

MOVE Conference on “Mutual recognition skills and competences gained through volunteering: Towards a European debate”

organised by
the European Volunteer Centre (CEV) in partnership
with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)
and the European Commission



23-24 May 2007 Final Report

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1. Foreword and acknowledgements

This report reflects the discussions and presentations of the MOVE conference, held at the Economic and Social Committee in Brussels on 23 and 24 May 2007. We would like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of the partners in designing and implementing the project and the seminar and identifying the key experts contributing to our discussions. The project partners were

- The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA); Europe
- Association of Voluntary Service Organisations, AVSO; Europe
- INBAS-Sozialforschung GmbH; Germany
- Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwillerswerk (The Flemish Volunteer Development Agency); Belgium
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- Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR); UK
- Önkéntes Központ Alapítvány ÓKA (National Volunteer Centre); Hungary
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- ARBES Arbeitsgemeinschaft Bürgerschaftliches Engagement und Seniorengenossenschaften (Network for senior citizen's civic engagement); Germany;
- Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke (Austrian network of adult education institutes); Austria
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- Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement BBE (Federal Network for Civic Engagement); Germany
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Markus Held

CEV Director

2. Introduction to the MOVE project

2.1. Background and objectives

Non-formal and informal learning play a major role when it comes to opportunities for citizens to gain skills and competences needed in our so called 'knowledge society' and to contribute to personal development. Volunteering as a key non-formal and informal learning experience makes learning opportunities available for all – especially for those that fall out of the formal educational sector or that find it difficult to (re-)enter the labour market.

However, through its very nature the contribution volunteering can make to people gaining skills and competences remains often invisible. There are innumerable projects at local, regional, national and European level to remedy to this problem assessing or accrediting skills and competences learned through volunteering and, thus, raising awareness on the contribution volunteering can make to reduce social exclusion and to enhance employability. Some of them take self-evaluation by volunteers as basis, some involve volunteer centres as "awarding" body; few have links with authorities or business.

What is lacking is a European overview of instruments and models developed to make skills and competences gained through volunteering visible; a reflection on how these models are transferable to other countries and target groups; and an ongoing debate on mutual recognition of methods and instruments between different sectors: The volunteer sector, business, the formal educational sector as well as government and official accreditation bodies.

Finally, we need a better recognition in national and European life long learning policies (such as the discussion on validating non formal learning and the work on the European Qualification Framework) on the positive impact volunteering can have in terms of alternative learning opportunities.

This is the background and rationale to the MOVE project that aimed at

- ***Bringing together a variety of stakeholders with their tools and experiences in identifying, assessing or accrediting skills and competences gained through volunteering and provide an overview of these good practices***

- *Creating a space for the exchange of approaches, needs and knowledge between these actors and identify criteria of good practice for these approaches*
- *Instigating the dialogue between different stakeholders from voluntary sector, business, formal education and where possible government and accreditation bodies on mutual recognition of these skills and competences with the aim to further develop the results and outcomes of the seminar*
- *Leading to an ongoing debate after the seminar itself, possibly by a European Thematic Network that will take further the work on implementation of the results on the European level*

2.2 Description of the MOVE Conference

The core of the MOVE project was a two day conference in Brussels, that was organised by the CEV, the European Volunteer Centre, 23 and 24 May 2007, **bringing together 90 experts and practitioners in respective fields and representing the different stakeholders**. The conference was focused on following these objectives.

The participants debated three major strands:

- *How to identify, assess and validate skills, competences and knowledge learned through volunteering? What common standards or criteria for good practice emerging from the tools and instruments presented can be identified?*
- *How to ensure mutual recognition of these skills, competences and knowledge by different stakeholders such as institutions of formal learning (schools, universities, etc), the business sector and state agencies as well as accreditation bodies? What are the barriers that hinder collaboration of the different stakeholders and can they be overcome?*
- *What role shall the European level play in this regard? Could a "European Volunteer Pass" containing a skills portfolio be a contribution to the current work of the European institutions on the recognition on non-formal learning and the European Qualification Framework?*

2.3. Glossary of Terms

The project partners have prior to the conference agreed on a glossary of terms. It has become clear that these definitions and the importance attached to them vary significantly from country to country and project to project. However, the following glossary provided working definitions for the purpose of our project and seminar discussions.

Formal learning

Learning typically provided by a formal education or training institution (like school, university etc.), structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.

