

Citizens'  
Agreement  
for an Inclusive  
Barcelona

Citizens  
committed  
socially  
to the city  
of Barcelona

Monograph  
September 2014

Citizens'  
agreement

for an  
Inclusive  
Barcelona

Promotes:

Ajuntament de  
Barcelona







# Citizens committed socially to the city of Barcelona

Monograph

**September 2014**

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for an Inclusive  
Barcelona*

Barcelona is facing the current economic and social crisis, a crisis which has disproportionately affected the most vulnerable members of society and has seen a great number of citizens of the city facing hardship and difficulties, head-on.

Barcelona City Council is making social investment and support for its citizens a priority to face the challenges and new and growing social needs resulting from the current situation. Additionally, our city has a rich and diverse network of associations, a well-consolidated third sector and an active and committed population ready to fight poverty and social exclusion and inequalities.

Barcelona now needs these committed, involved individuals and joint civil society/city authority workspaces such as the Citizens' Agreement for an Inclusive Barcelona and Joint Strategy which it has created to combat these social challenges more than ever.



This monograph, which coincides with the very year in which Barcelona was awarded the title of European Volunteering Capital, is meant to acknowledge all of those individuals who make up part of this socially-aware Barcelona, from local official bodies and initiatives working in the different districts of the city to the individual civic actions of people and examples of being a good neighbour. Thousands of people who work relentlessly on a daily basis with commitment, involvement and solidarity to contribute to making a fairer, more cohesive and social city with better opportunities and a better quality of life.

I would like to pass on my deepest recognition and gratitude to all of these people, and those who will doubtless join them in the near future, personally and on behalf of all of us.



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# Background: the Citizens' Assembly for a Social Barcelona

On 24th May 2012, the Citizens' Agreement for an Inclusive Barcelona held the first ever Citizens' Assembly for a Social Barcelona, an event which was meant to acknowledge the work of the different people and organisations in Barcelona fighting to reduce poverty and social exclusion.

The event was designed to be an open space for debate and knowledge exchange and was aimed at all sectors in society contributing towards a more socially-committed Barcelona: individual volunteers from different areas, caregivers, mutual support groups and volunteer exchange networks.

On the one hand it was meant to highlight and acknowledge the tireless work these people do on a day-to-day basis, and on the other to debate and share suggestions and recommendations for how to promote even greater involvement from the citizens of the city in fighting poverty.

In short, the aims of the Assembly can be summarised as follows:

- to reaffirm and acknowledge the invaluable work carried out by those involved in making Barcelona more socially-committed city and who work to reduce poverty and increase public awareness;

- to identify suggestions and recommendations from the people for the people in order to promote greater involvement in the fight against poverty and exclusion;
- to give visibility to “local activists” in the city and
- to share knowledge and experience.

Over 80 volunteers from different organisations in the third social sector operating in Barcelona took place in the meeting which was held at the headquarters of Sant Joan de Déu Social Services in the Poble Sec district.

The Assembly was the Citizens’ Agreement’s contribution to the *Marató per la pobresa* (Poverty Telethon) run by TV3, Catalunya Ràdio and the Marató de TV3 Foundation under the title of “No-one left out”.



The great success of this first Assembly and the overwhelmingly positive evaluation from both the Citizens' Agreement and the people who participated in it have led to the organisation of a second Assembly in 2014.

This monograph is based on some of the touching thoughts collected during that event. To help put it together, the Technical Secretariat of the Citizens' Agreement has also made use of contributions from those in charge of volunteering in different social organisations, as well as interviews with volunteers themselves or participants in initiatives which are part of community improvement projects.

The following pages present those reflections and ideas, structured in different sections in order to make them easier to read, which have been complemented with some data<sup>1</sup> providing empirical evidence behind the opinions and perceptions of those people who have helped make this monograph possible thanks to their contributions.

