

# AARHUS 2018 – EUROPEAN VOLUNTEERING CAPITAL

The title as European Volunteering Capital has urged us to find new ways of **collaborating** in creating **welfare** through volunteering and active citizenship. It has reminded us to continue **celebrating** the many dedicated volunteers in Aarhus, Central Denmark Region, Denmark and Europe and has inspired us to support open organizations and share new grassroot initiatives in order to include everyone in local communities. We have gained valuable knowledge from all our partners throughout the year, which can be summarized in 8 overall learning points.

## OUR KEY LEARNING POINTS

### 1. Open up established local communities and invite new members at every occasion

Established communities can be open and inviting and focus on sharing usual circles with new people. Sometimes it requires new ways and methods, but you can begin with curiosity and organizations can reach out to be more inviting. Public administrations should prioritize the proper framework for local communities to grow when developing policies and cities.

### 2. Make it easily accessible to join communities, and help prevent loneliness

Strong local communities and organizations are important in order to prevent individual isolation and loneliness. Established organizations should work with creating structures and space for different kinds of volunteering and volunteers. Public administrations should be able to provide diverse forms of support for citizens who reach out, including diverse volunteering options. We all have to expand our understandings of volunteering so that we can invite more people to join our communities.

### 3. Prioritize lifelong training in active citizenship

Citizenship is a common value that guides us as people and as citizens who take part in local communities. Active citizenship should not only be a part of our culture, but can also be highlighted in our educational system. We can make future generations aware that active citizenship is crucial for human being if we prioritize dialogue from childhood onwards throughout the educational system. Every employee from busdrivers to police officers, can increase awareness and take part in active citizenship.



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### 4. Acknowledge diversity in volunteering

Some organizations are rooted several hundred years back in Danish society, while new volunteering communities emerge all the time. Each one contributes in creating a powerful civil society. Create celebratory meetings, dialogue, networks and articulate the importance of every communities' efforts. Volunteers should be prized, but volunteering should also be cultivated in order to highlight the potential in diversity.

### 5. Rethink financing and funding structures

We need long term investments in civil society that can support and ensure stability in local organizations. At the same time, emerging projects can benefit from prompt funding support to create new initiatives and increase social welfare. We need simple and flexible finance systems that clearly distinguish between funding for everyday operation and development of new initiatives. We can rethink our ways of ensuring sustainable funding locally between public organizations and volunteering communities.

### 6. Create a visible gateway for volunteering and active citizenship

There are wishes from members of civil society and across social sectors for tools to generate and increase visibility of initiatives and projects. We need common gateways and platforms to simplify cross-sectoral communication. Public organizations can create a culture of collaboration and "volunteering-readiness". Citizens and volunteering organizations should be able to easily address public organizations with questions and innovative ideas regarding volunteering and active citizenship - and most importantly, they should know where to go.

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### 7. Share resources, spaces and knowledge

Sharing economy is a way for civil societies to start movements towards creating new ways of increasing growth and social welfare. Sharing and being generous with resources, spaces and communication channels is a first step. Sharing experiences and examples of best (and worst) case practices can benefit more people. Across sectors we can share expertise, skills and training courses in much larger scale. This might lead to new possibilities of collaborating across civil societies, public and business sectors.

### 8. Be prepared to take risks

In order to develop our welfare society we must have the courage to experiment, which means that we must be prepared for the possibility of failed outcomes. When we find common grounds between volunteers, organizations, businesses and public administrations, we must sometimes take risks. Collaborating across sectors can spread new initiatives and can create new ways of evaluation, documentation and assessments of results.

