

## D2.3 REPORT

### European Volunteering Capital Candidates Community (EVCCC) Seminar

#### 10 September 2024: [Representation of the European Region Tyrol, South Tyrol, Trentino](#) *Brussels, Belgium*

On 10 September 2024 October 2023, in Brussels (Belgium), CEV hosted the European Volunteering Capital Candidates Community Seminar, which saw the participation of 90 citizens from across Europe, including 37 male, 52 female, and 1 non-binary person.

Gabriella Civico, [CEV Director](#) welcomed the participants and gave an introductory speech. She described the [European Volunteering Capital Competition](#) which is a Europe-wide open competition that aims to promote volunteering at the local level by giving recognition to municipalities that support and strengthen partnerships with volunteer centres and volunteer-involving organisations, celebrate and promote volunteering and the impact made by volunteers. She explained how it was set up to recognise and reward municipalities that support volunteers and volunteering in their communities and serve as a source of inspiration and motivation for all municipalities across Europe to make even greater efforts to promote and celebrate volunteering. She emphasised that all European Municipalities can participate and that the awarded municipality is chosen from the candidates by an international jury of key personalities connected with volunteering, representing civil society, the private, for-profit sector, as well as the EU institutions. She encouraged other municipalities that would like recognition for their volunteering initiatives that support European rights, promote equality and defend values through strengthening the local framework for volunteers, inspiring a culture of volunteerism in their community, to apply to become the European Volunteering Capital in 2027 when the new call opens in January 2025.



She emphasised the important role of cross sector cooperation for quality and impactful volunteering and highlighted that especially in times of crisis, volunteering is a key resource for community resilience, disaster preparedness and risk reduction, as well as being a driver of value creation, crucial for sustainable development. Involving volunteers at the local level in collaborations between the public and private sectors (profit and not for profit), enables different stakeholders, in communities of all sizes and contexts, to face threats together and contribute towards common, sustainable solutions to existing and future challenges. She highlighted however that the continued lack of coordination at the EU level and across Member States regarding volunteering programmes, policies and data gathering makes it impossible to have a realistic assessment and measure of the true transformative effect and value of volunteering in Europe. Consequently, it is more difficult for efficient and sustainable, evidence based policies to be developed, which leaves volunteering budgets at all administrative levels and fields increasingly vulnerable to cuts.

In the first part of the seminar, the [EV Capital 2026 Candidates](#): Ballina (IE), Maia (PT) and Rzeszów (PL) Municipalities presented their candidatures. Their [videos](#) were shown and they each gave more details about their approaches and strategies for supporting volunteers and volunteering and how they align with the priorities in the [Blueprint for European Volunteer 2030](#) and support and defend European values and democracy in the face of rising tensions and polarisation.



Jury members for the EV Capital 2026: [Jan Verdee \(CEV Board member\)](#), [Daniele Antonozzi \(CEV Board member\)](#), [Tine Radinja \(Mayor of Škofja Loka, Slovenia & European Committee of the Regions-CoR member\)](#), [Giulia Barbucci \(European Economic and Social Committee-EESC Member\)](#), [Sabrina Redolfi \(Municipality of Trento, Director of Welfare and Social Cohesion Department\)](#) and [Barbara Eglitis \(European Solidarity Corps Resource](#)

[Centre](#)) shared their impressions about the outstanding quality of the policies and strategies to support and promote volunteering in evidence in all three candidate municipalities. The remaining jury members [Michael Lefranc \(CEV Board member\)](#), [Piotr Sadowski \(Director of Volonteurope, Vice-president of the Standing Committee the Conference of INGOs, Council of Europe\)](#), [Begona Barbera Garcia \(Iberdrola Social Projects Manager, Employee Volunteering European Network-EVEN\)](#) were not able to be present in person, but also sent their congratulations to all candidates.



All candidates demonstrated how, having been launched in 2013 in the European Year of Citizens, as a legacy of the European Year of Volunteers 2011, the European Volunteering Capital Competition serves to promote and develop volunteering at the local level. The first winner of the competition was Barcelona, being awarded the title European Volunteering Capital in 2014. It was clear from the presentations from the 2026 candidates that whoever the winner, the title will be used in order to raise awareness about volunteering and volunteer-related activities at local, national, regional and EU level and their critical role in promoting and defending European rights, values and equality. Due to the fact that all candidates remain part of the European Volunteering Capital Candidates Community (EVCCC) candidates are enabled to continue to engage, exchange and interact with one another in a continuous inspiring way strengthening democracy in Europe regardless of the outcome of the competition.