Adapted from:

Communication of the European Commission on Life-long learning, COM(2001) 678 final
Proposed also by University of Liverpool

Non-formal learning

Learning that is not provided by a formal education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured, embedded in planned activities and intentional from the learner's perspective. E.g. training of volunteers recruitment etc.

Adapted from:

Communication of the European Commission on Life-long learning, COM(2001) 678 final
EAEA- "Adult education trends and issues in Europe" 2006 and AVE "Assessing volunteering in a professional perspective" working definition.

Informal learning

Learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family, leisure or volunteering. It is not structured and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or "incidental"/random). Non-formal and informal learning is also referred to as prior learning or prior experiential learning.

Adapted from:

Communication of the European Commission on Life-long learning, COM(2001) 678 final
EAEA- "Adult education trends and issues in Europe" 2006
And University of Liverpool (OECD definition)

**Learning
(process)**

A cumulative process during which the individuals gradually absorb and acquire knowledge, skills or competences (KSC) through study instruction or experience within a personal, civic, social or employment related perspective that transforms the individual.

Adapted from:
Definitions of Liverpool, EAEA and OKA

**Lifelong
Learning**

All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective. It encompasses the whole spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Source:
2001 EC communication on life long learning

Knowledge

The outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. It can be derived from formal instruction or study, practical or professional experience as well as from family, through leisure or volunteering.

Adapted from:
EU European Qualifications Framework and definition used by National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

Competence

The proven ability to use of knowledge and skill that enables effective and creative performance.

Adapted from:
EU European Qualifications Framework and definition used by National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

Skills

Proficiency, facility or ability to effectively apply knowledge to complete tasks, solve problems and perform a practical activity.

Adapted from:
EU European Qualifications Framework and definition used by University of Liverpool and EAEA- "Adult education trends and issues in Europe" 2006

Volunteering

Volunteering occurs in a variety of forms across Europe reflecting the diversity of approaches and traditions in the Member States of the European Union. However, common features can be identified.

Volunteering is an activity undertaken:

- Out of a person's free will, choice and motivation
- Without concern for financial gain (non-remunerated).
- In an organised setting (within NGOs, volunteer centres, more or less organised groups etc.)
- With the aim to benefit to someone other than the volunteer and to society at large contributing to values of general interest (although it is recognised that volunteering brings significant benefit equally to the volunteer).

Source:
CEV working definition

**Social
capital**

Social capital is generally referred to as the set of trust, institutions, social norms, social networks, and organizations that shape the interactions of actors within a society and are an asset for the individual and collective production of well-being. While definitions of social capital vary, the main aspects are citizenship, neighbourliness, trust and shared values, community involvement, volunteering, social networks and civic participation. On the personal level it describes a person's social characteristics, including social skills, and his/her network, which helps that person obtain business, formal and non-formal benefits from interaction with others. At the

macro level, social capital can affect the economic performance and the processes of economic growth and development.

Adapted from:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/centres/cradall/communitybasedlearning2a.shtml>
UK Office of National Statistics and definitions used by EAEA

**Identification
(of KSC¹
acquired
through
non-formal
and informal
learning)**

The process of specifying and defining the boundaries and nature of KSC. Identification can be also referred to as detecting.

Adapted from:

Communication of the European Commission on Life-long learning, COM(2001) 678 final

**Validation of
informal/non
formal
learning**

The process of identifying, assessing and recognising participation in and outcomes of learning as well as a wide range of skills and competences which people develop through their lives and in different contexts, for example through education, work, leisure activities and volunteering. There are diverse forms of validation used by different stakeholders e.g. diplomas, certificates etc.. They are not necessarily mutually recognised.

Adapted from:

AVE Project (Assessing Voluntary Experiences in a professional perspective), on VPL definition (Validation of Prior Learning used in Dutch practise) and Communication of the European Commission on Life-long learning, COM(2001) 678 final

**Accreditation
of informal/
non formal
learning**

The process of formal assessing and then credit-rating of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning by awarding formal certificates, credit units and by granting equivalence.

Adapted from:

APL definition (Accreditation of Prior) and APEL definition (Accreditation of prior Experiential Learning) used in English practice and on Communication of the European Commission on Life-long learning, COM(2001) 678 final

**Recognition of
non-formal and
informal
learning**

A process in which different stakeholders give an acknowledgment and approval of knowledge, skills and competences (KSC) acquired through non-formal and informal learning. Recognition can occur on the each stage – of identification, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning.

