

CEV

CEV Multi-Stakeholder Symposium

“Effectively Communicating Volunteering: The role of PR, Media and Raising Public Awareness”

Valencia, Spain | 28th-30th April 2010

FINAL REPORT – CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS



EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE

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See also the Symposium
video on You Tube:

[http://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=3fCdM448zcs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fCdM448zcs)



EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE

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Foreword

by Nick Cater

Finding communications colour and karma as volunteering prepares for 2011

Nick Cater explores the Valencia Symposium and discovers that we are all ladybirds now

How to sum up the CEV Symposium in Valencia? Colour, karma and contrasts are what I recall.

There were the golden rules on volunteering communication the organisers requested us to prepare and the pael-la turned black with squid ink in local bars. The discovery of cause-related “karma points” rewarding online volunteers, and then the idea of consequence-free inebriation if unpaid helpers can be recruited to assist drinkers after a night out. A busy schedule of panels, workshops and more, all conducted at a relaxed Spanish pace, with plenty of food and wine. Oh, and ladybirds as an inspiration for corporate volunteering.

This Multi-Stakeholder Symposium on “Effectively communicating volunteering; the role of PR, media and raising public awareness” ticked plenty of boxes. An occasion interesting and informative, entertaining and enlightening? Big tick. Great city and venue? Tick, since stylish Valencia comes com-

plete with meeting places of stone, steel, glass and water to dazzle the eyes yet sooth the brow. A mix of friends and strangers to provoke fresh thinking and send you off with ideas aplenty to prepare for the European Year of Volunteering 2011? Tick again.

In all, more than 300 participants and speakers from the volunteering world, the business sector, governments and media in at least 30 countries - from the US, Brazil and Turkey to Spain itself and almost every other European nation - defied the threat to flights of Icelandic volcanic dust and arrived with their insights and examples of volunteer communications excellence to share and new collaborations to explore to ensure the coming year's success.

CEV had already set a Valencia challenge, warning that a changing technological landscape offered more chances to reach audiences fast, yet meant more competition, extra costs and excluded some from that new net-led world, so

Journalist, media consultant and communications volunteer, Nick Cater was among the panellists at the Valencia Symposium.

“volunteer organisations have to be strategic as to which communication channels to use, what messages to convey and how to tailor communication activities to their different interlocutors”. Online or off, volunteer agencies were quick to show that with 2011 looming, they were sharpening those strategies.

RockCorps chief executive Stephen Greene talked of attracting tens of thousands of young people to give time in the US and Europe by initially avoiding any mention of volunteering, opening conversations about their “passion point” of music and then creating a community through shared experiences. The Dutch highlighted the NL DOET - Netherlands Does - campaign that tripled its response to engage 150,000 volunteers over two days in 2010, by focusing its advertising and media work on groups, such as families, schools and sports clubs, that are easier to motivate because people like to be part of a crowd.

All the social media were on the agenda, from Twitter to Facebook and YouTube. Needing money and support to build a youth centre, Serbia’s science and environment youth organisation

Vladimir Mandić-Manda explained how video can be an easily mastered tool, allowing wide involvement in communications. Also open to all was a new site backed by Spain’s Fundacion Bip Bip, Microvoluntarios.org, that allows online volunteers to earn its “karma points” by completing “microtasks” for charities worldwide, from website design to research or translation.

Not everything was so positive. Erik Rahn of Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement, the German National Network for Civil Society, suggested that the breadth of volunteer engagement - from the roles they take to the issues they tackle - can be a problem, since “volunteering is cursed with its cross-cutting nature”, so there is a risk of the media and others losing interest in something so hard to pin down. Stephen Greene also noted the wide gap between the 67% of RockCorps volunteers who looked for more volunteering opportunities and the 35% or so who actually volunteered again within a year.

An important extra ingredient in Valencia was the growing role, and even greater potential, of corporate volunteering, with firms investing in this as both part of their corporate social responsibility and, as KPMG’s Tanya Burak explained, because it offers business benefits by assisting formal training, and delivering a more “emotionally intelligent” workforce. But the work-

force could be just the start, since Telefonica Brazil’s Cesar Rua advocated going beyond the corporate to involve the friends and family of employees. Meanwhile, the link between insects and corporate volunteering was revealed by Aysun Sayin of Turkey’s Boyner Group. Its comprehensive volunteering programme includes in-house brand building and the slogan “Come on, be a ladybird!” to urge volunteers to encourage others to take part, explaining: “In Turkey, it is believed that ladybird brings good luck, good fortune and opportunities.”

Governments - especially Hungary and Poland as the EU presidency holders in 2011 - offered their perspective on the upcoming year’s activities, and media people added their advice, with Spain’s Pura Gómez Román urging volunteer-involving organisations to create “showy actions”, ideally in the streets, while offering journalists an easier life by providing them with photographs, texts and quotable spokespeople. The UK’s Mathew Little suggested research to target stories carefully to the right media, creativity to find new angles in volunteering - “does it increase

social cohesion, bring divided communities together, improve job chances for young people?” - and taking advantage of controversy to engage in debates and gain coverage.

Drawing together many threads from the formal and informal discussions, the European Commission’s John Macdonald, head of the European Year of Volunteering 2011 Task Force, told the Symposium that the year was well on its way, with governments, volunteering organisations and businesses actively involved and €11 million committed for the year’s activities and their build-up, including goodwill ambassadors, a website, and a roadshow to highlight 2011’s thematic quarters: sport; education and training; environmental protection and sustainable energy; and social inclusion.

Reflecting the positive tone of the slogan agreed for the year, “Volunteer! Make a difference”, he added that across the EU there were 100 million people already volunteering, leaving “200 million still to come”. With that task in mind for the European Year of Volunteering 2011, I can only add: bring it on ... and do not forget the ladybirds.

