

Warsaw Declaration for Sustainability of Action on Voluntary Activities and Active Citizenship (DESAVAC), December 01 2011

1. In the European Union, almost 100 million citizens¹ of all ages invest their time and talents to make a positive contribution to their community by volunteering in civil society organisations, youth clubs, hospitals, schools, in sport clubs, etc. For the European Commission, volunteering is an active expression of civic participation which strengthens common European values such as solidarity and social cohesion. Volunteering also provides important learning opportunities, because involvement in voluntary activities can provide people with new skills and competences. Volunteering plays an important role in sectors as varied and diverse as education, youth, culture, sport, environment, health, social care, consumer protection, humanitarian aid, development policy, research, equal opportunities and external relations.²

Volunteering is proved to be good for the well being of persons, strengthens the EU democratic values and social cohesion.

2. The Council Decision of 27 November 2009 on the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship (2011) (2010/37/EC) constitutes the main objectives on the European Year, that reflect the objectives of national, regional and local level policies for promoting and supporting voluntary activities and active citizenship, as well as objectives on NGO-Action:

- *work towards an enabling environment for volunteering in the EU* in order to anchor volunteering as part of promoting civic participation and people-to-people activities in an EU context and address existing obstacles to voluntary activities, where appropriate and necessary;
- *empower organisers of voluntary activities to improve the quality of voluntary activities* in order to facilitate voluntary activities and help organisers to implement new types of voluntary activities and to encourage networking, mobility, cooperation and synergies within civil society and between civil society and other sectors in an EU context;
- *recognise voluntary activities* in order to encourage appropriate incentives for individuals, companies and volunteer-development organisations and gain recognition for volunteering at EU level and in the Member States by policymakers, civil society organisations, public institutions, the formal and non-formal education sector and employers for skills and competences developed through volunteering;
- *raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering* in order to raise general awareness of the importance of volunteering as an expression of civic participation which contributes to issues which are of common concern of all Member States, such as a harmonious societal development and social cohesion.

¹ Study on Volunteering in the European Union – final report, GHK, p. 57

<http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/eyv2011/doc/Volunteering%20in%20the%20EU%20Final%20Report.pdf>

² EC-Citizenship-Focus on EYV 2011 http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/focus/focus840_en.htm

3. The European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 did not only make explicitly visible the enormous value and engagement of volunteers all over Europe, but started a lot of diverse initiatives to promoting the year's targets, which could be continued on the basis of the *Council Conclusions on the role of voluntary activities in social policy*³, *Council conclusions on the role of voluntary activities in sport in promoting active citizenship*⁴, the European Commission's *Communication on EU Policies and Volunteering: Recognising and Promoting Crossborder Voluntary Activities in the EU*⁵ and the EYV 2011 Alliance Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe P.A.V.E.

4. We welcome with satisfaction that European Commission recognises the importance of the volunteering with relation to up-coming European thematic years, namely the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012. Thus, volunteering role in contributing to social cohesion and improving the social situation of the elderly people, strengthening their sense of belonging to the society as well as fostering European identity and active citizenship shall be underlined. However, there are several practical actions that need to be taken up in order to foster volunteering development in Europe, as already recognised in the documents mentioned above.

5. The assistance of the media in promoting its goals during the EYV 2011 needs to be continued for the future, while social research in the volunteering field and the provision of comparable data at European level on the measurement of volunteering and active citizenship should be intensified.

6. Therefore, participants of the Warsaw EU-Closing Conference of the EYV 2011 request all stakeholders, the Member States, European Parliament, European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the EYV 2011-Alliance of NGOs and the civil society to continue their efforts in promoting and supporting volunteering and active citizenship.

7. The NCB's would like to contribute into the final report of the European Commission on the results of the European Year of Volunteering 2011 as is foreseen to be published at the end of 2012.

8. The European Commission is invited to develop – respecting the national, regional and local competences and needs - adequate structures for exchange and cooperation of all stakeholders and civil society in the field of volunteering beyond the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011. A focal point on volunteering within the European Commission is needed.

NATIONAL COORDINATING BODIES

FOR THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF VOLUNTEERING PROMOTING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP 2011

³ Doc. 14061/1/11 REV 1

⁴ No number yet

⁵ COM(2011) 568 final