Adapted from:

EAEA definitions, Communication of the European Commission on Life-long learning, COM(2001) 678 final

2.4 Final conclusions

The context...

- Participants identified the need **to raise awareness on the importance of volunteering as a learning environment** – with governmental level, business, formal education and sometimes the voluntary sector itself. We are still at early days of the paradigm shift away from input orientation and the primacy of formal diploma and learning. It is still not taken for granted that volunteering is non-formal and informal learning that needs to be recognized. Developing tools and instruments to recognize learning outcomes through volunteering are precisely a step towards a better recognition that volunteering is a “natural” learning environment.
- In this debate, volunteering shall be seen **not as a supplement to formal education and training but as a complement** to it.
- The Norwegian example shows that **legislation at national level** enforcing recognition of non-formal learning concerning admissions to university courses and exemptions from examination can be a valuable way of achieving this.
- The volunteering sector needs to be **open to new developments** and provide tools and instruments for personal learning development of volunteers – but should not lose sight the **core values and principles** that make the genuine value of volunteering (personal commitment for the common good, solidarity, active citizenship that is not guided by personal interest or gain).
- An inherent paradox identified is that the recognition of skills gained through volunteering (VPL / APEL) can be both **a remedy and a risk**: It can be **a way of empowerment and raising self-estimation for volunteers** and make volunteering more attractive especially to volunteers keen on learning and raising their human capital; it will also raise the profile of the whole sector showing its contribution to learning; it might, however, also be **off-putting** to volunteers that do volunteer precisely because it does not follow rules as the labour market or formal education. And it might be off-putting to volunteer organisations if formalisation and professionalization are perceived as being counterproductive to very nature of volunteering.
- There is also a risk of **creating new cleavages** between volunteers. Volunteering is a means of social inclusion and empowerment of those that experience discrimination and exclusion in the labour market or in formal education. Tools of recognition must not reinforce exclusion and discrimination between “skilled” volunteers and “unskilled” volunteers especially as evidence suggests that it might be in the first place the skilled and better off (young) volunteers that enhance their CV with new ways of making their skills visible.
- Skills development and recognition can be **beneficial** both for the volunteer and **for the volunteer organisation**: The volunteer organisations might actually attract new volunteer target groups and will find it also rewarding to propose skills identification as a means of professional volunteer management and their responsibility to provide personal development opportunities for volunteers. Reluctance in the volunteer sector concerning the implementation of tools to recognize knowledge, skills and competences might be overcome by explaining that these tools do not change the nature of a volunteering experience but make its learning outcome visible.
- There is also a **business case** for recognizing knowledge, skills and competences gained through volunteering: **“CSR without HR is PR”** – companies do have an interest in their employees volunteering. Outside the usual work environment, often perceived as part of a “rat race”, employees can learn in a different environment, enhance social, communication or organisational skills and simply benefit from the positive feeling of contributing to the local community’s well-being. While this enhances the human capital of the individual and the company, evidence suggests that employee volunteering also enhances motivation.
- The sector should avoid creating tools and instruments for the sake of doing so. There is a need of **further research into attitudes and expectations of volunteers** of such tools and a **needs assessment** on whether these tools are actually to be taken up by volunteers. Can it be taken for granted that volunteers do want assessment or even accreditation of their knowledge, skill and competences – and if so, what kind of tool do they want / need? Interestingly, very few delegates of the conference themselves had ever filled in a “competence portfolio” – and they suggest that no tool should be developed without a clear demand of a need for it.

- This also applies to the **attitudes and expectations of the other sectors**, stakeholders and receivers of competence portfolios: What is business and formal education institutions' stance towards such tools? Research in Norway for example suggested that "merely" the hairdressers' sector was interested in social competences gained by applicants through volunteering...
- Recognition of knowledge, skills and competences is **just one element of a full-fledged awarding culture** for volunteers: Volunteer cards, volunteer awards and appraisals are other ways of publicly recognising the value of volunteering.

The methods...

