) Alexander Kraake (EAPN Germany). The revised version was discussed and approved in principle by the EXCO on the 30th April.

¹ "Report on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion" (2007/2149(INI)), European Parliament, Committee on Regional Development (2008), <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A6-2008-0070+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

² "European Social Reality", Special Eurobarometer 273 / Wave 66.3, 2007, February 2007.

³ "Poverty and Social Exclusion", Special Eurobarometer 321 / Wave 72.1, 2010, February 2010.

challenges. As activities promoting the public good, it is clear that there exists a grey area of overlap between citizen's action as individuals or groups, and the role of the state. In the current context of the crisis (even before in some cases) and its aftermath, with most governments opting for severe austerity measures, this is increasing the risk of exploitation of volunteers and volunteering, at the expense of quality jobs providing key universal services to the Welfare State. It is also important to make sure volunteering activities do not impede or cancel out the action of wider community and governmental efforts to end social problems.⁴ The challenge is to affirm the right to citizen's action for the public good, whilst ensuring the strengthening of strong, social protection systems as the backbone of our European Social Model.

In 2010, EAPN campaigned hard to ensure that the 2010 Year for combating poverty and social exclusion left an important legacy for the fight against poverty. A key achievement was the EU commitment to reduce poverty by at least 20 million, by 2020.⁵ For EAPN, 2011 is therefore an opportunity to continue this fight: highlighting the contribution of volunteers to social inclusion as well as key actors defending the European Social Model.

For EAPN, the year should involve raising awareness on the role of volunteering showing the different approaches across Member States, exploring the benefits and risks, and campaigning together to get answers to the common challenges currently on the table.⁶

⁴ An example of this is giving coats and blankets to homeless people instead of supporting efforts to provide them with housing with the goal to end, rather than "ease" their homeless situation. For more information see www.feantsa.org/news=4508

⁵ "An EU we can trust: EAPN proposals for post 2010 Strategy", 2009, and other documents on www.eapn.eu

⁶ "Volunteering and the European Year on Volunteering 2011", Solidar, 2010. Briefing paper 26, December. www.solidar.org

2. What is Volunteering? Definitions

“A core value of the EU”, European Parliament

Volunteering is a major force nurturing civil society and strengthening solidarity –one of the core values of the EU – as well as an essential component in supporting community development programmes.

Volunteering could be defined using the following criteria:

- 1) *Volunteering is not undertaken for financial reward, i.e. it is unpaid*
- 2) *It is undertaken of one's own free will*
- 3) *It brings benefit to a third party outside the circle of family and friends*
- 4) *It is open to all*

There are a number of different types of volunteering and these broadly include mutual and or self help, philanthropy or service to others, campaigning and advocacy and participation and self governance.⁷

“Agents of change”, UN Volunteers

The capacities developed through volunteerism are an important foundation of "free agency", a term proposed by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen to mean genuine opportunities for individuals to be "agents of change". As he suggests, exercising free agency-in the political, economic and social spheres-is at the very heart of development. Volunteerism has the potential to effectively leverage all forms of free agency. In the political sphere, it serves as a nursery for good citizenship, educating people in democratic involvement and providing a platform for stakeholders, especially those often at the margins, to participate in decision-making and governance processes.

“Imagine how many needs would go unanswered without volunteers”, Red Cross, 2011

Volunteering generates social value for the community, for the organization and for the volunteers themselves.

Value for the community: Voluntary service is at the heart of community-building. It encourages people to be responsible citizens and provides them with an environment where they can be engaged and make a difference. It enhances social solidarity, social capital and quality of life in a society. It can serve as a means of social inclusion and integration.

Value for the organization: They would not be able to deliver essential services without the support of their volunteer networks. This is the case for many other organizations.

