

D2.3 REPORT

European Volunteering Capital Candidates Community (EVCCC) Seminar

14-16 May 2024 Trento, Italy

In Trento (Italy), the European Volunteering Capital Candidates Community Seminar saw the participation of **102 participants** from **20 European countries**, including 39 males, 62 females and one non-binary. It was divided into three parts: the first part dedicated to visiting local associations and their volunteering projects, the second to sharing best practices, and the third to discussing the network's future. A final ceremony was dedicated to mark the 10th anniversary of the competition and the network.

1. The Opening



On 14 May 2024, “La piazza del volontariato” was opened with the presence of Alberto Pedrotti, *Councilor for Welfare and Community, Municipality of Trento*, Gabriella Civico, *Director of CEV – European Volunteering Center*, Daniele Antonozzi, *CEV Board Member*, Giorgio Casagrande, *President of CSV Trentino*, Mario Tonina, *Councilor for Health, Social*

Policies and Cooperation, Autonomous Province of Trento and Sabrina Redolfi, *Director of Welfare and Social Cohesion Service, Municipality of Trento*. La Piazza gathered approximately 100 associations, including CEV in Piazza Duomo to present the strength and variety of volunteer activities at local level to more than 1000 people.



2. Study Visit



Representatives of local authorities and Associations of volunteers from the European Volunteering Capital Candidates Community (EVCCC) had the opportunity to visit the **Emporio Solidale**, located in the Cristo Re Parish (Via Bresadola, 10 Trento). This food pantry, run by volunteers, offers food distribution in a shop format. The volunteers mentioned the project “*Mani in Pasta*”:

a day when the youth volunteers dedicate their time to collect essential goods for the food pantry supporting vulnerable people in the local community.

Ms Paola Fontana, from the municipality of Trento, offered a comprehensive presentation on the **Nutrire Trento project**, a collaboration between the Municipality and the University of Trento, producers, business associations, researchers, professionals, schools, citizen groups, and associations aimed at promoting conscious consumption, sustainable production, and bridging the gap between producer and consumer.



Participants had the opportunity to ask questions about the legal framework of the two projects and the logistics of the warehouse and the shop. Moreover, they asked about the selection of beneficiaries and their relations with local authorities.



On the 16th of May, network members had the opportunity to visit other local associations divided into different groups around four distinct themes:

Theme 1: Social Inclusion, fight against food waste, responsible and sustainable consumption, and homelessness.

The members visited Trentino Solidale, an organisation of 700 volunteers who run a food bank. **Mr Giorgio Casagranda**, president of the association, explained that people do not receive pre-packaged food parcels but can choose food in quantities proportional to their family unit by accessing



one of the 31 centres, spread widely throughout the city of Trento and the entire territory of the Province of Trento. Then, study visit members met the inhabitants of **Casa Orlando**, a house providing living quarters and support for homeless individuals. Finally, they visited **Emporio Edera**, where two of the founders guided the members through their food store run entirely by volunteers, sharing the values of the cooperative: attention to critical and responsible consumption, environmental, social and economic sustainability, and participatory community processes.

Theme 2: Community building and restoring public spaces.

Another group visited **La Foresta Accademia di Comunità**, a community space in a regenerated section of the Rovereto train station offering a variety of educational, social, and cultural activities while promoting community collaboration. The visit was an opportunity to share best



practices for the regeneration of public spaces and cooperation between the municipality and volunteer organisations. Then they went to **La Tana dei Papà**, a place for families, made to strengthen bonds between parents and children, and parents with other parents. La Tana dei Papà organises activities specifically for fathers and their children.

Theme 3: Collaborative Communities, community management of public spaces, digitalisation and disability.

A third group visited **Beni Comuni** and **Orto Aperto**, which were two “collaboration pacts” between citizens and the Municipality. The last of which showed how a garden can be both a source of healthy food and a concrete expression of authentic social engagement, enhancing wellbeing and generating significant relationships between volunteers. On a similar point, **La Rete - Giardino degli Aromi** was visited as a collaboration which includes middle school students and a social Cooperative in addition to the municipality. The visit showcased how caring for a public garden along the Fersina River has built competencies and allowed young generations to contribute towards the common good. Afterwards, participants had the opportunity to discuss with **Speck&Tech**, a community of people united by a passion for technology and innovation, who want to exchange ideas and knowledge about these topics and similar ones. Finally, participants visited **Spazio X**, a library managed by Noi Quartieri Trento Sud, has become a multi-functional community space, open to dialogue, knowledge, and sharing of experiences.



Theme 4: Social cohesion, youth, multiculturalism, inclusion and sports.