CEV's 40 Golden Rules on Effectively Communicating Volunteering

Setting up a communication strategy – main elements

- 1 There is no Golden Rule – every situation is unique!
- 2 Prepare, prepare, prepare!
- 3 Precisely define your objectives
- 4 Precisely define the message you want to disseminate
- 5 Adapt the content of your message to the different target groups
- 6 Talk about people's interests and "passion points"
- 7 Formulate a clear, intelligible and attractive message
- 8 Talk both about emotions and concrete projects
- 9 Modernise the volunteering message by highlighting new dimensions of volunteering, in order to challenge its old-fashioned image
- 10 Involve volunteers themselves as important channels of communication
- 11 Use as many tools and channels of communication as possible
- 12 Build partnerships and gather supporters in order to get the necessary resources to implement your communication strategy
- 13 Assign one person as exclusively responsible for the communication strategy in order to allocate the necessary resources and time for an effective strategy
- 14 Define objectives that can produce measurable results in order to be able to assess the effectiveness of your communication strategy
- 15 Be realistic; define objectives that you can afford to implement
- 16 Assess the effectiveness of your communication strategy and learn lessons

Spotlight on three specific cases:

1. Communicating online

- 17 Be prepared to invest time in the management of your website and other online communication tools
- 18 Strategically choose which online tools to invest in, considering the results they might bring
- 19 Collect as many email addresses as possible and maintain a well-organised and updated contact database
- 20 Always make the most important and up-to-date information directly visible in your web communication tools
- 21 Communicate in a concise, clear and attractive way through emails and e-newsletters

- 22 Keep in mind that online communication is two-way and allow some space for interactions, opinions, and questions
- 23 Combine online and "offline" – traditional – communication tools and channels

2. Collaborating with media and PR and communication agencies

- 24 Identify the media and agencies you should work with, based on extensive research
- 25 Present a clear, concise and "newsworthy" message to the media
- 26 Present real and concrete stories, together with tangible data, and identify the hooks that will attract media attention
- 27 Facilitate the work of the journalists as much as possible by providing all necessary information in a brief but exhaustive way
- 28 Do not wait until journalists come to you but rather take the initiative to approach them and to build a real partnership
- 29 Be aware of controversies and take them as an opportunity for more visibility
- 30 Negotiate pro bono services with PR and communication agencies by committing them to your cause and triggering their interest
- 31 Use a diversity of partners among PR and communication agencies to trigger a sense of competition leading to more and better results

3. Communicating corporate volunteering

- 32 Convince companies' top management of the benefits of employee volunteering by referring to their CSR responsibilities and to how volunteering contributes to employees' self-development and commitment to the company
- 33 Provide clear information about the volunteering opportunities to employees
- 34 Include employee volunteers in the planning process of volunteering activities
- 35 Be in regular contact with employee volunteers and be available for questions and remarks
- 36 Acknowledge and reward employee volunteers for their contribution
- 37 Make volunteering relevant to your audience both personally and professionally
- 38 Involve employee volunteers in the communication strategy

The European Year of Volunteering – a unique opportunity to communicate volunteering

- 39 Make 2011 your year: Use the momentum created to further advance your campaigns and messages
- 40 Make the most of the European Year 2011 to widely communicate the message of volunteering!

PROGRAMME OF THE CONFERENCE

Wednesday, 28 April 2010

- 09:00** Registration
- 09:30** **Opening ceremony of the conference “Effectively Communicating Volunteering – The Role of PR, Media and Raising Public Awareness”**
- **Rita Barberá Nolla** Mayor of Valencia
 - **Rafael Blasco Castany** Fundar President
 - **Eva Hambach** CEV President
- 10.00** **Opening panel: Effectively Communicating Volunteering – What does it take?**
- Keynote Speech: **“Communicating Volunteering in Spain”**
Luis Aranguren Gonzalo, Philosopher, Director of PPC editions (Spain)
- **John Macdonald** Head of Task Force for the European Year of Volunteering 2011, European Commission
 - **Edit Bucsi Szabó** Ambassador of Hungary to Spain
 - **Kuba Wygnánski** The Unit for Social Innovation and Research “Shipyard” (Poland)
 - **Tanya Burak** Communications Manager at KPMG (UK)
 - **Ettore Degli Esposti** Head of Communications, Coordination of Volunteer Support Centres Lombardia (Italy)
- Chair: **Markus Held**, CEV Director
- 11.30** Coffee break and Communication Fair
- 13.30** Lunch
- 15.30** **A spotlight on good practice – Parallel workshops:**
- WS I**
- Video as tool to promote volunteering and Do it yourself: How to build a youth centre?**
- Domagoj Kovacic** SEEYN South East European Youth Network (Bosnia and Herzegovina);
- Danilo Tomic** SEEYN/research society “Vladimir Mandic-Manda” (Serbia).
- WS II**
- Entendiendo convivencias and “Que tu tamaño no te limite”. Pequeñas ONG que piensan a lo grande**
- Vicente Baeza** MPDL – Movimiento Por La Paz el Desarme y la Libertad (Spain);
- Isabel García-Ajofrín** Desarrollo y Asistencia (Spain).
- WS III**
- Make a Difference Caravan**
- Cristina Rigman** Pro Vobis National Volunteer Centre (Romania)

WS IV

Happy together! Should a campaign focus on groups, rather than on individuals?

Mark Molenaar MOVISIE (Netherlands)

WS V

RockCorps: Using live music, artists and pop culture to inspire youth volunteerism

Stephen Greene RockCorps (France)

WS VI

Organising the German National Volunteer’s Action Week

Erik Rahn and **Mirko Schwärzel** BBE - Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement (Germany)

17.15 Coffee break

17.45 **Practitioners’ panels**

Debate I

New technologies, the Internet and social media: How to make them work for volunteering?

Naoise McNally Volunteering Ireland (Ireland);

Yolanda Rueda Fundación Cibervoluntarios (Spain);

Matt Beard Amnesty International (Germany);

Karin Lopatta-Loibl European Commission;

Moderator – Jesús Montesinos, Journalist (Spain).

Debate II

How to talk “media”? What does it take to make it interesting?

Nick Cater Freelance Journalist (UK);

Matthew Little Freelance Journalist (UK);

Pura Gómez Journalist (Spain);

Moderator – Elaine Bradley, Volunteering Ireland (Ireland).

Debate III

How to bring the message across – Is “volunteering” still modern?

Stephen Greene RockCorps (France);

Daniel Pinazo Jaume I University (Spain);

Katie Rizvi The Little People Association (Romania);

Moderator – Andras F. Tóth, ÖKA National Volunteer Centre (Hungary).