Value for the volunteer: Volunteers confirm that they are pleased to be able to do something to help and are proud to have something to offer society. They value the acknowledgement they get from people in their community, the new skills they learn, and have a strong sense of belonging to a caring organization.⁸

⁷ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A6-2008-0070+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN#_part2_def9

⁸ “The value of volunteers”, January 2011. [RedCrossIFRC_300000_Value_of_Volunteers_Report_EN_02.pdf](#)

“Volunteerism promotes values such as altruism and solidarity and thus forms a counterweight to increasingly widespread isolation and egoism”, European Economic and Social Committee on Voluntary activity: its role in European society and its impact (EESC), 2006

Voluntary activity makes an invaluable contribution to society. In Europe more than 100 million volunteers devote their leisure time to a multitude of activities which benefit third parties and serve the common good. The work of civil society organisations, which is often performed exclusively or to a great extent by volunteers, is winning ever greater recognition from companies, government bodies and the public.

And yet the true value of voluntary activity goes far beyond the provision of services and the satisfaction of social needs. The motivation which underlies it, that is the desire to make a contribution on one's own initiative to the common good and to help shape society, promotes values such as altruism and solidarity and thus forms a counterweight to increasingly widespread isolation and egoism in modern societies.

Taking into account the differences among Member States, a set of classifications of volunteering - based on the kind of activity undertaken by the volunteer- could be as follows:

- **Self-help related to mutual aid** – probably the oldest form of voluntary action in which people with shared problems, challenges and conditions work together to address or ameliorate them. This is sometimes described as voluntary action ‘by us, for us’.
- **Philanthropy and service to others** – typically involving an organization which recruits volunteers to provide some kind of service to one or more third parties.
- **Participation and governance** – the involvement on a voluntary basis in the political or decision-making process at any level, from participation in a users’ forum to holding honorary office in a voluntary and community sector organization.
- **Advocacy or campaigning** – collective action aimed at securing or preventing change which includes campaigning against developments seen as damaging to the environment and campaigning for better services.
- **Expressive behaviours** – involvement in an activity as a fulfilment of a personal interest often associated with volunteering in the arts, culture and sports sectors. Here the volunteer is expressing their interest and passion in a particular field through their volunteering.⁹

⁹ This activity typology is developed for the UN International Year of the Volunteer (UNIYV) by Davis Smith, 1999, which identifies four types of volunteer activity; the 5th type is proposed by Angela Ellis Paine, Matthew Hill and Colin Rochester (2010), “A rose by any other name... Revisiting the question: what exactly is volunteering?” Working paper series: Paper one, Institute for Volunteering Research, page 23.

3. The contribution of volunteering

According to the Commission Communication on promoting the role of voluntary organisations it is estimated that in the EU-15 between one third and a half of the population are involved in some type of voluntary activity¹⁰, and while numbers and types of activity vary in different countries there are in excess of 100 million citizens engaged in voluntary activity in the EU 27.¹¹

1. To social inclusion

In fostering opportunities for individuals to be agents of change, particularly those traditionally most excluded from the processes and decisions that affect their lives, volunteerism can foster empowerment and broad-based ownership, as well as the chance to organize together as grass-roots informal groupings to campaign and lobby for change as well as to provide a web of mutual support. Through volunteering, the most disadvantaged can start to build a web of social networks that contributes to the growth of social capital, essential for stable and cohesive communities, and in and of itself a permanent resource for development.

Volunteering can provide people that are at risk of being socially excluded with ways to be connected to society such as those who are unemployed, retired and elderly, people with disabilities, migrants and people experiencing poverty.

Both international volunteering and local volunteering can provide opportunities for intercultural learning, which is a key in the fight against xenophobia, racism and discrimination and building more cohesive societies.

2. To active citizenship

Voluntary activity is inextricably linked with active citizenship, which is the cornerstone of democracy at local, national and European level. People take part in the life of their communities not only through political participation but also through working together to generate specific solutions of social problems. By working for the public good they can translate a desire to help and/or for change into action. Individuals working for the common good often make important sacrifices – their time and sometimes even financial resources and their health. In some countries, activism and advocacy roles may also lead to physical threats to their security and their lives. However, this type of active citizenship also brings strong individual benefits - giving people a strong sense of belonging to society, a feeling of solidarity, companionship and strength which commons from engagement in a common fight for social justice and a fairer society.