The last group visited **Forno Sociale Migola**, a public bakery promoting inclusion and social cohesion. It aims to generate opportunities to meet, build relationships, develop the community's potential to care for itself and strengthen its capacity to be a place of inclusion. Waiting times for leavening, a core part of the breadmaking process, provide an opportunity to forge bonds and share experiences. Then, participants went to **Progetto Fionda**, which aims to encourage volunteering amongst youth aged 16-20 while **Intrecciante**, an example of inclusion and intercultural dialogue, interweaves the stories of young people with different backgrounds and experiences united by sports.



3. EVCCC Network Next Steps exchange meeting

On the 15th of May, CEV Board members joined the municipality representatives to reflect on the network's current state and future plans. The discussion, initiated by CEV President, Ms Šehić Relić, emphasised the critical role of the EVCapital competition in promoting volunteers at the local level and the community in sharing best practices. She highlighted the importance of the EU CERV funding for being able to continually strengthen and extend the outreach of the competition. Dr. Alzbeta Brozmanova-Gregorova gave an update on the process and first ideas for the scope and framework for the “European Volunteering Capital Impact Measurement Methodology” that she is leading the development of. She underlined the importance of measuring the social impact of the European Volunteering Capital Competition despite its complex nature, as each municipality had different objectives and capacities to measure the impacts. All the participants agreed that minimum standards needed to be established and measured. They emphasised the essential role of partnerships with academics and universities to begin data collection from the candidate stage, or even earlier, and also after the Capital experience concludes as part of the legacy and longer term impact measurement. These data points will help to build knowledge to promote volunteering at the local and European levels.



Participants unanimously acknowledged the transformative impact of the competition on candidates and winners. The title of European Volunteering Capital, they agreed, has the power to significantly enhance the municipality and the region, attracting tourists and fostering organisational cohesion. It was emphasised that it also serves as a powerful tool for policymakers to understand the practical outputs and societal role of volunteering. Local or regional plans of action have been set in motion in preparation for the competition, inspiring a new wave of enthusiasm and dedication in different municipalities across Europe. Participants in the discussion also agreed that they found the study visit very interesting and

noting that they are sometimes the only way to justify the expense of visiting and travelling abroad and therefore need to be kept as a central aspect of EVCCC activities. Through the discussion, it was shared that knowing the topics as much in advance as possible would be beneficial in being able to also include suitable thematic organisations as part of the delegations together with municipality officials.

The discussion progressed to a look at the future of the Competition and the Network. Participants suggested exploring the possibility of having more regular online gatherings due to the network's added value and the need for regular interactions to keep the community active. Online meetings can also respond to staff changes to protect institutional memory and foster internal continuity.

An dedicated EVCCC online community was also proposed and created in social media focussed on professional connectivity (LinkedIn). Members of the network suggested exploring other competitions' best practices, such as the community of volunteer managers for the European Capital of Cultures. The idea of a quality label system for cities that promotes excellence in volunteering was also explored. In addition, participants suggested establishing a special day to celebrate the Capital Competition. To ensure equal opportunities for both large and small municipalities, and achieve better geographical representation, the discussions highlighted that it is essential to constantly search for new partnerships and support to expand the pool of candidates for each competition. Network members concurred that advice and coaching on participating in the competition should be made available for municipalities looking to participate.



4. The Closing Session “EVCapital @10 Celebration & Legacy”

The Closing Ceremony marked the culmination of 10 years of the European Volunteering Capital initiative. It celebrated the vital role that volunteering plays in society at all levels, from the local to the international level. Network members reiterated the importance of the competition and its enduring legacy. Delegates from Gdansk, Sligo, Padova, Cascais,

Mechelen, Aviles, and Berlin highlighted how the competition has fostered lasting networks and partnerships, and enhanced the necessary competencies required to be a candidate municipality for the European Capital of Volunteering. They emphasised the essential role of mapping existing capacities and associations, instilling a sense of hope and optimism for the future of



volunteering and community development. Salamanca and Trondheim, via video, shared the emotion and energy the competition has given them and how this is still alive in all the activities they and the associations are carrying out on a daily basis. Finally, Trento underlined that the Capital award has been the occasion to create a 5-year plan for volunteering and working groups for each thematic priority, such as corporate volunteering and competence awareness. This working group and plan have invigorated the population and the local administration, making associations visible and rallying the volunteers for a joint project. All the representatives from the municipality present and CEV were presented with a commemorative stamp dedicated to Trento as the 2024 European volunteering Capital. The stamp from the "Natural and Landscape Heritage" series was released in 250,000 copies, by the government on 3 February 2024, in partnership with Poste Italiane, the Trentino Volunteer Service Center, and the Philatelic Center of the Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, featuring an image by Michela Nanut that showed some volunteers in the foreground on a perfect Trento skyline that included the Civic Tower, the Palazzo Pretorio, the Buonconsiglio Castle, and the Science Museum.



