

## Our chance to create better societies



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The International Volunteer Day mandated by the UN General Assembly is viewed as a unique occasion for volunteers and organizations to celebrate their efforts and to acknowledge the enormous contribution of volunteers in making this world a better place.

### Lejla Šehi? Reli?

Submitted by F Pere Tarrés on Tue, 11/27/2018 - 10:23

**Description:**

CEV President

**Vertical photo:**



Square photo:



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The UN 2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report puts the global volunteer workforce at 109 million full-time equivalent workers, a number exceeding that of many major global industries.

Among these 109 million, 30 per cent are volunteers formally engaged through organizations, associations and groups. A qualitative analysis of global trends shows that volunteers have been at the forefront of every major crisis since the last State of the World's Volunteerism Report published in 2015.

Over the last two decades, volunteering has been progressively gaining importance across the globe. But even if these powerful facts and numbers support the potential that volunteer engagement can have on active civic participation, social inclusion, the quality of interpersonal relationships, resilient communities, and building social capital, volunteering is still not valued enough to gain unreserved political and social support that will treat development of volunteerism as one of the horizontal development policies.

Some of the global social problems such as poverty, disease, wars and ecological destruction persist despite accelerated economic and technological development. Many countries are facing trends of weakened democracy, polarized societies and shrinking space for civil society. Following that volunteering has to be perceived within the context and in relation with other social trends, I believe that the whole concept of volunteering needs to be more strongly attached to the values of more open, democratic, and inclusive communities.

There are many aspects of benefits that volunteering can offer for the global health of the society, four of which I would emphasise: empowerment of democracy, achieving the highest degree of social integration for everyone at

risk of exclusion, reducing social inequality and widening the space of more in common and building bridges.

International Volunteer Day is a good opportunity to remind us about, what I believe is, the essence of volunteer engagement: a potential to bring democratic values from abstract to real-life experiences with concrete, everyday meaning for people's lives. Numerous studies have shown that those who volunteer believe they have the power to influence the change and improve their communities. Opposing the culture of passivity, the assumption of citizen power, supporting social networks creating an inclusive and human side of democracy are those characteristics of volunteering that we need the most.

The volunteering ecosystem is wide and this is an advantage. Among its many shapes and sizes, it is focused on community building, allowing people to own what they care about and practice methods that do not divide, and thus creating the potential to unite people and restore social fabric.

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