



TOWARDS A MORE COHESIVE EUROPE

**French Presidency of the
Council of the European Union**

croix-rouge française 

FRENCH RED CROSS POSITION PAPER



In January 1st 2022, France took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for 6 months. In this context, the French Government has invited civil society to play an important part in the events and activities that will occur during its Presidency.

The French Red Cross will use this opportunity to share its priorities and ensure that the voices of its volunteers are heard, especially young people, on topics which have a European dimension and are common to its entire network.

Indeed, with its 27 national European societies, its 276,000 employees and more than 920,000 volunteers, and through its representation office in Brussels, the Red Cross contributes to European debates in its many areas of expertise : social inclusion, health, crisis prevention and response, humanitarian action and development. Moreover, National Societies are involved in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, a global humanitarian network of some 80 million members and volunteers who are dedicated to supporting people facing disaster, armed conflict or health and social problems.

In this context, the French Red Cross has defined four main priorities based upon the European agenda. It is around these themes that the French Red Cross will mainly mobilize, through active participation in the events of the 2022 French Presidency and by contributing constructively its discussions.

Summary

1 STRENGTHEN THE ENGAGEMENT AND MOBILITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE EUROPEAN DEBATE AND SPACE

- Allow each young person to build their own engagement pathway
- Encourage the sharing of experiences and views between young Europeans
- Support training actions and recognize the role of civil society organisations in the European educational pathway
- Allow each young person to better understand their rights and to assert them

2 ADVANCE SOCIAL ECONOMY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

- The European Union's definition of social economy must recognise the special role of civil society organisations
- The European Union must offer a framework that inspires Member States
- Encourage hybridisation and partnerships to stimulate more efficient economic models
- Make social impact a priority

3 MAKE THE FIGHT AGAINST HOMELESSNESS ONE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION'S PRIORITIES

- Strengthen ongoing monitoring as an essential basis for actions on homelessness and a tool for observing social needs on the ground
- Combatting homelessness must remain a priority mission for the State and the European Union
- Uphold unconditional reception, paying special attention to the most vulnerable groups
- Make the right to housing effective and work for access to social support for people in difficulty

4 A BETTER PREPARED EUROPE TO FACE FUTURE CRISES

- Pursuing the European Union's commitment to crisis response
- Organize three levels of response to deal with crises: prepare, protect and recover
- Prepare collectively for the impacts of climate change
- Foster cooperation and ensure better interoperability of crisis response systems

1 STRENGTHEN THE ENGAGEMENT AND MOBILITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE EUROPEAN DEBATE AND SPACE

The Covid-19 crisis has particularly affected young people and widened inequalities at all levels (educational, territorial, access and use of rights, etc.). European youth, however, demonstrate a strong desire to participate to the «social added value», through renewing their forms of commitment: transforming their consumption practices, new more specific forms of commitment, evolution of values and mobilization in favour of causes. For the French Red Cross, it is crucial to hear, encourage, support and prepare young people for this commitment at national and European level.

In addition, in the context of the European Year of Youth 2022 and the planned creation of the European Education Area by 2025, it is important to recognise the role of civil society organisations in personal educational pathways. The technical and interrelation skills developed within associative networks are indeed indisputable assets for the power to act of young people and the adults they become.

Allow each young person to build their own engagement pathway

By mobilizing all levels of its organisation (international, European, national and local, in France and its overseas territories), the French Red Cross intends to offer all young people a space for engagement that corresponds to their desires to act.

The French Red Cross has more than 13,000 young volunteers and trains 20,000 students in its 12 training institutes. During the health crisis, French Red Cross youth volunteers mobilized under the banner of intergenerational solidarity. They ensured the sustaining and strengthening of material support structures (food aid, clothing, etc.) and listening and psychological support while supporting Covid awareness and vaccination strategies.

