SAMARITAN INTERNATIONAL

Structured volunteering builds social resilience

Preparedness has to be built continuously not just in response to crises. From civil protection to social services, volunteers are a crucial pillar of Europe's preparedness and resilience. Civil society organisations invest their resources to make the engagement possible.

THREE CONTRIBUTIONS TO PREPAREDNESS

Builds resilience

PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY

Volunteers gain skills, confidence and networks. Communities gain engaged trained people, local knowledge and structures that are in place before a crisis hits.

Bridges divides

GENERATIONS, BACKGROUNDS, CULTURES

Volunteering connects people across generations, social backgrounds and cultures, building the trust and cohesion that hold communities together under pressure.

Fills gaps

BEYOND BASIC SERVICES

Volunteers are indispensable to create a social offer that goes beyond basic services and they enable a comprehensive crisis response, taking account of the needs of people in vulnerable situations.

Our recommendations

01 Recognition

- **Recognise volunteers' crucial contribution** across many sectors, in particular civil protection, social services, culture, education and environmental protection.
- **Improve individual recognition** through public appreciation, certificates, awards, personal development and visibility.
- **Recognise the resources needed for successful volunteer management:** recruitment, training, coordination, teambuilding, equipment, insurance and administration all generate costs.
- **Value social professions:** the social services sector is characterised by unattractive working conditions and low public recognition, this affects both staff and volunteers alike.
- **Recognise the value of civil protection volunteers** during peacetime: invest in training, structures and cooperation – not only when an emergency hits.

02 Structural

- **Take a strategic, life-cycle approach at EU-level:** support CSOs offering structured volunteering for all ages, instead of just focusing on creating experiences for young volunteers.
- **Recognise CSOs in the whole-of-society approach** to increase preparedness. They are key to reaching and engaging citizens.
- **Set up national sectoral CSO platforms** to strengthen cooperation and preparedness.
- **Promote links between social services and civil protection** for comprehensive preparedness.
- **Open the UCPM to recognised civil protection CSOs** for cross-border assistance, without bureaucratic certification.
- **Explore structural partnerships at the local level**, for example between local public bodies and CSOs or between corporations and CSOs in social volunteering.

03 Framework conditions

- **Increase EU and national funding** for CSOs offering volunteering opportunities. The funding is an investment in increased resilience and future preparedness.
- **Encourage Member States to free volunteers from their day jobs** for emergency response through national legal frameworks for recognised civil protection CSOs.
- **Transpose the Directive (EU) 2025/2205 on driving licences into national law** by making use of the possibility to enable the driving of ambulances up to 5.000kg with a B licence.
- **Harmonise first-aid certification** at EU-level and recognise it across borders. Encourage Member States to include First-Aid in their National Qualifications Framework.
- **Incentivise volunteering CSOs** through favourable tax or state-aid regimes and a European public benefit status.
- **Introduce a European volunteer card,** comparable to a student card, enabling local or national benefits and discounts.

Co-funded by the European Union

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.