

## Statement by NEVSO:

### Voluntary services confronted with the increase of nationalism and discrimination

We note with concern an increase in nationalist currents in Europe. In many member states of the EU, right-wing populist parties are gaining influence in parliament. The consequences of this are the increasing exclusion of refugees and migrants, and violence against dissenters. Basic democratic rights such as the freedom of the press and expression are restricted. In addition, discrimination, anti-Semitism (footnote: see European Commission study on anti-Semitism with reference to sources) and open racism have increased again in the last years.

These developments are in conflict with the values that the international voluntary service stands for, which are tolerance, international understanding, democracy and diversity:

- Volunteers work in projects that are consciously committed to the marginalized, to the disadvantaged and to diversity. They deal extensively with topics such as anti-Semitism or racism and work with and for people who are affected by discrimination.
- Volunteers learn to move in a transcultural context and international team. Through this they learn to question notions that are natural and familiar to them.
- Volunteers reflect together in seminars on their role(s), the question of identity(ies), privileges, and concomitant challenges. By confronting and dealing with different realities of life, volunteers are encouraged to move out of their "comfort zone".
- Volunteers are supported by educational work, non-formal education to become solidary, open-minded critical thinkers. They take responsibility for others and learn to truly live democracy.

NEVSO is a network of international voluntary service organisations, which provides and encourages diversity and peaceful coexistence among different people(s), cultures and religions.

Volunteer services believe in the European peace project and work to strengthen it. Accordingly, they stand for the fact that Europe will no longer be militarized.

On the occasion of their election to the European Parliament, NEVSO members call on all EU citizens to be actively involved in democracy and the preservation of the "European peace project", to show solidarity with those who are discriminated against and to vote for parties which strongly defend democratic-rights.

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