To support the power to act of young people, the French Red Cross proposes to:

- > **facilitate access for all young people to different modes of engagement** (civic service, volunteering, European solidarity corps, etc.);
- > **allow young people** to train, participate in decision-making, take on responsibilities and be proactive;
- > **promote a diversity of causes and methods of engagement** (long-term/one-day/spontaneous volunteering, etc.);
- > **recognise and promote the engagement of young people** through an Enhanced Youth Guarantee.



Encourage the sharing of experiences and views between young Europeans

Experiences of mobility and dialogue supported by civil society organisations can be strong vectors of European identity. Thus, they have a major role to play in promoting the voluntary engagement of young people to promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship.

In order to promote mutual aid, cultural exchanges, inclusion and the sharing of life experiences, the French Red Cross supports:

- **the possibility for each young person to benefit from a European experience**, through an enlargement of Erasmus+ and through the acceleration of the deployment of the European Solidarity Corps jointly with the Civic Service via the European CSO networks in order to produce a generation of engaged Europeans. As such, we will be attentive to the concretization of the "European civic service" proposed by France for 2022;
- **greater promotion of the voices of young Europeans on major issues of the European Union** by supporting structured dialogue projects and organising opportunities of exchange between organisations working for the engagement of young people in Europe;
- **the development of young people's sense of belonging to Europe** through the creation of a European masterclass to cross-reference experiences between young people and European experts.

Support training actions and recognize the role of civil society organisations in the European educational pathway

The French Red Cross is a major player in training for a variety of audiences: volunteers (social action, first aid), employees (French Red Cross and others), students (health and social training institutes), children, young people and adults as well as the general public.

Through the Red Cross Option, the French Red Cross intervenes in schools to include humanitarian, citizenship and health values in educational pathways.

Training actions for young volunteers, which contribute to their social inclusion and enrich their overall skills (self-confidence, taking responsibility, participatory democracy, etc.) and techniques (first aid, social action, international humanitarian law, etc.) should be supported by European funds (Erasmus+, ESF+, ERDF), and benefit from dedicated sub-programmes.

Particularly active in the professional integration process, from the definition of the personal project to lifelong learning, the French Red Cross welcomes 20,000 learners in its health, social and medico-social diploma courses and prepares them for health and social professions, the importance of which was particularly highlighted during the Covid-19 crisis. The development of international mobility via Erasmus exchanges represents, in this sense, a guarantee of quality for this sector.

To promote the social and professional integration of young people in Europe, the French Red Cross proposes to:

- > **recognize the diversity and richness of the training** provided by associations throughout Europe;
- > **develop the attractiveness of health and social professions** among young Europeans;
- > **allow voluntary training to be eligible** for European funds;
- > **continue to develop the international mobility** of NEETs via the ALMA program (ESF+) and of students via the Erasmus + programme;
- > **generalize the Red Cross Option** in school pathways..

Allow each young person to better understand their rights and to assert them

To offer every young person the same opportunities, the Red Cross encourages Member States and European actors to:

- > **promote young people's access to their rights** (social services and benefits, support systems, etc.);
- > **strengthen inclusive and non-discriminatory access to education, training and digital technology** for all young people;
- > **strengthen social and health support for all young people involved** (health check-ups and social assessment offered to all participants in a European programme).

TO INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE FRENCH PRESIDENCY 2022, THE FRENCH RED CROSS IS ACTIVE IN:

>> THE ORGANIZATION OF THE EUROPEAN INCLUSIVE AND SOLIDARITY GENERATIONS CONFERENCE (BORDEAUX, APRIL 16, 2022) - ENDORSED BY THE FRENCH PRESIDENCY

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ program, led by the youth team of the French Red Cross in Bordeaux, this event will bring together 80 young people from civil society, from 17 European countries, alongside scientists, climate change experts and political figures.