- Different methods of skills identification and assessment are valid and have advantages: Those that focus on **self-assessment** are easily accessible, support the volunteer in self-reflection and are simply cheaper. **External assessment** (or even "validation") contains the advantage of being objective, providing guidance to the volunteer and leading more easily to official recognition while it might be perceived by the volunteer and the volunteer organisation as cumbersome and resource-intensive. The presented good practice suggests that a mix between these two methodologies is advisable.
- Two ways of making the tools accessible and disseminate them were reported: Some projects choose to make a portfolio **available online** for volunteers to freely download and use. Others **disseminate portfolios to (accredited) volunteer organisations** in charge of making them available to the volunteers. The latter ensures that the volunteer has access to guidance and training when filling in the portfolio; but organisations might meet limits in resources not being able to cope with the demand to help volunteers fill in the forms – the former has a lower threshold, but with the disadvantage that volunteers might in the end find it too difficult to use them without personal support.
- The voluntary sector needs to remain flexible to **take into account different motivations of volunteers**: Some do want to "get something out" and to seek official recognition of their learning outcome through volunteering, some appreciate an identification of their knowledge skills and competences for their self-awareness and self esteem, and others do not want any of

these. Volunteering needs to remain to any of them – and tools of assessment and recognition of skills will have to be designed taking into account different forms of motivation.

- In order to avoid risks and to make tools and instruments of recognition meaningful...
 - ➔ **Demand** for tools needs to be **assessed**
 - ➔ **Assessment** needs to be **voluntary**
 - ➔ **Recognition** needs to be **mutual**
 - ➔ The **language** needs to be **common** (between and even within the sectors)
- A real challenge is to design a **simple procedure of high quality** that focuses on the volunteer as centre of the assessment procedure and the potential receiver (the recruitment officer, the university admission officer, ...).
- In order to achieve mutual recognition, the different sectors need to **actively seek cooperation and dialogue**; this seems to be still difficult due to different organisational logics and functioning, different language and different aims of volunteer centres, business and formal education. The experience with MOVE shows, that it is rather difficult to bring the sectors together. Many of the presented tools are still designed only within one sector. But a common debate is a necessary requirement for a successful tool of recognition of volunteers' skills, competences and knowledge. This requires in many cases a real **change in attitude** from all these sectors to be open to this dialogue, especially from the formal education side to address the still existing resistance to acknowledge other forms of learning.
- In particular, any activity wanting to raise employability through the recognition of knowledge, skills and competences needs to **engage business and recruiters**. Business methods to identify and assess skills and competences might be inspiring – and more importantly the needs and language used by business when recruiting staff needs to be taken into account if a tool is to be useful to a recruiter, being the receiver of a competence portfolio.
- The general feeling of participants was that **not one single tool** to identify and assess knowledge, skills and competences fits all volunteers, learning experiences nor aspirations that volunteers have using a portfolio.

However, a **common framework** (a “currency”) taking into account the below mentioned criteria of good practice in which these different tools shall operate seems to be possible. Work needs to be done to develop and agree on a **common language** as to the notions and definitions used to be applicable at a national and European level – and across sectors. The tools and instruments developed locally taking into account the reality of volunteer centres and volunteers’ needs can fit into this common framework.

- Lots of efforts could be pooled if a **database of good practices as well as a handbook on do’s and don’ts existed** – possibly across Europe, to avoid re-inventing the wheel, but at the same time facilitating the creation of tools that fit a local reality

Towards criteria of good practice...

A way forward towards a common framework is the formulation of **common criteria of good practice** extracted from all the tools and instruments presented over the two days:

- 1. Voluntary usage** of the tool both for the volunteer and the volunteer organisation must be ensured – and the non-use of it shall in no way have negative effects.
- 2. Ownership** should lie with the volunteer: He / she and his / her attitude, interest and motivation shall be the starting point to develop such methods – and should be the guiding force through the process. The tool shall be conceived and implemented not for volunteers but with and on the initiative of volunteers.
- 3. Receiver-orientation and stakeholder involvement:** While the heart of the process is the volunteer it also has to be designed in order to take into account the “receiver” of the instrument: The business recruiter, the university coordinator for accreditation of prior learning, policy makers, accreditation institutions, etc. Good practice is able to take both dimensions into account throughout the process of development and implementation.
- 4. Needs assessment:** Tools are meaningful if they are designed on the basis of a needs assessment and research into the attitudes and expectations of volunteers and the other stakeholders involved.

5. A Simple, accessible and attractive procedure using a process and a language that the volunteer understands and is willing to use. It shall not be administrative nor time-consuming but using creative methods to guide the volunteer through the process. For young volunteers computer-based portfolios might be attractive. For volunteers of disadvantaged backgrounds specific awareness raising to use such tools will be needed.

6. Flexibility: These instruments shall be flexible and adaptable to the different realities that volunteers work in and to the different motivations the volunteers have to use such a tool.