3. To personal development

Volunteering can also be an important instrument to increase people's confidence, supporting the development of key competences helping volunteers to gain skills which may enable them to find decent jobs and enhance their active participation in society, whilst guarding against the dangers of unpaid apprenticeships. This is particularly important for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion themselves, who become volunteers in community organizations, where they have been beneficiaries, providing support or other activities, or in the governance mechanisms of the

¹⁰ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A6-2008-0070+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN#_part2_def7

¹¹ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A6-2008-0070+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN#_part2_def8

organisations. Where people engage directly in social movements and actions mobilizing for social change, skills of advocacy, campaigning and representation as well as working and problem-solving in teams are key capabilities which are developed. In its various manifestations voluntary activity offers an opportunity for informal¹² and non-formal¹³ learning and thus, alongside formal¹⁴ learning, plays an essential part in achieving lifelong learning.

4. To participation

Volunteering also offers a key means to participate in local communities and to work together for social justice and social change. The levels of participation can vary – from engagement through individual action in a local organization, to participation in collective action, to representation within the management of organizations or informal groupings or associations – or engagement in the governance mechanisms impacting on policy on social inclusion, e.g. in EAPN, members actively engage in the fight against poverty through the National Action Plans on Inclusion and National Reform Programmes. A crucial concern for the fight against poverty is to ensure that volunteering is opened up to people experiencing poverty, to engage at all these levels.

5. To intergenerational development

For younger and older people, volunteering is a crucial development resource. It is fundamental to increase solidarity among young people, to develop tolerance and mutual understanding, to directly reinforce social cohesion in the European Union. It contributes to professional and individual maturity. Furthermore, while volunteers can show solidarity to older generations by providing services to older people, volunteering is also means for older people to stay active and to remain healthier for longer in their lives. There is a trend registered in all European countries on the increasing participation of older people in voluntary activities, particularly in countries such as Austria, Romania, Spain and Sweden.¹⁵

6. To economic development

Due to its contribution to strengthening social capital and social cohesion, Volunteering can help to provide a firm foundation for sustainable economic growth. Volunteering can also help to stimulate development, more specifically in the economic sphere. It can help individuals gain valuable skills that enhance employability and contribute to developing initiatives which may translate into income-generating opportunities, particularly in social and/or community enterprises. Care, however must be taken to avoid promoting economic growth through the abuse of volunteering, by substituting paid with unpaid services.

The Comparative Non-Profit Sector project revealed that the voluntary sector contributes to an estimated 2-7% to the GDP of our national economies.¹⁶

¹² **Informal learning:** Learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or “incidental”/random).

¹³ **Non-formal learning:** Learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective.

¹⁴ **Formal learning:** Learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective. Source: COM(2001) 678.

¹⁵ Solidar (2010), page 10.

¹⁶ “Volunteering”, Eurodiaconia Policy Paper, September 2010. www.evy2011.eu/resources-library/item/download/35

7. To the environment

Volunteers and the work can make a positive impact on the environment. When people get engaged in the environment, they change their attitude to and understanding of the environment and nature, creating a sustainable future.¹⁷

8. Volunteering is ...

- a creator of social capital
- a means to support the participation and empowerment of people experiencing poverty
- a pathway to integration and employment
- a positive outcome in itself
- an expression of bottom-up, grass-roots organisation for community solutions that work
- a step towards the creation of social and community enterprises
- a mechanism for improving SOCIAL cohesion and reducing economic, social and environmental inequalities
- a contribution towards sustainable economic development

¹⁷ *"Inspiring people, improving places"*, BTCV, 2008. The positive impact and behavioural change achieved through environmental volunteering with BTCV. <http://www.eyv2011.eu/resources-library/item/download/292>

4. The role of EAPN in the European Year of volunteering

Fighting poverty and social exclusion is a complex process involving different actors ranging from governments and the European Union institutions to civil society organisations, companies as 'corporate citizens' and individuals. For EAPN, poverty and social exclusion cannot be eradicated without tackling the causes of inequality focusing on the means of distribution and redistribution: reducing the gap in income and wealth, but also promoting fair distribution through effective, adequate social protection systems and universal services. Promoting participative democracy is also at the heart – engaging individuals and communities in having a greater say over their lives and those of their communities. In this context, the role of volunteers in the fight against poverty and social exclusion is crucial both in organizing together to tackle the causes and alleviating the consequences on individuals and communities– but far from tapped to its full potential. However, in the context of the crisis it is also essential to guard against the potential risks of exploitation of volunteers, replacing paid with unpaid work and undermining the role of the Welfare State.