[MEP March Angel](#) (S&D Group), Parliament's Bureau Member and a Quaestor, part of the 2026 Jury, followed the speeches with a [video message](#). He underlined that he is honoured to have been part of the Jury to select the winner of the 2026 European Volunteering Capital, and that the incredible candidates showcased provide inspiration across the European Union through their activities. He emphasised that the results of their actions do not go unnoticed, they are supporting their communities, improving their well-being and creating a legacy for the generations to come. They are contributing to creating a Europe in which volunteers are central in building a cohesive, sustainable and inclusive society based on solidarity and active citizenships. These values are the cornerstone of the EU and the capital candidates have shown the importance of volunteering practices in addressing moments of crisis and humanitarian emergencies like the tragic war on our continent. Many of them have been on the front line of humanitarian support and they all represent the very best in spirit and solidarity. On this point, Angel gave recognition to the municipalities that support and celebrate volunteering in their communities. He also highlighted that at the European and National level, policies need to recognize and protect volunteers and allow them to have a proper legal framework to facilitate their tasks. *"Volunteering is a powerful tool for communities improving personal well-being, building social capital and for personal development which can also improve an individual's employment prospects, however volunteers must not be exploited and used as a substitute for paid employment and this is a topic very dear to me in my work as a member of the European Parliament and in this regard I want to thank CEV for their incredible advocacy work that shows how precious the involvement of Civil Society in policy-making".*



In the second part of the event the results from Trento EV Capital 2024 were showcased while Mechelen EV Capital 2025 introduced its strategic plan for 2025 when they will hold the title.

Alberto Pedrotti from [Trento Municipality \(Trento EV Capital 2024\)](#) talked about participation and engagement as driving forces in his municipality, and Trento's experience as EV Capital. He outlined that a participatory process was utilised to develop a volunteering strategy pre-candidacy, while an additional process was created to structure the implementation of the strategy with different CSOs and citizens. He underlined the continuous engagement of the volunteering community and citizens throughout the EV Capital year in workshops, feedback sessions, working groups and other initiatives. Wider engagement of stakeholders through civil society, business,



government, schools raised over €1 million in public and private contributions, plus in-kind resources. At the inauguration, 2500 participants, 1000 volunteers, 400 students, 300 association were involved, and during the Piazza del Volontariato and study visits - over 100 volunteer organisations got involved, with over 200 events held between January and August 2024, and many more planned for the rest of the year, outlined in the Capital calendar ([www.trentovolo.capital](http://www.trentovolo.capital)). With this award they strengthen, inspire and celebrate volunteering and the impact made by volunteers at the local level, particularly through partnerships with stakeholders from different sectors such as volunteer centres, organisations that involve volunteers, and the for-profit sector.



Ellen Vervoort from [Mechelen Municipality \(EV Capital 2025\)](#) presented their plans and activities for 2025. She highlighted they are honoured to be awarded the European Volunteering Capital 2025. It's a recognition of Mechelen's long-standing commitment to fostering a caring and accessible community, where everyone is encouraged to participate in community life. They have embraced the spirit of civic engagement, working together to strengthen social cohesion. People are given opportunities to showcase their skills and talents, contributing to the growth of the city and enriching its culture. She underlined that now, as the European Volunteering Capital, Mechelen set its sights on becoming an even more welcoming and inclusive city. With every citizen involved, from the youngest to the oldest, the vision is clear: to build a future where kindness, compassion, and togetherness define the soul of the city. She emphasised that in 2025 they will focus to make volunteering inclusive and accessible for everyone; inspire, learn and share good practices and connect and create opportunities. They strive to recognize, value and boost volunteering in Mechelen, Belgium and Europe.



The event finished with a reminder that the [European Volunteering Capital 2026](#) will be chosen from the applicant municipalities by an international jury of experts who assess the extent of their strategies, policies, and programmes in connection to the Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030 and to the CEV Volunteering Policy Statements. Evidence about their engagement with, and support for, the European Solidarity Corps when the applicant comes from an EU member state will also be taken into account. The winning municipality will be announced at the Trento EV Capital closing ceremony on 29th November ahead of International Volunteer Day on December 5th.