The conference aims to create a common commitment, to promote exchanges and initiatives of young Europeans embodying the plurality of methods of commitment (volunteering, European Solidarity Corps, civic service, association leaders, non-volunteers) around four major themes: environment, access to information, globalization, and the fight against poverty. At the end of the conference, an action plan will be posted on the platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

>> LEADING A GROUP OF YOUNG AMBASSADORS

A group of ambassadors will be the spokesperson for the young people involved in the French Red Cross network and will carry their expectations during the French Presidency. In particular, he will participate in the events planned for the first half of 2022 in order to draw up proposals or conclusions that will feed into the debates of the Conference on the future of Europe.



2 ADVANCE SOCIAL ECONOMY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union counts 2.8 million social Economy organizations and enterprises. They bring together 13.6 million employees and represent 8% of the European Union's GDP. More broadly, nearly 160 million Europeans are involved in these various structures (cooperatives, mutuals, associations, etc.).

The European Union Red Cross national societies represent more than 15 billion euros of annual budget and have more than 276,000 employees as well as more than 920,000 volunteers.

Within this Movement, the French Red Cross is a major economic player and participates by its very nature in the development of social economy in Europe. A social enterprise working for the general interest and a major player in the social and medico-social fields, it thus has an annual budget of 1.4 billion euros. The French Red Cross also employs 18,000 employees and has undertaken a process of social responsibility by emphasizing the protection of employees, their well-being at work, their skills and their professional development.

The European Union's definition of social economy must recognize the particular role of civil society organisations

Through the decisive role they have played during the Covid-19 crisis and their presence as close as possible to civil society, social economy actors have shown their adaptability and responsiveness. It is therefore necessary to recognize and amplify the place of this sector in global recovery by promoting their participation in the construction of a society more rooted in the field, more attentive to all audiences (vulnerable people, sick, elderly and those in precarious situations), more resilient at times of health, social and environmental emergencies as well as more autonomous as it promotes essential and non-relocatable actions.

Faced with the current and future challenges of today and tomorrow, social economy stakeholders must maintain and nurture the trust of institutions, funders and citizens, in order to meet needs. To achieve this, the French Red Cross is constantly innovating, adapting and transforming itself to confirm its place as a key player in this economy. Social economy aims to embody a performance model for tomorrow, combining meaning and efficiency in the most harmonious way.

To support social economy actors and consolidate the protective Europe, the French Red Cross proposes to:

- **develop an ambitious definition of social economy** shared by the European institutions and the Member States and embodied by the stakeholders respectful of its principles and truly invested in social utility ;
- **recognize the transversality, the legitimacy and the contribution of social economy** in all fields of competence of European policies (employment, health, inclusion, regional economic development, environment, research, etc.), including external action of the EU (humanitarian, crisis response and development);;
- **strengthen the dialogue between social economy stakeholders and the European institutions**, by allocating a more important place to civil society organisations in the decision-making process;
- **permanently allocate a social economy portfolio** to a European commissioner;
- **protect non-profit actors and their status** and recognize their unique and essential contribution by enabling them to continue to meet social needs regardless of their financial performance and political stakes.

The European Union must offer a framework that inspires Member States

The Red Cross movement promotes active collaboration between national societies and thus contributes to strengthening the collective capacities of social economy actors in the European Union.

To remove barriers and promote emulation between social economy actors in the European Union, the French Red Cross considers it appropriate to:

- **adapt European Union and member state regulations** to consolidate the social economy model (incentive taxation, privileged access to public procurement, relaxation of the state aid regulation);
- **develop and make more flexible the mechanisms and funding specific** to social economy stakeholders at national and European Union level to strengthen their role in the recovery;
- **support the emergence of good practices** and enable mutual aid between European social economy actors via dedicated exchange spaces (European social economy networks, capacity building projects, assistance for the development of social entrepreneurship, etc.).

Encourage hybridisation and partnerships to stimulate more efficient economic models

As an associative group, the French Red Cross holds a central place within social economy: it mobilizes subsidies, delegates public services, manages several hundred establishments and services, develops new income-generating activities by promoting social ties. In addition, it bridges the private and public sectors. Thus, it has a strong capacity for innovation enriched by its internal, inter-associative network and its place in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

In the social economy sector more than in the traditional economy, performance cannot be considered other than globally (operational, economic, social and environmental). The French Red Cross is constantly evolving to be the proof by example of a balanced performance, in a hybrid model at the intersection of charity and social entrepreneurship, mobilizing volunteers and employees.