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*1. The data on volunteers given in this monograph has been taken for the most part from the 2013 Yearbook of the Third Social Sector Organisation of the City of Barcelona ("Taula d'entitats del Tercer Sector Social de Catalunya"; Observatori del Tercer Sector ("Third-Sector Observatory") 2013 Yearbook of the Third Social Sector Organisation of the City of Barcelona. Barcelona, 2014). It should be noted that these figures only provide information on people who volunteer as part of an official body; as a result, volunteers acting independently in community, civic, neighbourly or mutual support actions or cooperation, etc. are not included. If we were to take into account the work these other volunteers carry out, the figures would clearly be much higher.*





# Barcelona, European Volunteering Capital 2014

Barcelona was awarded the title of European Volunteering Capital 2014 as part of the European Volunteer Centre (CEV) within the framework of the European Year of Citizens held in 2013.

The aim of declaring a town volunteering capital is to promote the act of volunteering itself on a local level by acknowledging municipalities which provide support for, and work in close cooperation with, individuals and organisations or which promote the altruistic help of others.

The city's application, supported by the Commissioner for Citizen Participation and Association Movement of Barcelona City Council with the support of over 100 organisations and institutions around the city, was presented in conjunction with the Catalan Federation of Social Volunteering (FCVS), the Federation of Volunteers of la Caixa (FASVOL) and the Catalan Regional Government.

Barcelona stood out thanks to its rich network of non-profit organisations in different areas based on volunteering and cooperation between civil society and local government in order to overcome important challenges (such as the Barcelona-Sarajevo solidarity campaign, the organisation of the Olympic Games, public involvement in the Great Food Bank Donation

or active participation in the World Swimming Championships), in addition to the different opinion, debate and joint work spaces between the public and the City Council across a wide range of public policies.

What stood out was the city's network of over 550 different bodies and organisations committed to the work of the Citizens' Agreement and the work between all the different associations and the municipal administration in order to achieve the common goal of a more inclusive, supportive city.

As could be seen at the city's candidature presentation for the title of European Volunteering Capital 2014, Barcelona has over 6,000 different non-profit organisations which are based on social, community, cultural, environmental and cooperative volunteering.

It boasts approximately 2,400 organisations in the third social sector in which around 100,000 people work on a voluntary basis. It has even been calculated that around 17% of all of the citizens of Barcelona have volunteered at some point of their lives.

This monograph on how Barcelona's citizens are committed to the city's well-being constitutes one of the contributions from the Citizens' Agreement towards its candidature for European Volunteering Capital 2014 and will also serve as part of the II Citizens' Assembly for a Social Barcelona to be held in November.



# 3

## A socially-committed Barcelona

All day, every day, there are thousands of people who, in one way or another, are working towards making the city of Barcelona more socially-cohesive and reducing inequalities and poverty and social exclusion.

This work can often easily be overlooked, but lately it has come more and more into the limelight and has become essential for fighting for the needs of the people, especially those who are more vulnerable and who have been particularly affected by the economic and social crisis.<sup>2</sup>

### Active commitment and solidarity from the citizens

These two items make up what we refer to as socially-committed Barcelona, which is the group of people acting individually or grouped into organisations, associations and groups and who are actively committed to the city, working for its benefit and towards helping to improve the life of others.

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*2. It should be reiterated that the contribution these individuals make is not intended to substitute the responsibility that public administration has with regards to welfare, social cohesion and the social rights of each and every citizen. In summary, volunteers provide an essential network of support and solidarity in favour of social inclusion.*

These are people that volunteer in different organisations around the city in different areas, people who are carers for others or who carry out actions or provide support for projects aimed at good neighbourliness, and also those who are part of support or mutual support groups participating in community networks or neighbourhood solidarity initiatives.

All of these individuals exemplify the commitment and supportive, neighbourly actions of our city and just go to show the activism and support provided on a daily basis by a large number of people

## **Different needs; different types of cooperation**

The characteristic which unites all these people is the work they do together with organisations, groups, neighbours' initiatives and networks on a purely selfless and altruistic basis, giving up a part of their free time (either sporadically or continuously) in order to improve or help a certain reality or situation, to help out with a specific need or to generally improve the well-being of individuals, vulnerable groups or the population as a whole.