18:45 **Reflections and conclusions of Day I**

Chair: **Susana Szabo**, France Bénévolat, CEV Vice-President

21.00 Cocktail dinner

Thursday, 29 April 2010

10:00 Challenges in practice: Devising effective strategies:

WS VII

Successful internal communication and volunteer recruitment

Aysun Sayin The Boyner Group (Turkey)

WS VIII

**Virtual Consulting Platform for Volunteering and
Hacesfalta.org – Internet project for volunteering promotion**

Eugen Baldas and
Ulrike Berger Deutscher Caritasverband/Volunteer Center
Brandenburg (Germany)

WS IX

The Italian “Charter of Representation”

Mara Georgescu Celivo – Centro Servizio al Volontariato della
provincia di Genova

WS X

**Successful examples of nation-wide PR/
communication campaigns on volunteering**

César Rúa Telefonica São Paulo (Brazil);

María Ángeles -

Alcázar García Iberdrola (Spain).

WS XI

“A look on the other side”:

What can we learn from media professionals?

Matthew Little Freelance Journalist (UK);

Nick Cater Freelance Journalist (UK).

WS XII

A look on the other side”:

What can we learn from media professionals?

Julià Castelló Journalist (Spain);

Eulalia Mas Federació Catalana del Voluntariat Social (Spain);

Pura Gómez Journalist (Spain);

Iván Sánchez Journalist for Mediasresponsible (Spain).

11.45 Coffee break and Communication Fair

12.45 Closing session of the conference

Lessons learned - Guidelines for effective communication at different levels;
And award ceremony for outstanding communication tools presented during
the conference in 3 different categories.

Chair: **Renzo Razzano**, CSVnet, CEV Vice-President

INTRODUCTION

What, Who and Where?

What does it take today to effectively communicate “volunteering”? How do we motivate people to get involved? How can we contribute to creating a positive image of volunteering in our societies? What are the best tools to communicate our work?

The first of the two CEV General Assembly conferences in 2010 took place in Valencia, Spain, between 28th and 30th April 2010, bringing together more than 300 participants from 25 different countries to discuss these questions as well as plans of action towards the upcoming European Year of Volunteering 2011. Among them were representatives of CEV members and other civil society organisations; communication experts and journalists; representatives from the European Commission including John Macdonald, the leader of the Task Force for the European Year 2011; businesses such as American Airlines, Iberdrola and Telefonica; and governments, including representatives from the Belgian, Hungarian and Polish European Council presidencies in 2010 and 2011. The conference was organised by CEV in cooperation with its member organisation, FUNDAR - Fundación de la Solidaridad y el Voluntariado de la Comunitat Valenciana, and was supported by the European Commission.

Why?

Effective internal and external communication is key in today's information society. New technologies have brought about exciting opportunities and we are able to communicate quickly and to wide audiences at the same time. At first sight, recruiting volunteers or telling successful volunteering stories to the public has become easy. However, these new opportunities have also increased “competition” for attention and created new forms of exclusion of those not having access to the Internet. And communicating can be costly both in term of finances and energy. Volunteer centres and volunteer-involving organisations have to be strategic as to which communication channels to use, what messages to convey and how to tailor communication activities to their different interlocutors. The aim of the Symposium was to discuss these various challenges and issues and identify best practices regarding volunteering projects using innovative and effective communication tools and strategies, involving the use of new media, implying forms of collaboration with the media and PR and communication specialists, or aiming at renewing the image and perception of volunteering. The Symposium attempted to identify the “Golden Rules” in the field of communicating volunteering and with regard to the various dimensions of this topic.

How?

The conference “Effectively communicating volunteering – the role of PR, media and raising public awareness” took place in the framework of the Valencia CEV Multi-Stakeholder Symposium, next to the Multi-Stakeholder Forum on the preparations towards the European Year of Volunteering 2011. The conference started with a keynote speech of Luis Aranguren Gonzalo, philosopher and director of PPC Editions, on communicating volunteering in Spain, in which he used various metaphors to refer to the different dimensions of volunteering. This was followed by an opening panel discussion involving representatives of the European Commission, the Hungarian and Polish EU Presidencies, a CEV member organisation, and the business sector, who discussed the question of how to effectively communicate volunteering, what the message should be, and which tools can be used. In twelve different workshops various communication projects were then presented by CEV members and other stakeholders, and three panels of practitioners de-

bated the use of new technologies and social media in the volunteering area; cooperation with the media; and effective ways to bring the message of volunteering across. In addition, during the whole conference, various organisations and companies had the opportunity to display their communication tools and strategies in a Communication Fair consisting of 25 stands. With the Communication Awards, the participants could vote for the best stand, the best workshop and the best speaker's contribution.

What does this report contain?

Rather than literally reporting on the manifold discussions held in the different sessions, this report seeks to identify and highlight the main conclusions that have been drawn in terms of "Golden Rules" for communicating volunteering in the most effective way, looking at the various dimensions of communication, some specific cases, and the upcoming European Year of Volunteering as an opportunity for communicating volunteering. No less than 40 Golden Rules have been formulated during the conference and are compiled in this report. The different sections are illustrated by examples of projects and statements drawn from the debates and workshops.

The first chapter "Setting up a communication strategy - main elements", addresses the different dimensions to take into account when designing a communication strategy, including the objectives, the message, the tools and activities and the importance of assessing the impact of any communication strategy. The second chapter "Spotlight on three specific cases" looks more deeply at how to effectively communicate volunteering in the following specific situations: communicating through Internet; collaborating with the media and PR and communication agencies; and communicating corporate volunteering. Finally the third chapter concludes the report by considering the European Year of Volunteering 2011 as a unique opportunity to widely communicate about volunteering and raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering all over Europe.

The report also comprises three appendices – an address book of the organisations involved, the participants' list and a bibliography – as well as the DVD of the conference which compiles the various PowerPoint presentations, videos and other communication material presented during the Symposium.

» In addition, a video summarising the Symposium and providing a glimpse of the event is accessible on the video-sharing website 'You Tube' at :
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fCdM448zcs>

CEV would like to thank FUNDAR - Fundación de la Solidaridad y el Voluntariado de la Comunitat Valenciana, for having hosted the conference; all speakers and workshop presenters who agreed to share their expertise and knowledge through the workshops and panel discussions; the participants for their massive presence and their active contribution in the discussions; and the volunteer proofreader Miriam O'Brien for her contribution to this publication. CEV also extends a special "thank you" to Ángel Varela Pena, who realised the film of the conference, and to Nick Cater, who contributed to it as well as to this report.

Aurélie Storme

CEV – the European Volunteer Centre
Brussels, July 2010

I. SETTING UP A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY – MAIN ELEMENTS

Although more than 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary activities today, volunteering is still a very unknown sector and many people remain unaware of its concrete impact as well as of the ways they can get involved as volunteers in their daily life; the advocacy process has not yet been effective enough to convince policy-makers to make volunteering one of their policy strategies' priorities; and volunteering remains perceived by many as an old-fashioned activity reserved to a restricted number of people.