EAPN supports the role of volunteering as a means of empowerment and participation, community activism and in promoting social inclusion, but not cheap labour. 2011 should help to put volunteering and participation high on the EU's political agenda, as a cornerstone in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. In this regard, volunteering should be an active ingredient of the delivery of EU 2020 Strategy.

EU 2020 Strategy focuses on promoting smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and has made the reduction of at least 20 million people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, one of its 5 key priorities.

It has also recognized the importance of mobilizing all actors, including civil society in the design, delivery and evaluation of policies to deliver on these objectives.

5. EAPN's key concerns

EAPN is concerned about the current situation, with austerity measures and the use of volunteering as a stop gap when public services are reduced, which could be jeopardizing the efforts of thousands of volunteers, and compromising the assistance of people in need, as well as undermining the role and effectiveness of the Welfare State.

EAPN underlines that Member States must not exploit volunteering as a means of cheap labour; *it is important to ensure that voluntary activity is additional to public services and not a replacement of them, and that use is made of the specific value-added of volunteering activity and commitment. Funding and commissioning authorities must implement guidelines and ensure the resources to avoid this.*

EAPN is also concerned about the lack of sufficient recognition and protection of the ones who volunteer.

- Volunteers are not “pseudo workers”, who can support everything... and even have to be thankful for the experience. They must not bear the gap left by salaried workers, switching from one activity to another, without clear explanations, proper training, or without knowing the standards for their work. *They cannot be treated as the “disposable” parts in the machinery.*
- Volunteers’ contribution should be clearly appreciated. Misguidance, bureaucracy and lack of transparency sometimes adversely affect volunteers. Volunteers who do not feel valued for their contribution soon lose motivation and the organization risks losing quality volunteers with skills and commitment to offer. Menial or highly repetitive activities may also complete a frustrating picture. Many volunteers experience “the burn out syndrome” - a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in situations that are emotionally demanding. *This “burn out syndrome” appears when their work has no meaning and stress continuously outweighs support and rewards, and/or when they do not feel an important part of the organization.*
- Volunteering does not mean an excuse for exploitation. People experiencing poverty who organize together in local associations to improve conditions in their communities should not be expected to bear all costs – financial, social and political... *People should be enabled to participate, to represent their communities, to engage in governance also has direct costs which need to be met, through adequate financing.*
- Volunteers should not be treated as “punch-bags”. Volunteers are often exposed to accounts of human pain and suffering which may affect their personal thoughts, feelings, beliefs and actions and influence the decision to quit. “Compassion fatigue” is one term used for this inherent “cost of caring.”¹⁸ Volunteers may not have these skills, nor be aware of the consequences involving a relation with people in extreme pain, who is suffering or who is going through very complicated situations, involving vulnerable persons as children or chronically ill persons. *Volunteers who are not prepared to cope with these situations must be helped to understand their limitations, and must be supported by strategies for self-care in order to prevent “compassion fatigue”.*¹⁹

¹⁸ “Education and Debriefing: Strategies for Preventing Crises in Crisis-Line Volunteers”, Audrey Kinzel and Jo Nanson, 2000, Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention, Vol.21, Number 3, <http://www.psycontent.com/content/120208/>

¹⁹ The dictionary meaning of compassion is a "feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by suffering or misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the pain or remove its cause". The concept of Compassion Fatigue has been around only since 1992; it fit the description of nurses who were worn down by the daily hospital emergencies and now it means how and why practitioners and volunteers lose their compassion as a result of

Volunteers need to have a previous preparation to do this kind of volunteering (training, self-help groups, psychological help and support). It is also important to define clearly the limits between the role of the professionals and the role of volunteers.