This cooperation is clearly diverse, as it depends greatly on the nature, level of organisation or structuring, the task to hand, the type of intervention, the level of commitment or dedication required and the frequency, etc.

Additionally, these actions are not just limited to what we understand as volunteering in the strictest sense - many actions, such as civic engagement and good neighbourliness, are similar to volunteering but are not classified as such.

These volunteers generally act as part of an organised structure or within actions, programmes or projects carried out by organisations, bodies, associations or institutions. Recently volunteering has spread into other areas, such as companies (known as corporate volunteering), some public administration bodies or institutions and educational centres.



The appearance of new and growing social needs has also brought about or led to the creation of new bonds and relationships between people which go beyond the strictly legal associations and organisations - new, more horizontal, forms of social organisation and activism which can give more focussed or better coordinated answers or solutions to different demands or needs.

Examples of this new form of help are self-help and support groups, which are basically networks of individuals set up to achieve a common goal, or basic or community initiatives.

In the same way, many people have also recently opted for promoting more individual initiatives or solidarity away from the official organised bodies or semi-organised structure - we now see more civic actions with people strongly invested in the people close to them living in their neighbourhoods or districts.

Based on the ideas and thoughts above, we have attempted to draw up a set of categories which will help us classify the different types of cooperation from all of the different people making up this socially-committed Barcelona:

**- Volunteering in organisations or in programmes or projects as part of an official body or association.**

People acting as volunteers in direct-care projects who carry out logistical or support tasks or who are part of the governing bodies of associations in the third social sector.

**- Good neighbourliness or civic actions.**

All the different citizens, individual or collective actions or initiatives which contribute towards better coexistence, public-spiritedness or social cohesion in the region.

Examples of such initiatives would be local projects aimed towards the needs of a neighbourhood or district such as the Radars project, school paths to some schools in the city or looking after senior citizens, etc.

**- Carers and mutual support, self-help and support groups.**

People acting as carers for others and groups providing support or companionship for vulnerable members of society in order to deal with a community need.

Examples of such initiatives are support group for marginalised groups, carers and mourning support groups, etc.

**- Community projects or networks.**

Community initiatives or movements which arise in a specific region and are based on solidarity and trust and which generate local bonds and social relationships between citizens.

Examples of this are time banks, solidarity banks, self-financed communities, exchange networks and social exchange networks or social communities or networks involving people showing solidarity.

**- Initiatives or services of a social nature.**

Municipal programmes, initiatives or social services which include support from people helping out in an altruistic and selfless manner.

Examples of this are the Host Family Service or Educational Volunteers who help children with their homework.



# The voice of socially-committed citizens

## 4.1 The motivations and expectations of volunteers

The volunteers or contributors interviewed are clearly unanimous in how they define exactly what a volunteer is: a person who, selflessly and altruistically (expecting nothing in return), donates part of their spare time to participate in some form of cooperation.

These people give their time freely and with the circumstances of their surroundings in mind to other individuals and to the population as a whole. In short, it could be said that they “offer something personal, of themselves, to the society or community they are involved in” (be it time, knowledge, ideas, their profession, etc.).

Unconditional generosity or solidarity, they also say, are characteristics which set volunteers apart.

Those interviewed also highlight the commitment, conviction, thoroughness and responsibility involved in being a volunteer. However, we should also take into account that there are different types of volunteer work carried out or different levels of involvement in terms of time available which allow more flexible volunteering or a less strict requirement.

The motivations driving a person to become a volunteer and to participate in a certain community project or carry out civic actions are wide-ranging and varied. These motivations can depend on the person's personal circumstances (age, sex, job situation, stage of life, availability, etc.) or might be socio-economical, and can basically be altruistic or self-centred.

The "willingness to help others and show solidarity", or making a positive contribution to society, are the main reasons people have for volunteering as shown in the answers given by those interviewed. Most of them value highly the direct character and relationships with other people that the volunteer work or cooperation they are involved in has.