7. Outcome orientation: The tool should be based on the concept of ‘documenting competences’, rather than ‘documenting experience’: Volunteer activities and experience should be translated into knowledge, skills and competences.

8. Use a clearly identified list of generic / key competences and the activities that lead to their acquisition to make the competences and method to identify them “observable”. While it seems to be close to impossible to embrace all possible forms of voluntary action and competences gained within them, there is a clear advantage using a pre-defined list of competences: For the sake of simplicity and an easily accessible tool, the users will find it much easier in their reflection process to find a list to work with.

9. Basic principles for mutual recognition or accreditation shall be respected:

- ➔ **Validity** – evidence submitted should be appropriate to the learning claimed
- ➔ **Reliability** – the extent to which there is inter-assessor agreement or consistency
- ➔ **Sufficiency** – the quantity and range of evidence should be sufficient to determine competence across the full range of learning outcomes.
- ➔ **Authenticity** – the evidence must be verifiable
- ➔ **Currency** – concerns the “recency” of the evidence

10. Guidance and support for the volunteer to use the document needs to be provided – and in turns the volunteer organization needs to be trained and have the respective resources to give this support.

11. The portfolio's value rises if it is used in the context of a "**personal development plan**", meaning that the volunteer may use the portfolio to develop further his/her career, self-esteem, etc and that the process is not merely done for the sake of it.

12. Identification of roles: The separation of the roles of the volunteer, the coach guiding through the process and possibly an external assessor will enhance the quality of the process.

13. Local design within a national (and / or European) framework: Tools should be designed and implemented locally, but fit into a national framework to be comparable and to facilitate recognition; and they should be linked to overarching policy developments such as life-long learning and the general recognition of non-formal and informal learning, volunteering being one element in this debate.

The role of a European debate...

The participants have voiced reluctance concerning a "**European Volunteer Pass**" as a top-down instrument designed far away from the local reality of volunteer centres: How can a single European tool fit all kinds of volunteer experiences and the knowledge, skills and competences gained?

However, the European level can play a meaningful role...

- To organize an ongoing debate between practitioners and sectors in Europe: MOVE itself proved that it is enriching to "**think outside the box**", to get inspired by other country's experiences and to work towards a common understanding.
- To gather good practice, make them available in a **database** accessible for all stakeholders as a tool to provide inspiration and avoid "reinventing the wheel" in different parts of Europe.
- To extract good practice elements and instigate a bottom-up debate on a **common framework and language** in which national / local tools operate to ensure a wide geographical and sectoral recognition of tools that identify knowledge, skills and competences gained through volunteering.

■ Part of the common framework can be a **list of key competences** typically gained through volunteering.

■ To continue **European advocacy work** on better recognition of volunteer learning to tap into recent developments under way: The work on the European Qualifications Framework, the recognition of non-formal learning and the EUROPASS initiative that provides for social competences to be included into a CV.

3. Wednesday 23rd May 2007 - DAY I

3.1 Panel I

Identifying, assessing and recognizing – skills, competences and knowledge of volunteers – but how and by whom?

Non-formal and informal learning play a major role when it comes to opportunities for citizens to gain skills and competences needed in our so called 'knowledge society' and to contribute to personal development. Volunteering as a key non-formal and informal learning experience makes learning opportunities available for all – especially for those that fall out of the formal educational sector or that find it difficult to (re-)enter the labour market. However, the very nature of volunteering leads to the fact that knowledge, skills, and competences that people gain remains often invisible.

Panel I addressed the following questions:

- What are the tools to identify skills, competences and knowledge of volunteers?
- How can so-called "soft skills" be identified and assessed?
- Who shall identify and assess these? The learner / volunteer (self evaluation)? The volunteer organisation? An external accreditation body?
- How shall tools and actors be chosen so that different stakeholders can recognize the outcome of the assessment?

Chair: Eva Hambach from Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk

- ▶ **Frank Moe** (Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education, SIU)
"Formal accreditation of non-formal learning – a challenge for institutions and for the volunteering sector"
- ▶ **Andrea Reupold** (German Youth Institute DJI)
"Development of a competence portfolio for volunteers in Germany"
- ▶ **Lies Graafsma** (IVIO Didaktiek, the Netherlands):
"Accreditation of Prior Learning – between quality and accessibility"



Frank Moe (Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education, SIU):
"Formal accreditation of non-formal learning – a challenge for institutions and for the volunteering sector"

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Mr. Moe started his presentation recalling the importance of the true gist of volunteering – while it can be necessary and desirable to accredit volunteer learning, this cannot and should not be the major goal or outcome of a volunteer experience.