EAPN is particularly concerned about the following issues:

- ***The misuse of volunteering as job replacement:*** volunteering can be a stepping stone to employment, but never a replacement; it should never be used as a cheap substitute for paid work, especially when public sector services are being cut in many Member States.
- ***The mandatory volunteering within the “Make Work Pay” policies:*** for instance, forcing people with minimum income revenues into volunteering as a requirement to continue receiving minimum income or unemployment benefit under threat of sanctions, in certain countries (NL, DK)
- ***The lack of a clear legal framework on volunteering:*** in certain Member States and especially at the EU level, this is a crucial problem for the development of volunteering. This problem concretely translates, for many civil society and volunteer organizations, in disadvantages in terms of taxation, insurance and reimbursement of expenses, with a volunteer sector not legally identified. In more personal terms, the lack of a clear legal recognition of volunteers’ contribution to society and of the safety requisites regarding their work may lead to problems which range from frustration and abandonment, to suffering from the “burn out syndrome” and other behavioural issues.
- ***The socio-economic barriers which prevent volunteering:*** gender issues, ethnic or migrant background, age, health condition, family difficulties and/or responsibilities, long-hour jobs, and – above all- poverty and social exclusion, can play as discriminating factors which prevent people from volunteering.
- ***The glass ceilings within voluntary organizations:*** despite the fact that women outnumber men as volunteers, there are frequently glass ceilings blocking female upward advancement within the non-profit organizations’ boards.²⁰

their work with the suffering. “Compassion Fatigue: An Introduction”, Charles Figley, 2008, Green Cross Foundation, <http://www.georgiadisaster.info/MentalHealth/MH22%20SelfCare/Compassion%20Fatigue%20Intro.pdf>

²⁰ Numerous studies have found women to be more public spirited than men, volunteering more and giving a larger share of their income to nonprofits. Yet in the theoretical literature on the nonprofit sector, the role of women has been largely neglected. “Gender and the Nonprofit Sector”, Nuno S. Themudo, 2009, Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly August, vol. 38 no. 4663-683, <http://nvs.sagepub.com/content/38/4/663.abstract> The survey, “Ambition and Gender at Work” by Europe’s Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) found almost three-quarters of women believed a “glass ceiling” exists, barring them from senior roles. Although the survey was not specific on charities or on the NGO sector, it shows the bias in society. http://www.i-l-m.com/downloads/resources/press/Ambition_and_Gender_at_Work.pdf

6. EAPN's key recommendations

For EAPN, volunteering is considered as an active tool for inclusion. For example, empowering people in poverty as a step towards participation, empowerment and inclusion – a step in the pathway approach.

For EAPN, volunteering can also be a pathway of solidarity and for social change; alliances, platforms and networks -with an active role as political and community advocates, and a role to empower people experiencing poverty and social exclusion- are engines for change in the fight against poverty. However EAPN also stands firm against the exploitation of volunteers as substitute workers, or as part of a strategy to roll back the Welfare State.

1. To all stakeholders

1) To volunteer “with” people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and to promote volunteering “of” people experiencing poverty and social exclusion – EAPN has signed the ‘CEV Brussels Declaration’, which stimulates actions amongst all key stakeholders to:

- Boosting the contribution of volunteers and volunteer organizations to promoting empowerment and social inclusion: Volunteering “with” people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.
- Enhance the inclusiveness of volunteering and its potential to be a means of empowerment; social inclusion and active citizenship – Promoting volunteering “of” people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.
- Ensure that volunteering is a right for all and guarding against exploitation: providing and encouraging an enabling legal environment for the active participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.
- Recognize and boost the potential of volunteering as a means for personal development and to acquire competences and experiences which can help people’s self confidence, connection to their communities and to enhance employability.²¹

2) To develop better, innovative mechanisms to engage people experiencing poverty and social exclusion as volunteers, both in non-profit organizations as volunteers, in which they may have been users, supporting them to participate as representatives in the governance structures --eg Boards and in dialogue with government representatives in consultation processes--, or in helping in the development of self-organized initiatives to promote community solutions and social change.

3) To address the socio-economic barriers which prevent people experiencing poverty and social exclusion from volunteering including the need to reimburse as appropriate the direct expenses that arise from volunteering.