Others decide that they want to volunteer to address a particular aspect they disagree with in society, improve a specific issue or provide help regarding the needs of a specific group or collective of people by volunteering. The effect or impact their actions have in "creating a better society" is one of the elements which drives them to participate actively.

In these cases, the volunteers aim to attack the causes of inequalities, social exclusion and discrimination, intervening in the factors or causes leading to them - particularly in cases of vulnerability of those who are around us, such as neighbours in the same area of the city.

In other situations, people get involved as a result of solidarity or empathy for the problems that certain people might experience. This is clearly visible in another common characteristic that we have seen while studying this socially-committed Barcelona: "the willingness to help".

Some people, regardless of whether their motives are based on solidarity or a sense of being civil, see volunteering or cooperation in a cause or project as a way of remaining active. For others, the motivation is as simple as having the feeling that they are useful members of society.

Additionally, we also note a high level of agreement from the volunteers regarding the satisfaction and personal enrichment they find from volunteering - self-satisfaction, but also in terms of the knowledge and learning gained from the act of volunteering or working selflessly for

social or community activities. They mention learning about other people, but also about themselves and their increased personal knowledge.

The fact that they are dealing with people and the importance of the human components and the links and bonds they establish - both with the people they are helping as recipients of help from the organisation or service and with other volunteers or professionals working for those associations - or the experiences and personal gain they achieve are some of the other aspects they highlight. "It's about giving, but it's also about receiving" is how some of those interviewed expressed their views: volunteering promotes personal growth, improved interpersonal relationships and commitment to one's society, among other positive aspects.

Some of those involved believe that the social and civic commitment of the citizens is "a way of understanding life, a particular way of being and acting".

The act of participating in a team of people or the feeling of belonging or bond with a certain group of people, project or organisation are aspects they class as clearly positive and beneficial when carrying out altruistic volunteering of this type.

The experience had when working together with an association, group or initiative can also change over time: sometimes "you start off being a volunteer for strictly personal reasons, but thanks to your own experiences and the exchange you have with other people you become more aware of the impact your work has and for what it means to the people you are helping".

## 4.2 New profiles of volunteers

Over the last few years, and as a result of the worsening of the economic and social situation we are experiencing, there has been a significant change in the number and profiles of volunteers in the city and in Catalonia as a whole.

## CLEAR INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS AND HELPERS

Since the start of the crisis we have seen a clear rise in the number of volunteers and helpers; this collective is now much more diverse, specialised and qualified than in the past.

Between 2007 and 2011 (the years covered by the 2013 Yearbook), it is estimated that there was an increase of some 31% in the numbers of volunteers active in the city.

Similarly, the number of organisations who have volunteers working for them has also increased by around 2%. This growth means that around 85% of the organisations working in the third sector in the city have volunteers.

The deepening of the economic crisis in conjunction with the increase in social needs, raised awareness across all the citizens of the difficulties that some fellow Barcelonians or Catalans are experiencing and the visibility of the importance of the cooperation and involvement of everyday citizens to help improve the responsiveness of social and third sector organisations have led to a huge new group of individuals joining social organisations or community projects and initiatives.

The closeness or empathy to people who are having a bad time and the personal experiences that people are having, seeing first-hand how others are suffering, has meant that a lot of people have felt the need to respond by helping or signing up to be a volunteer.

The increase in the number of volunteers and people who are actively committed to social change has also led to a change in the profile of volunteers as a whole and accelerated the change that we started to see in the last decade.

These changes are the core of this section of the document and illustrate the reality of the volunteers and helpers working currently in the city, a reality which is often difficult to reflect simply in the qualitative and quantitative information available.<sup>3</sup>

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*3. This section was written based on the opinions given by those interviewed and was complemented by data from the 2013 Yearbook which provides information on the age, sex, level of education and degree of voluntary involvement of these individuals.*

## WOMEN STILL MAKE UP THE MAJORITY, ALTHOUGH THE NUMBER OF MEN IS INCREASING

First and foremost it is important to draw attention to the increase in the number of men who have volunteered part of their time. Traditionally the great majority of volunteers have been women, particularly in certain areas or when providing help to certain vulnerable groups, as a result of the work market in our country.