From "Life-long schooling" to "Learning throughout life"

Non-formal learning represents an important challenge for universities that are used to their traditional "ownership" of knowledge and that still show resistance to acknowledge learning taking place outside formal institutions. On the other hand, developing a system of recognition of non-formal and informal learning also means 'quality control' which might represent challenges for the volunteering sector. Mr. Moe observes a shift in the notion of Life Long Learning (LLL) over the last 10 years away from a formalized concept of **"Life Long Schooling" towards "Learning throughout / in life"** by everyday experiences.

Accreditation of Prior Experiential (Informal) Learning (APEL) represents a series of challenges for universities:

- Universities might make the recognition so difficult that people become reluctant to go through the process
- Universities argue that "real life" competence lacks the academic dimension or that it will lower the academic standards
- Universities traditionally have very strong formal arrangement: There is a lack of understanding why people should "escape" an exam by using a different path of recognition

The tools for the documentation, description, the assessment and the recognition of acquired competences need to be compatible with the way knowledge is recognised in the formal education system – which means very often that it is an expensive process to go through. There are different types of recognition of prior experiential learning, going from the admission to universities (which is comparably easy) to exemptions from examinations that are more difficult to obtain.

Criteria to obtain APEL

The following **criteria** need to be fulfilled to obtain recognition of an assessment of skills:

- **Validity** – evidence submitted should be appropriate to the learning claimed
- **Reliability** – the extent to which there is inter-assessor agreement or consistency
- **Sufficiency** – the quantity and range of evidence should be sufficient to determine competence across the full range of learning outcomes
- **Authenticity** – the evidence must be verifiable
- **Currency** – concerns the “recency” of the evidence
- **Level** – the standard of achievement reached on completion of the learning outcomes of a specified module

Moreover, the supporting evidence should contain information that is particular to the degree or course targeted. The most common documentation methods are course diplomas/certificates, testimonials, self evaluation, interviews or testing of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired. In order to achieve better recognition of nf/if, Mr. Moe highlights three major conditions that need to be fulfilled:

- A real **change in attitude** of the formal education institutions
- **Professional tools** to describe “real” competences (Realkomptanse)
- And **legislation**

The Nor-WAY of dealing with APEL

The “Nor-WAY” of dealing with the issue: The legislative remedy

The Norwegian solution consists partially in a specific act stipulating the possibility for universities to recognize prior learning when accepting students or when recognizing examinations.

Admissions²: “The Ministry may stipulate that other suitable education or combinations of education and work experience shall constitute a general basis for admission. The institution shall consider whether applicants hold qualifications corresponding to the stipulated entrance requirements”.

(...) The institutions may grant applicants who are 25 years of age or older in the admission year admission to specific courses if they on the basis of their prior learning (formal and non-formal) are adequate for the course concerned.” **Exemptions** from examinations or tests³: “Documentation of prior learning (formal and non-formal) may also provide a basis for exemption”

In practice, admission seems to be widely applied (from 2001-2004 around 50% of approximately 5.200 candidates), whereas exemptions are practiced to a very small degree.

MOVE
presents

Andrea Reupold (German Youth Institute DJI):
“Development of a competence portfolio for volunteers in Germany”

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Mrs. Reupold has developed a competence portfolio called „**Kompetenzbilanz aus Freiwilligen- Engagement**“, in the framework of a programme supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

Three main facts lead to this project: Research in Germany shows that 33% of all Germans are active in volunteering; there is still a high unemployment rate; and 70% of work experience gained is ‘informally’.

² Act concerning Universities and colleges: Section 37.

³ Act concerning Universities and colleges: Section 49.

Description of the project (Oct 2004 to June 2006)

The project was run in collaboration with 15-20 organisations from the business sector mainly, with the following **objectives**:

- **Create a competency portfolio for volunteers**
- **Identify competences learned through volunteering and make them assessable**
- **Gain acceptance for the competences in businesses and volunteer organisations**

The project was realized within **three phases**:

1. Development of a list of requirements of different stakeholders from the tool to be developed through interviews and comparative studies
2. Development of a first version of the tool including a pre-test (not widely accepted)
3. Test of the modified version of the tool + development of a digital version

Criteria of good practice – Link it to 'real life'...

