

The Value of Volunteering to Communities and Society

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Limiting the value of volunteering to being merely a replacement vehicle for delivery of social and public services, as is the case in some areas of Europe today, demonstrates a failure to fully appreciate the role, value and ultimately the impact of volunteering.

As an expression of active citizenship, volunteering should be a complementary feature of the European social model and not be harnessed as integral feature of it. Europe is undoubtedly undergoing a political and economic transformation and volunteering will remain a constant feature of European life despite this changing environment. Civil society has a vital role to play in ensuring that in focusing on economic growth and financial stability, the transformation does not inadvertently impact negatively on such an important aspect of Europe's social fabric as its volunteers.

The impact volunteering can have however is variable and depends on the volunteering policies in which it operates and on the strategic multi-stakeholder partnerships that are developed to support and implement those policies. [CEV](#) advocates to ensure that the changes to the overall policy framework in Europe will enable and facilitate volunteering to remain a central feature of European society – If the Euro is the beating heart of Europe then we can see volunteers as the lungs – breathing life in Europe for the years to come. There is no Europe without volunteers; they contribute greatly to both social Europe and its economy. In this regard:

- Volunteers deserve to be celebrated with due and appropriate recognition.
- Volunteer-involving organisations deserve to be supported with an enabling volunteering infrastructure.
- Europe and its citizens rely on and deserve quality volunteering in an appropriate legal framework where the rights and responsibilities of volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations are respected.
- Volunteering should not be exploited as a solution to Europe's challenges but be properly valued as an expression of European values, a legitimate counterbalance to injustice and an appropriate expression of solidarity amongst its citizens.

The recent CEV conference "[Cross-Border Volunteering What is it For?](#)" focused on several aspects of the fields of activity where volunteering has a particular impact and makes a special contribution to European life:

- European Values and Building Citizenship
- Reconciliation/ Building Communities
- Humanitarian Aid and Development
- Gaining Skills/ Enhancing Employability
- Shared Learning
- Civil Protection

Under these headings, participants in the conference identified the following [ideas, concepts and actions](#) (see below image) as the products and outcomes of volunteering in Europe. The list is by no means comprehensive but never the less gives a strong indication that volunteers are key to the future of Europe and the society of equal opportunities, fairness and inclusivity that most citizens seek.

[More information](#)

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Resum:

Gabriella Civico, [CEV Director](#), exposes their ideas about the values of volunteering as a tool for communities and society



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