Thus, to strengthen the place of social economy in the economy and in the European Union, it is important to:

- **encourage synergies between social economy actors** and with other sectors to bring out new forms of collaboration, innovative solutions and more efficient economic models;
- **strengthen the legitimacy and support the economic model** of associations in order to develop their fields of intervention (social, environmental, health, humanitarian, etc.).

Make social impact a priority

Non-profit organisations are accountable to their donors and funders. This increasingly commits them to demonstrating their social added value, a common and structuring concern for social economy. This approach also makes it possible to highlight the primacy of the values of solidarity and social utility.

The French Red Cross is strongly committed to this dynamic of evaluating its social impact through a dedicated team, the development of specific tools and experimentation on pilot projects.

Social innovation must be supported because it is part of the DNA of social economy stakeholders such as the French Red Cross, which is constantly offering new services to better meet social needs of all kinds. To support players in the sector, whether internal or external, the French Red Cross launched its social innovation accelerator, "21" and developed an international online resource center, "Red Social Innovation".

It therefore seems appropriate to:

- **encourage informed decision-making** that is as close as possible to the realities on the ground, taking into account social utility in European policies;
- **promote, at European level,** the consideration of social impact indicators by social economy actors in the evaluation of performance in the same way as financial indicators;
- **support the emergence and dissemination of innovative solutions** to maximize social impact (experiments, ad hoc funding such as the ESF+).

ON THE OCCASION OF THE FRENCH EU PRESIDENCY 2022, THE FRENCH RED CROSS WISHES TO MOBILIZE AND SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL ECONOMY IN EUROPE BY:

- **supporting the implementation of the European Union Social Economy Action Plan** and rolling out concrete projects and actions;
- **actively participating in the French Presidency events on social economy in various forms** (workshops, conferences, youth village, young ambassadors), in particular in the Manifestation Social and Solidarity Economy, the future of Europe (Strasbourg, 17 February and 5 -6 May).

3

MAKE THE FIGHT AGAINST HOMELESSNESS ONE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION'S PRIORITIES

The French Red Cross is committed to providing appropriate assistance to people living on the street, by offering them accommodation or housing solutions and long-term social support, while respecting their individual problems.

With the Covid-19 crisis, vulnerable and isolated people were once again the first exposed and weakened. It is therefore essential to do everything possible to maintain activities to combat exclusion and offer everyone suitable and sustainable solutions.

With the Lisbon Declaration of June 2021, the European Union mobilized on the fight against homelessness and the Member States committed to work to end homelessness by 2030.

As illustrated in the publication "Red Cross approach - Combatting homelessness in the European Union" published by the Red Cross EU Office in January 2022, National Red Cross Societies are deploying actions throughout the EU to prevent homelessness, to respond to the specific needs of people and to support them towards sustainable solutions.

In this dynamic, the French Red Cross intends to emphasize monitoring, in order to reach out to the most excluded, to identify their needs and to better target responses, to continue to offer unconditional support and sustainable housing as well as individualized support to overcome exclusion.

Strengthen ongoing monitoring as an essential basis for actions on homelessness and a tool for observing social needs on the ground

With its **217 Samus sociaux** (including 190 managed by volunteers) in **76 departments**, the French Red Cross reaches out to people on the street to maintain or even recreate social ties.

The French Red Cross thus recalls the need to:

- > **promote an outreach approach** in order to strengthen knowledge of needs, ensure people know their rights and how to access them;
- > **improve public awareness** and the consolidation of data at national and European level to better work on the causes of homelessness;
- > **guarantee the role of "trusted third parties" of organisations fighting homelessness**, support the emerging demands and the restoration of social ties;
- > **respect the choices of the person** in their journey out of homelessness and their access to housing;



- **build innovative responses**, adapted to changing needs (food aid, access to care, risk reduction in addictology, mental health, etc.), by creating synergies and local partnerships;
- **develop the “bring towards” strategy** and promote the return to autonomy and common law.