The final tool focuses on volunteering 'tasks', the learning outcome of these tasks and the competences gained as a result. It is based both on **self-assessment** of the volunteer reflecting in a 'personal portfolio process' and a **public assessment** of the pool of competences identified. A list of possible competences is given, such as 'ability to take decisions'; 'ability to take initiative'; ability to manage conflicts'. The **utilisation** of the identified competences is completely chosen by the volunteer who would choose among the pool of competences those he/she wants to be publicly know when e.g. applying for a job – but the tool itself shall be **linked to 'real life'** as it is in many cases not an aim in itself but shall lead to employment.

... and make it easy! Criteria of good practice

It has to be a 'solvable task' for volunteers to fill in the portfolio: The first model developed was not accepted because of being perceived as over-complicated, a cumbersome time-consuming process. The final version consists of only seven worksheets and **uses accessible vocabulary, a simple layout and concrete guidelines and manuals.**

The challenge – Who recognizes?

Major challenges and barriers for the final instrument to be recognized identified in the project were:

- Lack of trust in an individual person filling the portfolio: there is no "official accreditation" that "witnesses" the competences
- Matching of competences to what is needed in companies/institutions
- Recruitment processes not yet used to recognizing these kind of tools

Keep an eye on the wider picture

Ms. Reupold concludes on recommendations in order to make initiatives more successful

- Including in any initiative to identify skills and competences representatives from business (Human Resources officers)
- Put a clear focus on the typical learning outcomes to be in volunteering (responsibility, organizational skills, commitment)
- Make volunteers aware of their motivation to fill in a competence portfolio (for employment? Self awareness?, ...)
- Address the challenge of assessing "hard skills" and knowledge gained through volunteering
- Link initiatives to a wider context such as the work currently under way of the OECD



Lies Graafsma (IVIO Didaktiek, the Netherlands):
"Accreditation of Prior Learning – between quality and accessibility"

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Lies Graafsma presented the final outcome of a **research project focused on Accreditation of Prior Learning (APEL)** and pointed to controversies when using APEL for volunteer experiences.

Measuring the immeasurable?

APEL as an instrument for identifying, assessing and recognizing competences, is often seen as an instrument that seems to conflict with the character of voluntary work. APEL measures, uses standards, and assesses the presence of competences in the experience of the individual. Measuring, reviewing and assessing are interventions that volunteers and volunteer organisations are not always familiar with. What is more: Even when carefully introduced, people feel these type of interventions interfere with the nature of voluntary work, which emphasises aspects like solidarity, unselfishness and respect for everyone who contributes according to one's own capacity. In fact 'measuring their learning' is not coming naturally to volunteers and it is easily seen as a way of criticising the capacities of a volunteer. APEL seems to distinguish people from each other based on 'good' and 'not so good' learning outcomes – and this is traditionally not what people seek when engaging in volunteering.

Divided opinions – Threat or remedy?

Some Volunteer development agencies which play a role in upgrading voluntary work and the image of volunteers, see APEL as a method with great perspectives: It may indeed make voluntary work more attractive to young people and has the potential of being a link in the chain for unemployed people to obtain paid work.

Others see the procedure as a threat undermining the true values of volunteering: APEL might indeed create 'divisions' and a danger of 'grading' volunteers according to their skills and competences.

Quality and accessibility: balance on a thin rope

In order to create acceptance and at the same time conserve the merits of voluntary work, organisations like MOVISIE and IVIO **balance on the small rope between quality and accessibility**. They want to take away the frightening image and they try to make APEL as easy and as accessible as possible. But the case is that the value of APEL is strongly related to the value the **receivers** will grant. The receivers might perceive the lacking reliability of the competences identified and presented. APEL therefore needs to be subject to rules of standardization and quality. If not, it will only serve incidental, individual purposes and not contribute to the value of voluntary workers and work in general

A simple procedure of high quality

Criteria of a successful instrument:

- Prepare the terrain: Raise awareness of the target group through focusing their attention on environmental influences
- During the process: Create a precise and verifiable methodology
- Maintain regular quality-standards, but be ready to adjust them
- Develop the process in dialogue with the volunteer field: volunteer organisations and volunteers themselves
- Involve national organizations (like MOVISIE) that will play a role in promoting, disseminating and implementing the tool (what may eventually lead to an 'upgrading' of volunteering as well as of the image of volunteers)
- The instrument itself should
 - ➔ Be accessible, not administrative
 - ➔ Be easy, not time-consuming
 - ➔ Be creative using less 'verbal' methods but images and colour features to guide the volunteer through the process
 - ➔ Be based on the concept of 'documenting competences', not merely 'documenting experience'
 - ➔ **Use clearly identified list of key competences** (in this case 12) that are available to guide the volunteer
- Separate clearly the roles of volunteer, coach (as support for the volunteer in the process), assessor and volunteer organization