As **Markus Held**, CEV Director, formulated: "We, as volunteer organisations do not communicate enough. We are very good at organising volunteering, we are very good at training volunteers, but we are not very good at communicating all the nice stories which are behind volunteering". Volunteer organisations' communication strategies should be improved in order to make volunteering accessible to all and recognised by everyone, and to allow for a strong volunteering infrastructure to be put in place thanks to enabling policies and adequate support. What are the main elements of an effective communication strategy? And what are the concrete recommendations that can be drawn from the discussions held during the Symposium?

A first Golden Rule that can be formulated, in relation to these questions, is that there is actually no Golden Rule. Indeed there is not one strict rule that can be defined, in the sense that every communication strategy is very specific and designed in the framework of a unique situation, addressed to a particular group of people, in a particular context, and aiming at disseminating specific messages. The different elements of a communication strategy depend on many factors, which makes it impossible to define one intangible line of action that can be followed in every cases. Thus, some clues and suggestions can be formulated, such as the Golden Rules that are compiled in this report, but they will always have to be adapted to the particular situation in which a specific communication strategy is developed.

GOLDEN RULE 1

There is no Golden Rule – every situation is unique!

GOLDEN RULE 2

Prepare, prepare, prepare!

A general recommendation that was agreed upon by most delegates on the global process of designing any communication strategy was the importance of good preparation of the communication

process before initiating any activity: research and precise knowledge of what your objectives, targets and tools are, is indeed essential, as this section will prove it. The planning of a communication strategy will depend on these various elements and will require thorough preparation in terms of collecting case histories, bringing together skills and experience, designing the budget, and assessing the work one organisation can afford.

This chapter outlines successively the following dimensions of communication which were addressed during the conference, and which are crucial to consider when designing a communication strategy:

- The objectives
- The message
- The tools and channels of communication
- The assessing process of a communication strategy's impact

1. The objectives

GOLDEN RULE 3

Precisely define your objectives

When planning any communication strategy, it is important to firstly identify precisely what are the objectives to be achieved. The ultimate aim must be kept in mind in order to ensure that all communication activities lead to the achievement of this aim and do not miss the target. The main general objectives of communicating volunteering that were identified during the conference can be grouped in 3 main categories:

» Fostering volunteering and maintaining consistent civic engagement

A permanent mission of volunteer organisations is to motivate more people to get involved in volunteering. In this aim, they need to be able to communicate efficiently about the multiplicity of volunteering opportunities and about the benefits of volunteering both to society and to the volunteers themselves. In this regard, effective communication will also aim to raise wide media attention as this will contribute to spreading the message as widely as possible and reach more people.

Effective communication built on strong and convincing arguments should also serve the objective of putting volunteering high on the political agenda of decision-makers in order for enabling policies to be designed in favour of volunteering and its infrastructure, making it easier for citizens to get engaged.

Finally, efficient internal communication with the volunteers will also be an important factor to ensure a constant commitment and motivation from them. A close connection with the volunteers, a clear and consistent communication about their mission and the importance of the cause they work for, and permanent availability of the volunteer organisations' staff to answer their questions and inquiries are key to keeping volunteers committed to the project and willing to continue to get involved.

» Raising public awareness of the value and impact of volunteering, and gathering support

A second important general objective of communicating volunteering is to raise awareness about its actual impact in order to gather more support from the general public but also from various stakeholders such as governments and businesses.

Here again, effective communication with the relevant authorities to advocate enabling volunteering policies is crucial, as well as gaining support from businesses by communicating the benefits of corporate volunteering for companies and the possibilities to include volunteering in their CSR strategies.

Celebrating volunteers and the input they bring to society is another way to increase recognition among the general public and different stakeholders, as well as bringing to the forefront the nice stories that are associated with volunteers.

» Increasing the efficiency of volunteering and share best practices and lessons learnt

Consistent, effective and clear internal communication with the volunteers through regular information-sharing and close supervision will ensure that the task is done in an efficient manner and according to what is expected.

"We want more to be known about the benefits of volunteering; we want policy-makers to care about and foster those benefits; and we want more people to be involved in spreading those benefits around Europe and beyond."

John Macdonald, leader of the European Commission Task Force for the European Year 2011

On the other hand, improved efficiency will also depend on the ability of volunteer organisations from various regions and countries to network and share best practices and lessons learnt. The more they communicate and exchange among themselves, the more they can learn about successful and unsuccessful experiences and draw lessons from these experiences.

Besides these three categories, any communication campaign will have to define its specific objectives, which will depend on several factors including the particular field in which the associated project or action takes place, the target groups, the general context in which the communication process is carried out and the tools that are available.

2. The message

"More than the tools, the message primarily matters"

Renzo Razzano, CSVnet, CEV Vice-President

The message is the sine qua non condition of any communication process; without a substantial message you cannot draw the attention of citizens

nor decision-makers or any other stakeholder. Moreover, the message needs to be precisely defined before being conveyed as it will have to fulfil several requirements in order to be as effective as possible and reach every target. According to **Matt Beard**, Marketing Director at Amnesty International Germany, the message is indeed much more important than the medium; a communication strategy using very popular media or high-visibility events can completely miss its objective if the content of the message conveyed is not specific enough or does not suit the targeted audience.

GOLDEN RULE 4

Precisely define the message you want to disseminate

GOLDEN RULE 5

Adapt the content of your message to the different target groups

The content of the message to be communicated should be flexible and adapted to the different target groups. While attempting to raise awareness of volunteering and encourage more people to volunteer, the message should obviously not be the

same when addressing an elderly person or a youngster. These groups will not be interested in the same aspects of volunteering and will be attracted by different fields of volunteering.

In a broader view, every individual has different interests; as stated by **Stephen Greene** from Rock Corps, volunteer organisations should be able to identify the "passion point" of their audience and adapt the message accordingly. **Naoise McNally** from Volunteering Ireland argues in the same direction, saying that volunteer organisations should showcase the multiplicity of areas in which volunteering can take place in order to match the interests of all segments of the population. **Marc Molenaar** from Movisie also emphasised this point by recommending to communicate not only about the concept of volunteering as such, but also about all the realities and concrete dimensions that this concept encompasses in order to enable people to link volunteering with what they actually like and are interested in.