Combating homelessness must remain a priority mission for the State and the European Union

As in most European Union countries, in France it is the State that is responsible for providing any homeless person in a situation of medical, psychological or social distress with emergency accommodation. It is therefore essential that the State concretizes its commitment to the implementation of principle 19 of the European Pillar of Social Rights on access to accommodation and housing.

In addition, the Covid-19 crisis has shown the importance of a strong and joint commitment by the State and stakeholders in the field to respond to the emergency and the social and health needs of vulnerable populations.

Adequate means would make it possible to propose, coordinate and finance actions to combat homelessness, and in particular accommodation and orientation systems for housing, often carried out by social organisations, everywhere in the field.

The European Union must continue to encourage Member States to mobilize to reduce homelessness, to support social organisations in their missions (funding of experiments, exchanges of practices, transferability of practices, etc.) and to redouble their efforts, with local authorities, to build social and affordable housing.

Uphold unconditional reception, paying special attention to the most vulnerable groups

The unconditionality of reception is a fundamental principle of emergency accommodation: the law imposes no conditions on the accommodation of a homeless person in a situation of distress. Regardless of the person's age, gender, income level or regularity of the stay, accommodation must be offered.

The French Red Cross intends to defend this principle and its concrete application, which requires the creation or maintenance of systems to welcome all people on the street, whether general or specific, summer and winter, by adapting to each territory, in France and overseas.

Make the right to housing effective and work for access to social support for people in difficulty

- > **Offer accommodation solutions**, that are reassuring and respectful of the dignity of the person, allowing the favorable evolution of the situations;
- > **Deploy a panel of housing responses** taking into account the specificities of the territories and the diversity of the public.

DURING THE FRENCH PRESIDENCY, THE FRENCH RED CROSS WILL BE PARTICULARLY MOBILIZED ON THE ISSUE OF HOMELESSNESS THROUGH:

- > **the organization of a conference “Converging approaches: combatting homelessness in Europe”** on February 8, endorsed by the French Presidency ;
- > **participation in the February 28 event** organized by the Ministry of Ecological Transition on the fight against homelessness ;
- > **the launch of the publication** on the Red Cross approach to combating homelessness, with the European Union Red Cross Office ;
- > **active participation in the European Homelessness Platform**, launched at the end of 2021.

RED CROSS INTERVENTION MODALITIES

>> SOCIAL MONITORING

217 Samus sociaux
35 day centers
14 SIAO

>> ACCOMMODATION

2,934 emergency places
564 insertion places
444 stabilization places
4 000 households at the hotel

>> ACCOMPANIED HOUSING

262 lodgings in boarding houses
49 housing in social residences

421 places in SIL
113 measurements AVDL/ASLL/ALT
208 IML measurements

>> SOCIAL AND MEDICAL

61 Health Care Stopover Beds
2 Therapeutic Coordination Apartments
1 first medicalized social reception
2 vaccination platforms
1 mobile medical team
14 Health and Social access points
100 000 hygiene and well-being kits



4 A BETTER PREPARED EUROPE TO FACE FUTURE CRISES

The associative project of the French Red Cross set its reason for acting: “The French Red Cross unconditionally protects and relieves people in situations of vulnerability and builds, with them, their resilience”. In its 2030 strategy, **it builds its action around 3 pillars: prevention and education, protection, and recovery by restoring social ties**. As members of the international Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the largest international humanitarian network, the French Red Cross and the European Red Cross Societies are mobilised to make the European Union a space for prevention, preparedness and response to European and international crises.