2. To the European Commission

1) To support and promote voluntary-based organizations in the governance of EU2020, recognizing their added-value to a more inclusive and sustainable EU society; bringing in their experiences and views during the follow-up, delivery and assessment of the Strategy; granting

²¹ CEV Brussels Declaration “Volunteering is a chance to get out of a vicious circle. It’s a positive move forward – lets you know that things aren’t over”, European Volunteer Centre. <http://community.cev.be/resources/view.html?id=227>

funds for enlarging the participation of people who are discriminated against, due to personal or social disadvantages.

2) To draw up a code of guidance, particularly related to public procurement guidelines to ensure that the exploitation of volunteers as substitute workers is not encouraged or used to drive down costs in provision of key public services.

3) To start to work on a White Paper on volunteering and active citizenship²²—recognizing the contribution that volunteering makes to the social and health care sector and national and local governments to raise awareness of the contribution of volunteering to reducing social and health inequalities in order to increase the number of people who engage in voluntary activities. It is important to push for the adoption of an EU-wide favourable legal environment for volunteers, including the right of all citizens and residents to volunteer, regardless of their social or legal status as well as protection against compulsory volunteering or exploitation.

4) To foster virtual volunteering in order to promote equal opportunities and to combat the social, digital gap – virtual volunteering is a term describing a volunteer who completes tasks, in whole or in part, off-site from the organization or association they are participating in, using the Internet and a home, school, work computer or other Internet-connected device. Virtual volunteering is also known as online volunteering, cyber service, telementoring, and teletutoring, and various other names. Virtual volunteering means working to benefit a non-profit organization, virtual group, school, government program or other not-for-profit entity, as opposed to a for-profit business. A great advantage of this modality is that people who live in centres, institutions, who have difficulties to leave their homes or people with disabilities have also the possibility to become a volunteer and to actively engage with others for the benefit of themselves and their local communities.

5) To support more transnational schemes in which volunteers, working with anti-poverty organisations involving people from the groups concerned, could gather, debate and make proposals to shared EU social problems – particularly in the areas such as: social rights and social protection, homelessness, integration of Roma and Traveller and migrants, and tackling xenophobia and racism suffered by EU citizens in other Member States and third country nationals.

²² Eurodiaconia, Position Paper, Op. Cit. According to SOLIDAR, “The lively debate of a lack of a clear legal framework on volunteering, in certain Member States and especially at the EU level, has been ongoing for years, and seen as a crucial problem for the development of volunteering. This problem concretely translates, for many civil society and volunteer organizations, in disadvantages in terms of taxation, insurance and reimbursement of expenses, with a volunteer sector not legally identified. To the other extreme, there are countries where the volunteer sector is subject to an infinite number of rules, stemming from different areas, being for instance youth or sport related laws, therefore increasing the legislative burden and creating confusion for organizations”. *“Volunteering and the European Year on Volunteering 2011”*, Solidar, 2010, briefing paper 26, December. www.solidar.org

3. To Member States

1) To grant volunteers' rights and protection²³ - to identify and eliminate, in their laws and practice, any obstacles which directly or indirectly prevent people from engaging in voluntary action, and to reduce tax pressure which penalizes voluntary action and give voluntary workers legal status and adequate social protection while respecting their independence, and removing financial obstacles to volunteering (as in 2001 Council of Europe Recommendation). EAPN stresses the importance of opening up current volunteering programmes to people in poverty, recognizing learning and skills gained through volunteering.

2) To draw up specific guidelines, particularly related to public procurement to prevent/stop the misuse of volunteering as a cheap substitute for public services and to reduce costs – this is particularly on the cards now explicitly in many countries, as a reaction to cuts in social spending and severely threatens the quality of public services as well as the long-term commitment to the Welfare State and the European Social Model.

3) To recognize and support the role of voluntary-based networks, alliances and civic platforms engaged in the fight against poverty and social exclusion as valid interlocutors– taking them onboard in the governance of the National Reform Programmes and in the National Action Plans and National Strategies for social protection and social inclusion, regarding their impact on increasing inequalities; more specifically, considering their voices as experts in assessing the social consequences of exiting the crisis, the guidelines set out to fight against poverty and social exclusion, and the delivery of social inclusion policies.