Among other explanations, the recent large fall in the numbers of men of working age from the market has contributed to the increase in the amount of men volunteering.

According to calculations, there has been an increase in around 9% of men making up these associations - data from the 2013 Yearbook shows that around 57% of all volunteers are women, with men making up the remaining 43%.

## REJUVENATION OF VOLUNTEERS AND HELPERS

Secondly we should point out the rejuvenation of volunteers, a trend which started to become visible some years ago. Traditionally most volunteers were people who were either retired or who had taken early retirement and whose average age was over 65. This average has been dropping progressively for some time now.

The increase in awareness of young people, mainly thanks to the work done in schools and education and in youth associations, has meant that ever more young adults are becoming volunteers.

The increase in the number of middle-aged people who are out of work and the number of those taking early retirement (people over the age of 50) has also made it easier for relatively young people to become volunteers. At the same time, improved health and the fact that leading an active life contribute towards reaching the age of retirement fit and healthy both physically and mentally have meant that these individuals are perfectly suited to carrying out volunteer work.

Especially significant is the case of young people (the young unemployed, students, etc.) who, above and beyond the purely altruistic motivations they might have, also consider volunteering and working with social associations as an opportunity to keep active on the job market and acquire additional knowledge and work experience (or professional reorientation) not offered on the job market in order for them to grow as people. They can provide support for tasks related to their professional experience and acquire further skills and experience which can make a valuable contribution to their CVs.

Currently approximately 24% of volunteers are under the age of 26. People between 26 and 35 represent around 12% of the total, 28% of volunteers are aged between 36 and 50, and 15% are made up of people between 51 and 65. The remaining 21% of volunteers are over the age of 65. As we can see, the age ranges of volunteers is becoming ever more balanced

## INCREASED PROFESSIONALISATION AND SPECIALISATION

Thirdly there has been a marked increase in the professionalisation, training and specialisation of the volunteers. Volunteers or helpers have an ever-increasing professional experience which they can apply to help in the volunteer or civic commitment task they are involved in. At the same time, there has been a considerable increase in the different professional backgrounds of these volunteers.

The rejuvenation has also contributed to the overall tendency for new volunteers to be much more technically-skilled - they are clearly much more qualified and, broadly speaking, more involved in the social sphere - and have much greater experience with new technologies and the skills and abilities to deal with the complexity of the current situation.

There is a clear correlation in the city of Barcelona between volunteering and university studies (degrees and further degrees) who represent around 40% of the total (approx. 35% have finished secondary education and the remaining 25% primary education).



## MORE PEOPLE... BUT SPENDING LESS TIME AND MORE INFREQUENTLY

Finally we note that the duration, i.e. the time people spend volunteering, has decreased significantly. Traditionally as a result of the type of person volunteering, we tended to see long-term implication (an average in the past of over 5 years). Today we see much greater “turnover” in the type of volunteers.

The same happens with the hours spent on activities which has also gone down over the last few years: in Barcelona it is calculated that around 48% spend less than 5 hours a week volunteering, 32% spend between 5 and 10 hours, and 16% are active for between 10 and 20 hours. Only 4% of all volunteers give over more than 20 hours per week of their time. In parallel, the number of volunteers or temporary helpers - as well as the need - has been on the increase.

In the same way, this period of time has also seen the founding of different initiatives and support networks which make it possible to offer much more flexible and many different types of help.

## 4.3 The impact of this socially-committed Barcelona: contributions to social capital

The social impact of the work these volunteers do and of the people who are working towards making Barcelona a more social city is undeniable and continues to grow, even though it is not always easy to provide proof or measurements which back this conclusion up.

In situations where peoples’ social needs or financial difficulties are increasing, the contribution or help is invaluable and has become key in improving social cohesion in our city.