Pursuing the European Union’s commitment to crisis response

Building on its commitment to crisis prevention, preparedness and response within and with the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, **the French Red Cross recommends to:**

- **better integrate humanitarian actors** in the discussions and during the deployment of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) to ensure coordination, and do the same for the development of the European humanitarian response capacity. This inclusive approach will allow to better anticipate and respond to crises and disasters, to develop the exchange of good practices between stakeholders, to ensure the coherence of activities and initiatives as well as to reflect on the necessary improvements;
- **support the operational launch of the EU4Health program** by integrating European health programs that include all the components of primary health care, such as access to care for the most vulnerable and vaccination.



Organize three levels of response to deal with crises: prepare, protect and recover

For a better preparation of populations to deal with crises, the French Red Cross proposes to:

- prepare by generalizing first aid training in the working environment and at school.

In order to ensure the protection of populations during crises and recovery, the French Red Cross proposes to:

- **strengthen collaboration with approved civil protection associations** (as players in the rescue chain in France alongside the SAMU and the Fire Brigade) to reinforce the coordination in times of crisis and in particular the pre-hospital response;
- **engage in the development of international health intervention standards** under the coordination of the WHO by adapting existing intervention modules for better collaboration and interoperability of human and material resources;
- **anticipate recovery** by taking into account – from the preparedness phase – the notions of resilience and recovery in social, economic and health terms;;
- **ensure recovery by restoring social ties** and give everyone the keys to their own recovery through their participation in society.

Prepare collectively for the impacts of climate change

The Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement is committed to adapting to and mitigating the consequences of climate change by participating in the production of knowledge and facilitating a better understanding of the related risks. The Movement contributes whenever possible to research projects on the subject by facilitating access to its areas of intervention. It contributes to the creation of tools enabling effective preparation and a concrete response to the consequences of natural disasters, by investing, particularly in the anticipation phase, in the development of early warning systems and financing principles. based on Forecast-based Financing (FbF).

By responding to the challenge of climate change through a systemic approach to adaptation, the French Red Cross is part of the holistic vision of health promoted by the WHO, including physical, mental and social well-being as determinants of health.

The French Red Cross encourages the European Union to invest more in preparedness and adaptation to climate change in the budgets for humanitarian aid and development aid. This will strengthen the continuity of action and the humanitarian-development Nexus approach.

Foster cooperation and ensure better interoperability of crisis response systems:

- > **ensure the early systematic participation of civil society stakeholders** in the definition of response strategies (e.g. Union Disaster Resilience Goals, European Civil Protection Knowledge Network, in PROCIV meetings, etc.);
- > **integrate civil society in the design and management of response systems both at European and international level.** The Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, thanks to its experience in responding to crises at international level, is a key player in uniting and coordinating the response capacities of civil society. In addition, the presence of the French Red Cross overseas and on the 3 oceans ensures optimal territorial coverage of responses and better coordination between responses at national and international levels;
- > **support cooperation efforts within the European Union and between all sectors of activity.** In all the phases of risk management, the participation of all the public and private stakeholders should allow to better deal with cross-border risks and the emergence of new threats;
- > **recognize the model and societal role of approved civil protection associations** by creating a single European approval to ensure better cooperation and interoperability between neighbouring Member States and easier access for emergency personnel;
- > **develop international disaster response standards such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Guidelines** for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance (IDRL Guidelines) to better organize and implement the response with all the actors for the direct benefit of the affected populations.

DURING THE FRENCH PRESIDENCY OF THE EU COUNCIL 2022, THE FRENCH RED CROSS WILL BE PARTICULARLY MOBILIZED ON THE ISSUE OF CRISES AND RESILIENCE BY:

- > **organizing a conference “Regional resilience in the overseas territories and youth engagement: what prospects for tomorrow?”** endorsed by the French Presidency;
- > **actively participating in the European Humanitarian Forum;**
- > **raising these issues in the context of the European Union-African Union Summit** and relevant activities such as the Africa-Europe Week (14-18 February);
- > **contributing to the agendas and discussions of the COHAFA** and PROCIV meetings of the French Presidency;
- > **getting involved in conferences dedicated to resilience and commitment,** particularly overseas.

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