4) To consider the appropriateness of volunteering and be sure to focus on the effects of volunteering on the recipients of assistance, not just on the volunteers themselves; avoid falling into the trap of “killing with kindness”.

4. To committed corporate business and foundations

To increase volunteering – civic engagement has become an important component of the corporate value creation chain. It is not only the reputation or image of a company that are at stake, but real, concrete figures. Civic engagement by companies, as part of corporate social responsibility can be important if companies mainstream social inclusion concerns within the

²³ A good example is the Spanish Law on Voluntary Work, 2006. Among the volunteers' rights defined by the Law are the following: 1) to receive information, training, guidance, support and materials necessary for the performance of the duties which are assigned to them; 2) to grant them respect for their freedom, dignity, privacy and beliefs; 3) to participate actively in the nonprofit organization where they are working, collaborating in the development, design, implementation and evaluation of programs, according to the statutes or rules; 4) to be insured against accidents and illness arising directly from the voluntary activity, with the characteristics and insured capital established by regulation; 5) to be reimbursed for expenses incurred in carrying out their activities; 6) to have a proper identification, for example an accreditation badge of their status as voluntary; 7) to engage in activities under proper conditions of health and safety in terms; 8) to get the social respect and appreciation for the social value of their contribution. Among their duties: 1) To commit to the organization they are part of, respecting its mission, purposes and regulations; 2) to keep confidential the information received and known in the development of voluntary activity; 3) to reject any material consideration which may receive either the beneficiary or others involved in its action; 4) to respect the rights of the beneficiaries of their voluntary activity; 5) to act diligently and caring; 6) to participate in training tasks provided by the organization, in concrete terms, related to the activities and tasks assigned, and which will require a permanent basis to maintain quality of the rendered services; 7) to follow the instructions which are appropriate for the purpose given in the mandated activities; 8) to use proper accreditation and distinctive organization; 9) to respect and care for the material resources given to them by the organizations.

running of their companies (e.g. in relation to fair , quality working conditions) and use volunteering to develop concrete links and ties with their local communities, helping to promote solutions to social challenges and strengthen social capital.

5. To the non-profit sector and other stakeholders

1) To challenge discrimination and promote diversity within the organizations and members by equal-opportunities monitoring.

- **Facilitating and promoting the access of migrants and ethnic minorities to volunteering, as well as other groups experiencing poverty and social exclusion** –migrants are often seen as beneficiaries of projects, but they are less considered to be eligible as volunteers. They face barriers such as: discrimination and isolation, lack of language command; lack of confidence; inhibitions; lack of awareness; low self-esteem; cultural and gender barriers. Like membership in associations and projects, volunteering is a sign of social participation and inclusion. Consequently, migrant’s participation should be increased, with the gain of their potential added-value of cultural diversity and experiences.
- **Combating glass ceilings and barriers blocking women advancement** – non-profit organisations should take the lead voluntarily and set transparent, self-imposed targets for female representation at boards and senior executive levels. Gender equality at the highest levels is evidently a significant leadership challenge for the non-profit sector.
- **Developing more openness to incorporate representatives of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion**, as part of the managerial or directive boards.

2) To increase the professional quality of volunteer management. Voluntary work should be organized on the basis of job profiles. At the same time clear boundaries need to be drawn defining the scope and role of work carried out by volunteers and paid workers. More professional support is needed for volunteers to ensure that they derive satisfaction from their contribution and to ensure that they are aware of and comply with best practice and standards in the field for which they are volunteering.²⁴ At the same time, volunteers should have various options involving different levels of responsibility, so that anyone can find individually tailored forms of volunteering depending on their qualifications and personal wishes. “Burn-out syndrome”, “compassion fatigue” and pathological stress should and could be prevented and monitored.

²⁴ Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe, 2010, loc. Cit. Carola Schaaf-Derichs, Managing Director of “Treffpunkt Hilfsbereitschaft”, Berlin State Volunteering Agency (Germany).

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