Fortunately, “society is increasingly aware of the necessity of getting involved” in order for individuals to improve their own surroundings and the social situation of their fellow citizens. The feeling that we cannot

remain indifferent when faced with these increasing shortcomings and different types of need, and the fight to make it clear how important it is to act and help those in need have made it clear to a lot of people that “volunteering is the future and that at some point or other in their lives, everyone will be a volunteer”.

Based on the interviews we carried out, we have summarised different opinions with regards to the important contribution those involved in this more socially-committed Barcelona are making below.

### **RESPONDING TO NEW AND GROWING SOCIAL NEEDS**

First and foremost the main contribution, especially against the current social backdrop with increasing numbers of people requiring help and which has been a challenge for public services and those in the third social sector to continue providing support, is to be able to help more people and to deal with new needs and social demands as they arise.

This contribution is fundamental, especially when we take into account the new profiles of people needing help - people who never thought they would require support to help them deal with basic everyday needs such as food or paying the roof over their heads, etc.

### **WORKING TOWARDS A FAIRER, MORE COHESIVE SOCIETY WITH A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE**

Secondly, we would like to highlight how this contribution improves life in general across the whole of society. “Living as a member of society means accepting that you’re not the only one, and that you need to behave less selfishly”; understanding that you belong to a community and need to be more aware of those around you.

The selfless and altruistic acts on behalf of others or the community as a whole carried out by volunteers or those helping out in groups, community projects or civic actions - and the values that this involves (help, solidarity, altruism, cooperation and mutual support) - have become an essential contribution towards achieving a fairer, more cohesive society.

Accordingly, the act of coming together as a group helps to improve our communities, find alternatives for the future, change society as a whole, fight against social injustice and defend both civil and social rights, particularly the right of participation. This improves and strengthens the social capital and democratic and social quality of a society.

We also highlight the importance of dedication and commitment - altruistic work for the benefit of everyone - and the spirit of contributing towards the community impact in terms of raising awareness, the transformation of society and the transmission of values and new ways of being and doing.

### IMPROVED COEXISTENCE AND COOPERATION AND SOCIAL BONDS

In third place we would like to mention the improvement in coexistence and cooperation in a community or area. "New local support and cooperative networks increase the possibilities and the resources of the neighbourhoods and the people taking part, and also increase the feelings of belonging to a place".

The creation of trusting bonds and the relationships established when you share experiences with other people or as a result of the exchange itself are an especially relevant element in this sense.

Thanks to this direct contact, the bonds between society and people - people who are at risk of social exclusion or are socially excluded, who are lonely or who have been discriminated against or are rejected by society - are stimulated and reinforced. "Small actions, a conversation, a moment spent sitting in silence, a game or just being with someone can be hugely rewarding for these individuals".

For some, just seeing that they are not alone and that there is someone out there who is interested in how they are doing and want to help them can be a first step in belonging and changing certain dynamics which lead to this type of social exclusion.

## OVERCOMING EXCLUSION AND RECOVERING LOST DIGNITY

In fourth place, the actions of everyone involved in volunteering or providing help bring tools, resources and instruments for people to improve their own lives and thereby break the cycle of social exclusion and overcome situations of poverty or marginalisation, improve their own prospects or opportunities for the future and face the difficulties and adversities they are facing.

As some of those interviewed commented, “sometimes in the middle of the smoke there’s a person or family who don’t know how to put out the fire, who don’t know how the get out of the situation they’re in”.

The actions and the support they receive from volunteers can bring back these people’s hope, helping them rediscover lost dignity and feel like valued members of society once more. As some others have put it: “working for the dignity of others is the same as working towards your own dignity and that of society as a whole”.

## SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND ADDED VALUE IN CARE

In fifth place, we highlight the fact that volunteers or people working directly with a certain service or programme are key to its success. By listening carefully to people and letting them share their thoughts, by getting a feel for the reality people are experiencing in their neighbourhoods and their worries and by working closely together with professionals, we can detect when new needs arise which need to be dealt with or find aspects of current work which might need improvement.

Being close to the people we help and listening to their needs means that we become key players in continually improving the situation. Volunteers are a stimulus for the progress, strengthening and growth of a programme or project; a source of creativity, new proposals, constructive criticism, innovation and much more. In short, they “give added quality and value to social work”.