GOLDEN RULE 6

Talk about people's interests and "passion points"

GOLDEN RULE 7

Formulate a clear, intelligible and attractive message

Other recommendations formulated during the conference include the importance of making the content of the message clear and intelligible so that it can reach every individual from any background. The message should also be attractive and talk about both emotions and concrete projects, as stated by **Isabel Ajofrin-Garcia**, from Desarrollo y Asistencia. Emotions and "happy-ending" stories will sensitise people while illustrating

"Do not resort to easy emotion to recruit volunteers. Combine emotions with ideas; provide specific data, not just impressions."

Isabel Ajofrin-García, Desarrollo y Asistencia, Spain

tions of concrete projects will give them a clear idea of how they can get involved as volunteers, as pointed out by **Daniel Pinazo**, from Jaume I University. The message should also highlight both personal and professional benefits of being a volunteer.

GOLDEN RULE 8

Talk both about emotions and concrete projects

GOLDEN RULE 9

Modernise the volunteering message by highlighting new dimensions of volunteering, in order to challenge its old-fashioned image

3. The tools and channels

While the previous section highlighted the importance of the content of the message when communicating volunteering, this section focuses on the more practical side of the communication process, i.e. the tools, activities and channels that we use to convey the message. This aspect is also crucial as the various tools that are nowadays at our disposal allow us to spread the message more quickly and among a much broader audience.

In the various workshops and stands of the Conference Communication Fair, a variety of activities and tools used by volunteer organisations in their communication strategies were showcased.

These include¹:

- » **High-visibility events and campaigns** such as the Make a Difference Caravan of Pro Vobis, the German National Volunteer Week presented by BBE, the Happy Together campaign organised by Movisie, the Flashmob action of Bator Tabor in Hungary, or the RockCorps concerts;
- » **Big media campaigns** such as for the German National Volunteer Week or the RockCorps events;
- » **Volunteer Award campaigns** such as the Ireland Involved Awards organised by Volunteering Ireland
- » **Videos and spots on volunteering** published on DVDs and the Internet, as presented by SEEYN, Celivo or FUNDAR;
- » **Virtual web platforms** such as official websites, the CEV Online Community, the virtual consulting platform of Caritas and the Internet project Hacesfalta.org of Fundación Chandra;
- » **New social media** such as blogs, Facebook and YouTube, like SEEYN uses;

"New technologies have brought about exciting opportunities and we are able to communicate quickly and to wide audiences at the same time"

- » **Renowned celebrities as ambassadors** such as those presented by The Little People Association and Pro Vobis; or CEV Ambassadors;
- » **Conferences and seminars** on different topics such as the CEV Symposiums;
- » **Traditional communication channels** such as newspapers, newsletters, press releases and appearances on TV broadcast spots, face-to-face meetings, promotional presence in public spaces, emails, phone calls and SMS messages, etc.

In addition to these different tools, another important channel of communication was mentioned several times during the discussions: the volunteers themselves. In this perspective, **Matt Beard**, from Amnesty International Germany, underlined the role of volunteers as communication agents of the volunteering work and values. As they are the ones who were convinced by the message of volunteering and live volunteering in their daily life, they are the best placed to spread the message around and convince other people on the basis of their own experience.

GOLDEN RULE 10

Involve volunteers themselves as important channels of communication

GOLDEN RULE 11

Use as many tools and channels of communication as possible

Volunteer organisations should make use, to the extent their resources permit it, of as many tools and channels as possible, as different audiences have access to different tools. The use of a variety of channels will ensure that awareness is effectively raised among more people. In this perspective, traditional communication tools should not be left aside as they are still very effective, but benefits should also be taken from the use of the new communication tools which have appeared over recent years and have already become popular and effective, as pointed out by **Domagoj Kovacic** from SEEYN.

The use of as many tools as possible can sometimes be difficult to implement as one might lack the necessary resources to do so. Organising a big campaign or developing an innovative and very advanced website obviously requires money. One possibility to gather the necessary resources consists in finding sponsors and getting support from different actors such as public authorities and companies, or benefit from pro-bono services. The key is to establish partnerships and gather supporters. But in turn, this requires first the development of a good communication strategy towards these stakeholders in order to convince them to give their support. On the other hand an organisation with limited resources can also achieve a lot if it manages to adequately allocate its budget and set the appropriate priorities.

GOLDEN RULE 12

Build partnerships and gather supporters in order to get the necessary resources to implement your communication strategy

GOLDEN RULE 13

Assign one person as exclusively responsible for the communication strategy in order to allocate the necessary resources and time for an effective strategy

One way to achieve this is to have a very good division of work within the organisation, with at least one staff member fully responsible for the communication dimension, as recommended by **Ettore Degli Esposti** and **Pura Gómez Román**, and therefore able to clearly identify what are the priorities and the needs in terms of budget and the effective implementation of the communication activities.

¹ More details about these tools can be found on the DVD which compiles the workshop presentations and so e material presented at the Communication Fair.

4. Assessing the effectiveness of a communication strategy

Volunteer organisations need an efficient communication strategy in order to increase their visibility and in this way be able to gather support and raise awareness among society in general and among various stakeholders. The communication strategy is thus not an end in itself but rather a means to an end. Therefore, the design of the strategy must be really well thought out and accompanied by the definition of precise objectives so that once the strategy is implemented, its impact and effectiveness can be regularly evaluated on the basis of measurable results. Measuring the concrete impact of a strategy will make it possible to decide on whether the strategy should be maintained or whether it should be adjusted somehow or even completely re-oriented. Hence the importance of defining, from the beginning, objectives that are measurable, as highlighted by

"Use feedback to improve programme communication and delivery"
Tanya Burak, KPMG

GOLDEN RULE 14

Define objectives that can produce measurable results in order to be able to assess the effectiveness of your communication strategy

In addition, it is important to assess from the start whether your objectives actually match the resources that are available for the communication strategy. An overly ambitious strategy which does not take into account the actual degree of affordability will undoubtedly miss its objective and be a waste of money and time. On the other hand a positive assessment of a strategy can be an argument to present to the decision body of the organisation in order to convince it to increase the communication budget.

