



## European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011

More than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities, live solidarity and through this make a difference to our society. A Eurobarometer survey in 2006 revealed that 3 out of 10 Europeans claim to be active in a voluntary capacity and that close to 80% of respondents feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life in Europe. In addition, the year 2011 will be the tenth anniversary of the 2001 International Year of Volunteers of the United Nations.

The overall purpose of the European Year will be to encourage and support — notably through the exchange of experience and good practices — the efforts of the Community, the Member States, local and regional authorities to create the conditions for civil society conducive to volunteering in the European Union and to increase the visibility of voluntary activities in the EU.

The specific **objectives** of the European Year shall be as follows:

To work towards an enabling environment for volunteering in the EU and address existing obstacles to voluntary activities.

- To empower organisers of voluntary activities to improve the quality of voluntary activities, 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.
- To 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.
- To raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering as an expression of civic participation.

Taking into account the particularities of the situation in each Member State and all forms of volunteering, for the purpose of the Year the term "**voluntary activities**" refers to **all types of voluntary activity, whether formal, non-formal or informal which are undertaken of a person's own free will, choice and motivation, and is without concern for financial gain.**

### How will the Year be organised?

- **European level.** The European Commission shall implement the European Year at EU level. The Commission shall convene meetings of the national coordinating bodies as well as of representatives of European organisations or bodies active in the field of volunteering and stakeholders to assist the Commission in implementing the European Year at Community level.
- **National level.** Each country has designated a 'national coordinating body' responsible for organising its participation in the European Year and shall inform the Commission of that designation. Check the list of national coordinating bodies
- **Consultation with civil society.** In carrying out its actions, in particular when drawing up the national programme, the national coordinating bodies shall closely consult and cooperate with a wide range of relevant stakeholders, including civil society organisations and where appropriate the national agencies or contact points of relevant Community programmes.

### Planned activities

Activities will take place both at European and national level, regional and local level involving civil society, local and regional authorities. They will include exchange of experience and good practices, studies and research, conferences and events, and information and promotion campaigns to disseminate key messages.

EU activities may include a common logo, high visibility events and forums for exchanging experience and good practices, contests, information and communication tools and materials –including a dedicated information website-, measures to publicise the results and raise the profile of EU programmes, schemes and initiatives, surveys and studies. Activities in the Member States shall be run through the national coordination structures.

### **Funding**

The total EU budget for the period from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2011 shall be 8 million euros, of which 2 million euros will be used for the preparatory actions starting in 2010.

### **How to get involved?**

The European Year offers a wide range of possibilities for individual foundations and interest groups interested and/or active in the areas of volunteering and active citizenship to advance their mission by providing an excellent framework for promotion, networking, knowledge-sharing and partnerships both with public and private stakeholders.

We would be pleased to hear from you if:

- **You are already undertaking and/or planning to undertake activities in the area of volunteering/active citizenship and/or in relation to the European Year.** They could be featured and promoted in the EFC information and communication tools that the EFC is developing in relation to the Year as well as in the events organised by the EFC and other stakeholders in the run-up to and throughout the European Year. In particular, a workshop on the European Year will be organised in the context of the EFC Foundation Week.
- **You would like to provide input and ideas on activities the EFC could undertake in the context of the Year** to raise awareness and promote foundations' action in the fields covered by the Year.
- **You are interested to be informed about the developments** related to the European Year **and/or be involved in the activities to be organised** by the EFC, EU institutions and other stakeholders.

Please contact the EFC secretariat at [eu@efc.be](mailto:eu@efc.be).

Other opportunities to get involved in the Year at European and national level are as follows:

- **Becoming a partner of the Year.** In carrying out its actions, in particular when drawing up the national programme, the national coordinating bodies shall closely consult and cooperate with a wide range of relevant stakeholders, including civil society organisations. Contact the National Coordinating Body in your country to know more about the activities planned for the Year and to develop close and continuous cooperation during the European Year. The list of National Coordinating Bodies will be available in the coming months.
- **Taking part in the events** that will be organised at European and national level.
- **Organising your own events** and use the Year as a “hook” to advance the priorities on your agenda.

### **Where to obtain further information?**

[Read other official documents](#)

Read the [decision](#) of the European Year

Contact EFC secretariat at [eu@efc.be](mailto:eu@efc.be)