## LIFE LESSONS AND PERSONAL ENRICHMENT

Finally, volunteer and community work also has a direct, positive, effect on those taking part. As a lot of these volunteers themselves say, “giving my time or being part of an association or project changes your state of mind; it makes you feel like you’re a valued member of society and gives you back the feeling of fun and motivation. It gives you the opportunity to find your place in this ever-changing society of ours”. This proves just how beneficial volunteering can be for all those involved.

In the same vein, many of those involved say that contributing (both volunteers themselves as well as those around them or with whom they volunteer) helps to bring about or strengthen feelings of responsibility, commitment or simply belonging.

We should not forget the life lessons that being part of an exchange with other people or facing new situations or challenges can teach.

## 4.4 Recommendations for building a more social Barcelona

By way of a conclusion for this monograph, we have decided to include a section aimed at explaining some new proposals in an encouraging and motivational manner. The proposals cover the advice or recommendations given to us by those interviewed who were asked how we could increase the interest in volunteering in the city to make Barcelona an even more social and cohesive place to live. Motivational because we are keen to put other options on the table which will help motivate more people to get involved.

### GETTING MORE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Volunteering is seen as one of the best ways of improving other people’s lives, which is why one of the suggestions which came up most often in the interviews was to “work towards trying to get more people involved”.

The current situation is conducive towards this change as almost everyone knows someone in their lives who needs some kind of support, be it a neighbour or colleague, etc.

Facing this crisis head-on and not ignoring it or looking the other way and moving on from complaining or resignation to getting into action and motivating and mobilising others to help strengthens our society as a whole: "Being a volunteer is a great way of changing things!"

Corporate volunteering, i.e. promoting volunteering among a company's workers, is another great way of involving more people and for motivating them to get involved - both the individuals themselves and their companies - in different initiatives.

## **INCREASING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENT WAYS OF HELPING AND THEIR POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE**

The reinforcement, promotion and publicity regarding community initiatives or experiences such as time banks or neighbourhood support networks are highly valued and are considered as having a very high potential for generating new social integration and cohesion dynamics.

In this respect, we recommend explaining in as detailed a fashion as possible what is involved in volunteering or helping out in associations, projects or initiatives as there might be people who do not know what kind of contribution they can make or how much work is involved, etc. "A lot of people don't know how they can help or are worried; we need to motivate them and channel their energy".

"We also need to make it clear that every extra pair of hands helps and that everyone is welcome, no matter how little time they have spared. Everyone has something to offer, no matter what their skills, availability, etc. The key is the sum of what everyone together can give!"

"The most important thing is wanting to help". In Barcelona there are plenty of different options for how people can help out - no matter what your motivation, feelings or concerns. "There's room for everyone!"

Discovering the different ways they can help out can be of particular interest to the retired, the unemployed or those enjoying early retirement but who want to stay active. “The potential, strength and energy that a lot of older people have can be incredible”.

Information evenings where real-life people come and explain how they have been helped, as well as volunteers explaining their feelings of “usefulness” and personal enrichment or satisfaction, or different awareness campaigns, can all be useful in reaching this objective.

### **RECOGNISING THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERING AND SOCIAL COMMITMENT**

Communicating the importance of commitment and cooperation in the community and of volunteering in making society a better place is another of our suggestions. We should increase the recognition of the important work volunteers carry out as this is one of the best ways of promoting our efforts and raising awareness in society.

An effective way of doing this would be to explain the importance of the work of volunteers and helping out in the community from a very young age, in primary schools, for example.

### **MOVING TOWARDS MORE FLEXIBLE WAYS OF VOLUNTEERING**

One of our greatest challenges in the short and medium term is to promote or explore new, more flexible, ways of volunteering. This is especially the case for people who are obviously interested in helping out, but due to time constraints cannot commit themselves to lots of hours or an extended period of time.

“We need to be creative so that everyone that wants to help can help, regardless of their possibilities and circumstances”.