GOLDEN RULE 16

Assess the effectiveness of your communication strategy and learn lessons

In order to assess a strategy's impact the results will have to be measured to be then confronted to the initial objectives. Results can be measured in different ways and measurement techniques vary depending on the communication tools used and the objectives. Here are some examples: surveys can be conducted among the audience to find out their perception of a communication strategy; if the objective is to raise media attention, the impact can be calculated on the basis of the number of medias channelling the message and the extent to which they report on the key ideas; if the communication strategy includes channelling information via a website, statistics regarding the frequency of visits is a useful way to measure the effectiveness of the strategy. In every case, impact can only be measured if objectives were precisely defined from the start.

Naiose McNally from Volunteering Ireland.

GOLDEN RULE 15

Be realistic; define objectives that you can afford to implement

II. SPOTLIGHT ON THREE SPECIFIC CASES

After having addressed the main elements of the communication process, we will now consider some specific cases that were discussed in more depth during the conference.

These cases are:

- » how best to communicate online, through the Web, including websites and social media;
- » how to establish a fruitful collaboration with the media and PR and communication agencies;
- » how to communicate volunteering in the business sector in the framework of CSR and employee-volunteering programmes.

1. Communicating online

"Within the first 10 seconds of a potential volunteer coming onto a website or a social media space, he/she should be able to directly answer the three questions a) who are you? b) what do you do? and c) what do you want him/her to do?"
Matt Beard, Amnesty International Germany

The emergence of Internet has brought a wide range of new options to channel our messages more quickly and to wider audiences. Websites, emails, e-newsletters, blogs, forums and other social media are so many tools that are at our disposal nowadays to convey our messages. Moreover, Internet is the first source most people now resort to when they look for information or anything else. In this sense, online technologies constitute without any doubt a unique opportunity for volunteer organisations to reach more people.

However, Internet also has its pitfalls including the fact that it is evolving so fast that you need to invest significant time in it in order to follow the curve and stay updated to be efficient when using it. Moreover, one might rapidly get lost in the Web and waste a lot of time if he/she does not put some limit with regard to the type and number of tools it uses in order to get the message across; it makes no sense to try to be "all over" if this means spending more resources than it actually brings results. Depending on the objectives of the organisation as well as on the target groups it wishes to reach, an organisation should decide to invest time in the management of a website, a blog, or a profile on Facebook. If not regularly updated with new information, these tools might indeed not have any impact, hence the importance of assessing the worth of investing time or money in it.

GOLDEN RULE 17

Be prepared to invest time in the management of your website and other online communication tools

GOLDEN RULE 18

Strategically choose which online tools to invest in, considering the results they might bring

With regard to email addresses, volunteer organisations should permanently seek to collect as many email addresses as possible in order to send their messages, e-newsletters, press releases, etc. to more people, and they should maintain well-organised and updated contact databases in order to be able to contact the right person at the right time. On the other hand, volunteer organisations should always make their email address and website as well as other contact details very visible in emails and printed publications in order for people to be able to easily find them and contact them.

GOLDEN RULE 19

Collect as many email addresses as possible and maintain a well-organised and updated contact database

GOLDEN RULE 20

Always make the most important and up-to-date information directly visible in your web communication tools

details of an organisation or a volunteer opportunity in a specific field. The same recommendation actually applies to emails and e-newsletters: nowadays, we all receive plenty of these every day, and unless the information is clear, brief and “to the point”, one will not take the time to read a long email or newsletter which does not clearly indicate the topic or the issue at stake.

Matt Beard stressed the importance of making the most important information directly accessible and visible on the website of the organisation. Internet is indeed very wide and Web users do not want to spend hours exploring one website in order to find the information they seek, especially if they are looking for something very specific like the contact

GOLDEN RULE 21

Communicate in a concise, clear and attractive way through emails and e-newsletters

GOLDEN RULE 22

Keep in mind that online communication is two-way and allow some space for interactions, opinions, and questions

what is proposed to them. Considering this, **Eugen Baldas** and **Diego Lejarazu** both emphasised the importance of allowing some space on websites for people to be able to give their opinion and ask questions.

Finally, although these new technologies are now widely spread and accessible to many people, one should keep in mind that a large part of the population still does not have regular access or even any access to those tools. Therefore one should not base his whole communication strategy on them but rather continue to use more traditional communication channels such as printed media and face to face gatherings in combination with online communication.

The two-way nature of online communication, in contrast to communication through television or radio, was also highlighted in the discussions. On the Web, people expect to have the opportunity to react to the information that is provided to them; they want to have the opportunity to interact with the information provider and have their say on

GOLDEN RULE 23

Combine online and “offline” – traditional – communication tools and channels

2. Collaborating with media and PR and communication agencies

“The need for ‘content’ has increased rapidly. Media need stories and often won’t be too discerning. If you have something to say, say it.”

Mathew Little, Freelance Journalist

Press coverage, including through print, broadcast and electronic media, is a fast and powerful way to disseminate information and raise awareness of your organisation and volunteering in general. Moreover, it generally does not require a big investment of money while allowing for great exposure. However, collaborating with the media requires following some “rules” and being ready to adapt to the journalists’ schedule. It also requires being aware of certain

consequences, including the fact that, once you share your story with the media, you have limited control over the way it will be delivered.

A first important step in establishing some collaboration with journalists and getting your entry in the “world of the media” consists of having a

GOLDEN RULE 24

Identify the media and agencies you should work with, based on extensive research

precise idea of what you want to say, to whom, and for which purpose. Knowing this will allow you to know which kind of media to address. In order to identify which media it would be more efficient and more realistic to work with, it will also be important to do some research on the various media that exist and regularly consult them.

“Read, watch or listen to the media you target as you cannot serve up what you have not eaten.”

Nick Cater, Journalist & media consultant

GOLDEN RULE 25

Present a clear, concise and “newsworthy” message to the media

why journalists would find this news worth publishing in their newspaper or broadcasting on their programme, and how to convince them that it can indeed be interesting for them and their audience.

What do we mean by “newsworthy” stories? What kind of stories will interest the media? According to **Nick Cater**, real stories about real people that honestly portray the rewards and pitfalls should be most valued when speaking to the media. These are indeed looking for stories about people with which their audience can easily identify, while at the same time they seek “the new, the unusual, the counter-intuitive, the colourful, funny, dramatic”. In addition, volunteer organisations should not simply present vague stories with references to broad values and ideologies; they should be able to present tangible, concrete data. **Mathew Little** insisted on the importance of finding the “hook” which will attract media attention. High-visibility events or special days can be this hook; obviously 2011 being the European Year of Volunteering is a powerful hook.

GOLDEN RULE 26

Present real and concrete stories, together with tangible data, and identify the hooks that will attract media attention

GOLDEN RULE 27

Facilitate the work of the journalists as much as possible by providing all necessary information in a brief but exhaustive way

to be updated on the topic without having to commit themselves to time-consuming research. The information should also be clear and jargon-free.

Also due to this question of a lack of time, volunteer organisations should not wait until the journalists come to them to look for some news; they should take the initiative themselves and approach the journalists with their stories. Moreover, one person in the organisation should be exclusively responsible for contact with the media, in order to allow journalists to have one reference contact point, to facilitate their work when they collaborate with the organisation.

When approaching journalists, it is crucial, according to **Mathew Little**, to have a clear, concise and “newsworthy” message to offer them. The important question to think about is

On the practical side, **Julia Castello** and **Pura Gomez** both made the point that journalists often have very tight schedules and expect the volunteer organisation to facilitate their work, by being able to present their news to them briefly but exhaustively, and provide them spontaneously with all the background information they need in order

GOLDEN RULE 28

Do not wait until journalists come to you but rather take the initiative to approach them and to build a real partnership

Finally, many media representatives present at the conference pointed to the fact that controversies should not be feared but rather taken as opportunities to get the message across and to get more people talking about the topic, which means more visibility.

GOLDEN RULE 29

Be aware of controversies and take them as an opportunity for more visibility

In addition to the media, volunteer organisations might also want or need to collaborate with PR and communication agencies, for example in the framework of the organisation of big events or promotional campaigns. Collaboration with this kind of agency is likely to cost more than collaboration with the media; their services are often expensive as these organisations also work with big companies which can invest a lot of money in their communication strategy.

GOLDEN RULE 30

Negotiate pro bono services with PR and communication agencies by committing them to your cause and triggering their interest

According to **Nick Cater**, any organisation should nonetheless be prepared to invest some resources in this kind of service as communication has become highly professionalised and therefore cannot be carried out effectively without the help of professionals. On the other hand, he also points out the possibility to collaborate with some agencies on a pro bono basis. This can be negotiated if the volunteer organisation can trigger the interest and the commitment of the agency which it works with. **Eric Rhan**, from BEE, shares this view and recommends finding the relevant arguments in order to get the agency committed to the cause and to convince them that working for such cause can also bring benefits and publicity to them.

In addition, working with several agencies on different aspects of the same project – global conception of the campaign; design of the image of the campaign; management of the website; dissemination of content; ... – can also be effective as it will create a sense of competition among the different partners and encourage them to provide more and better results. This being said, effective coordination must obviously be ensured by the volunteer organisation in order to ensure coherence and avoid duplication.

GOLDEN RULE 31

Use a diversity of partners among PR and communication agencies to trigger a sense of competition leading to more and better results

3. Communicating corporate volunteering

In view of the growing importance of Corporate Social Responsibility in the business sector, the question of how to communicate volunteering in companies has become increasingly relevant. Indeed most big and medium companies now have their own CSR policy, which allow them to 'demonstrate to the wider public that they are good "corporate citizens" and do business responsibly'².

CSR can be beneficial for companies in various ways including by providing them with a good reputation among their customers, and by increasing cohesion among their employees as well as employees' commitment to the company.

Employee volunteering schemes have become a common tool in CSR policies. Companies are indeed increasingly establishing such schemes, which, according to various systems, allow the employees to volunteer during part of their working time, for example by engaging in their communities to mentor disadvantaged youth; by engaging in environmental action; or by offering their skills to local non-profit organisations.

However, CSR policies are still far from being implemented in the majority of companies and employee volunteering schemes are not always considered an option, either because this kind of programme remains unknown, or because benefits are not clear. Therefore, communication should be improved regarding this particular dimension, both vis-à-vis companies' managers, in order to convince them of the utility and benefits of corporate volunteering, and vis-à-vis employees, in order to inform them about the existing opportunities and the benefits they can draw from engaging in a volunteering experience.

² The European Volunteer Centre, 2009. *Developing Employee Volunteering. A joint venture between volunteer organisations and companies. Strategies, success stories, challenges* (Conference final report), Brussels: the European Volunteer Centre

GOLDEN RULE 32

Convince companies' top management of the benefits of employee volunteering by referring to their CSR responsibilities and to how volunteering contributes to employees' self-development and commitment to the company

according to **Tanya Burak** from KPMG, an opportunity to express and communicate the values of the company and its commitment to the communities. After having convinced the top management, the communication process should be oriented towards the employees: how to effectively inform them about existing opportunities? And how to get them motivated and willing to engage in voluntary activities?

On this dimension, **Aysun Sayin** formulates some key recommendations:

GOLDEN RULE 33

Provide clear information about the volunteering opportunities to employees

» Clear and comprehensive task descriptions should be established and be available to the employee volunteers, who should be presented with different options adapted to their respective skills and knowledge; and they should be informed about the training offered to them.

GOLDEN RULE 34

Include employee volunteers in the planning process of volunteering activities

» Give a voice to employee volunteers when deciding on the division of tasks and the content of the tasks; share the results of the activities with the employee volunteers who participated in the activity; encourage employee volunteers to express their own creativity and bring their own input.

GOLDEN RULE 35

Be in regular contact with employee volunteers and be available for questions and remarks

insists on the importance of using all existing internal channels to regularly update employees about the state of play of the different programmes, successful stories and new opportunities that arise. **María Ángeles Alcázar García**, from Iberdrola, underlines that regular communication will contribute to creating a community-based spirit within the company and foster commitment.

GOLDEN RULE 36

Acknowledge and reward employee volunteers for their contribution

» Successful programmes as well as remarkable commitments should be acknowledged and highlighted; award criteria should be open and transparent.

"Make the volunteering opportunity relevant to your audience – both personally, as well as professionally."

Tanya Burak, KPMG

Tanya Burak insisted on the need to make the volunteering opportunity relevant to the audience, both personally, as well as professionally. Regarding the personal dimension, she argues that most people practice a certain degree of "Personal Social Responsibility"; moreover, employees can be attracted by the prospect of meeting new people and experiencing new projects. On the professional side, emphasis should be put on volunteering as an opportunity to develop and learn new skills and knowledge.

GOLDEN RULE 38

Involve employee volunteers in the communication strategy

Finally, **Aysun Sayin** made the point that the best communicating agents of the values and benefits of volunteering within a company are the employees who are already engaged in some volunteering schemes. They should be encouraged to spread around their experience and feelings, among their colleagues, and be themselves "recruiters" of new volunteers. Aysun Sayin noted that this requires the necessary training and means being given to them in order for them to be able to provide exhaustive and clear information, and adequately answer to the questions of their colleagues.