To improve this point we recommend “creating a database of professionals who, thanks to their experience, can offer part of their time or expertise to help out social associations or NGOs when needed on a temporary basis”.

## PROMOTING NETWORKING AND NEW SHARED INITIATIVES

The volunteers and helpers we spoke to also mentioned several challenges or issues in the case of associations working in the third social sector when defining certain common projects or networking so as to be able to create stronger initiatives with a greater chance of making real change and mobilising more people to join in.

It would also be a very positive step to “create meeting points where people could come together and get to know each other. This way they can discuss their common needs and can get organised to see the best way of working together to deal with a specific issue”.

## MORE TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS

Finally, we also highlight the need to provide training for volunteers who help out as part of an official association: it is essential we give our supporters the tools and resources they need to carry out their work better and more efficiently.





# Acknowledgements

We would like to offer our thanks to everyone providing support in one way or another in Barcelona - socially-committed Barcelona - voluntarily and selflessly on a day to day basis. We also want to thank the rich and diverse network of associations across the city, especially those in the third social sector.

More specifically we would like to extend our thanks to those people and associations involved in the Citizens' Agreement for an Inclusive Barcelona who have made this monograph possible.

In particular we also want to pass on our personal thanks to Anna de Eguia, Anna Varderí, Antònia Giménez, Elisa Gutiérrez, Esther Prats, Eva Garcia, Gala Palau, Joan Uribe, Núria Monsalve, Patricia Rovira and Rossend Fernández, as well as everyone who has provided us with invaluable information as part of an interview or in the Citizens' Assembly for a Social Barcelona as listed below:

## PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Alicia León	Volunteer Manager at Barcelona Red Cross
Anna Oro	Volunteer Manager for the Casal dels Infants als Barris
Assumpta Orodea	Manager of the HR and volunteer department at the Foundation of Time Banks
Emma Vendrell	Volunteer at the Ared Foundation

Isabel Rodríguez, Rosa Maria Ruiz and Josefina García	Volunteers at the Bon Pastor Time Bank
Jaume Casassas	Volunteer Manager at Càritas Diocesana in Barcelona
Lluís Claveria	Volunteer at Amics de la Gent Gran
Montse Serena and Ricard Aybar	Volunteers at the Host Family Service of Barcelona City Council
Paola Contreras	Volunteer Manager at Arrels
Pol Quintana	Volunteer at the Associació Benestar i Desenvolupament (Energy Control)
Rafa Martínez	Volunteer at the NGO De veí a veí
Teresa Pinto	Volunteer at BarcelonActua

## PEOPLE WHO TOOK PART IN THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

Ariadna Oltra	Journalist
Carmen Lorenzo	Volunteer at Càritas Diocesana in Barcelona
Carolina Galante	Volunteer at Save the Children
Domingo Bronchalo	Volunteer at Barcelona Red Cross
Eva García	Volunteer at Sant Joan de Déu Serveis Socials
Georgina Rufo	Volunteer at Barcelona Red Cross
Joan Bautista Carbó	Volunteer at Transformas
Imma Vallejo	Volunteer at Barcelona Red Cross
Joana Herance	Volunteer at Transformas

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Laura Jornet Domingo	Volunteer at the Enriqueta Villavecchia Foundation
Mari Àngels Mebuy	Volunteer at the In via Association
Maria Antònia Puché Carbó	Foster Families Association of Barcelona
Maria Rosa de la Torre	Volunteer at ABD, Associació Benestar i Desenvolupament
Marta Sebastià	Volunteer at Casal dels Infants per a l'acció social als barris
Olesea Sircu	Volunteer at the Raval Time Bank
Salvador Alier	Volunteer at Sant Joan de Déu Serveis Socials
Xabier Ballesteros	Member of Xarx@ntoni

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**Help out at one of Barcelona's associations!  
Become a volunteer!**

[www.bcn.cat/barcelonainclusiva/ca/colabora.html](http://www.bcn.cat/barcelonainclusiva/ca/colabora.html)

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