GOLDEN RULE 37

Make volunteering relevant to your audience both personally and professionally

GOLDEN RULE 39

Make 2011 your year: Use the momentum created to further advance your campaigns and messages

In order to make the best use of 2011 to effectively communicate volunteering, the voluntary sector and its partners will actually have to follow the same schema as for any communication process, the first step being to identify the objectives that we want to achieve. In this regard, four main objectives have already been formulated in the Council decision on the Year⁵:

- » 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 to all Member States, such as a harmonious societal development and social cohesion.

III. THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF VOLUNTEERING 2011 – A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMUNICATE VOLUNTEERING

"With the European Year of Volunteering in 2011 approaching fast, everyone should get involved in preparing to get the message across and encourage millions to take part – governments, volunteer organisations and businesses."

John Macdonald, leader of the European Commission Task Force for the European Year 2011

After a sustained advocacy campaign from the "EYV2011 Alliance"³, 2011 has been designated by the European Union as the European Year of Volunteering. The Year will be a unique opportunity in terms of communicating volunteering as it will constitute an occasion to "raise public awareness of the scope, value and impact of volunteering in Europe and to highlight its contribution to our communities; to celebrate

volunteers and volunteer organisations for their contribution and to showcase good practices and projects involving volunteers; to raise awareness among European citizens of the possibilities to volunteer and to motivate people to become involved; to highlight and recognise the value of local volunteer action in building a European identity; and to demonstrate and raise awareness about the need for a volunteering infrastructure at local, regional, national and European level"⁴.

Throughout the Year, various awareness-raising activities will be organised at European, national and local levels. Volunteer organisations should take this chance to communicate among citizens, but also towards different stakeholders such as authorities and businesses, about the contribution of volunteering to society and the need for more resources and people in this sector.

³ The EYV2011 Alliance – the Alliance for the European Year of Volunteering 2011 – is a group of European networks of NGOs with an interest in volunteering that came together at the end of 2007 in order to advocate the nomination of 2011 as the European Year of Volunteering 2011.

⁴ The European Year of Volunteering 2011 Alliance, 2008. *Towards a European Year of Volunteering 2011* (position paper), Brussels

In order to identify the target audiences, **John Macdonald** suggests asking ourselves the following questions: who will help us to achieve our goals? What segments of the population do we want to reach? This will allow us to precisely define the various target groups and adapt our strategies, messages and activities on the basis of these groups.

The next step consists of identifying the specific message that we want to convey throughout the year. The message, based on the objectives, will be adapted to the different targets – different segments of the population and different stakeholders. Thus, for example, one message to the volunteers will be: "Thank you"; to citizens, "You can be a volunteer"; to policy-makers: "A great deal of work still needs to be done", **Nick Cater**, freelance journalist and **Katie Rizvi**, from the Little People Association, both insisted on the importance of presenting concrete and inspiring stories, relating to real people and showcasing the concrete impact of volunteering both on volunteers and on society.

This Year should be the occasion to prove that volunteers really make a difference, as the slogan of the Year expresses it. In addition, the core of the message should be shared by all stakeholders, in order to maintain coherence and present a common position from the whole voluntary sector; all stakeholders repeating similar messages through different channels and in different places will ensure greater visibility and an efficient mass impact. **Matthew Little** underlined the important hook that the Year can constitute in order to attract wide media coverage, however insisting on the importance of building a clear message and being able to convince the media about the relevance of such a Year and the value of volunteering, by having tangible data to present to them.

⁵ Council Decision of 27 November 2009 on the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship (2011), 2010/37/EC

Finally, we will have to consider which tools are at our disposal, depending on the resources, and which are the most appropriate to use depending on the different target groups, but also on the level of awareness of these groups. At European level, the communication strategy will be mainly the responsibility of a professional communication agency. Different activities and tools will be used including a website; thematic events; an advertising campaign; the organisation of a "EYV tour" – taking the form of an interactive mobile structure passing through capitals of the EU Member States with a goal to depict individual volunteer stories in different EU Member States; At national and local levels, the various activities will have the possibility of receiving financial support from the European Commission and will be coordinated by the national coordinating bodies.

GOLDEN RULE 40

Make the most of the European Year 2011 to widely communicate the message of volunteering!

The communication process through the European Year 2011 must be a common effort from all stakeholders from the voluntary sector in collaboration with its partners. We should make use of all possible tools and channels that will be at our disposal, including the over 100 million volunteers

in Europe, to really make the most of the Year and ensure that it has a long-lasting impact in everyone's mind.

APPENDIXES

1. Address Book

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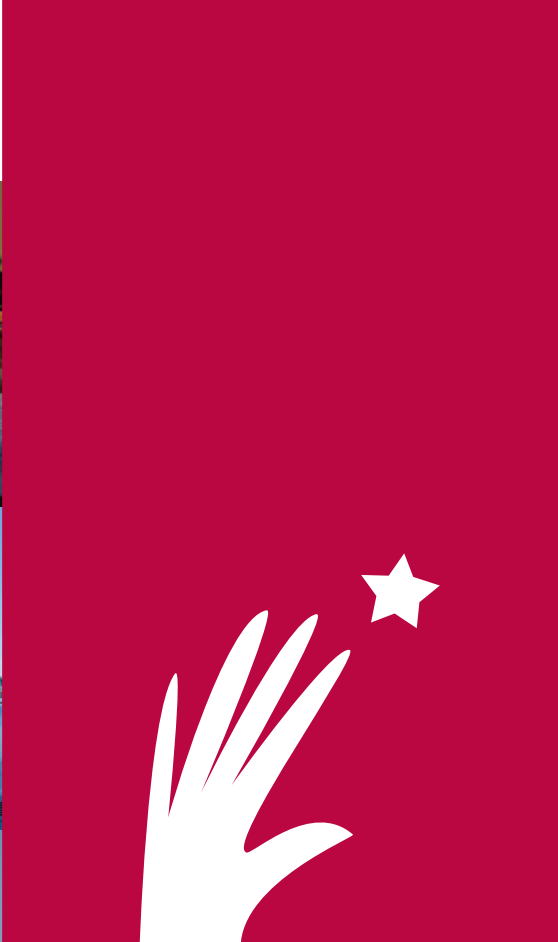
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