Questions, answers and conclusions

Resistance

While nobody puts in doubt that volunteers gain competences, there is still resistance from different angles concerning the identification and assessment of these skills and competences. A first step to overcome resistance is to develop standardized procedure with and accepted by the voluntary sector itself. The next step is to achieve acceptance within other sectors, especially the 'receivers', i.e. schools, universities and business. As seen in the Norwegian presentation, the resistance in the educational sector is quite high, due to the traditional notion of "ownership of knowledge" and a "monopoly" concerning knowledge transfer widespread within formal education. Norway chose to introduce a mindset change through legislation.

Usage

Not all volunteers will want, or should have to, use the tool as they all volunteer for different reasons. The difficulty consists in designing tools that are adaptable to motivations of volunteers such as finding a job and / or raising self esteem.

Accessibility

Free download or a physical tool? Both do have advantages and disadvantages inherent, one being widely accessible (but might on, the other hand not be used), the other being a physical proof that people can touch and present (but that might be too cumbersome to obtain and fill in).

Simplicity

The call for a simple and non time-consuming, accessible tool was the red thread through panel I. The tools developed are easy to use and fill in for the volunteers themselves. However, does a '30-minute-tool' provide sufficient and valid data?

Reliability

The process needs to foresee ways of making the information provided reliable and verifiable. Some form of accreditation needs to be found so that the receiver will recognise the tool.

Transferability

The volunteer sector is just one sector of informal and non-formal learning. Does it make sense to develop a specific tool for every different sector where people gain competences informally and non-formally? Or shall the approach be rather a general, generic tool to be applicable to any kind of informal and non-formal learning?

Generic / key competences

Is it possible to define a list of key competences that are generic and applicable to different types of volunteering? While this approach will limit the volunteers to possibly identify other competences and while it seems to be close to impossible to embrace all possible forms of voluntary action and competences gained within them, there is a clear advantage using a pre-defined list of competences: For the sake of simplicity and an easily accessible tool, the users will find it much easier in their reflection process to find a list to work with.

3.2 Workshop Session A

The aim of the workshops was to present tools and instruments developed focusing on the following questions.

Questions

- Who were the key partners and why were they involved in this project / initiative?
- What were major barriers to collaboration between stakeholders?
- How were these barriers overcome?
- What are the good practice elements of this project?
- How is this experience transferable to other contexts / countries?
- Which results or outcomes of the project could be included in a portfolio of volunteer skills to be used across Europe?
- What kind of recommendations can be fed into a European debate on the mutual recognition of skills and competences learned through volunteering – and into the discussion of a European Volunteer Pass?

The report from the workshops gives the ground information about each project and attempts to tackle the most important answers following the structure of the list of questions.

3.2.1 Workshop A1



Paulina Koszewska (Polish National Volunteer Centre) **and** **Szilard Strenner** (ÖKA National Volunteer Centre Hungary):
“AVE – Assessing voluntary experience – Polish and Hungarian results of a European project”⁴

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Short background:

Both presentations come from new EU member states. Due to the national historical context, volunteering is in both countries subject of public promotion in order to change public awareness and attitudes of citizens towards volunteering. The recognition of the skills meets a big interest from the part of the volunteers, especially young graduates. However, human resource departments seem still to be reluctant.

Project description:

The AVE project is a pilot project organized under the EU-funded Leonardo da Vinci from 2003-2006. 7 partner EU countries looked at the target group of long-term volunteers willing to enter or return to the labour market (eg. mothers returning to work (after child birth), young people starting their careers but have no professional experience, those away from the job market due to sickness etc).

⁴ Introductory Note: The A1 workshop was a joint presentation of both speakers. The reports follow the good practice templates delivered by the workshop leaders.

1. Aims of the project:

- Create a portfolio to identify and evaluate the skills and qualifications required and acquired in volunteering
- Develop a method to assess these skills and qualifications in a professional perspective
- Create a network of experts

2. Good practice components

- Development of a portfolio for Poland: the method of self-evaluation by the volunteer and mentoring the volunteer throughout the process has been chosen (Volunteers obtain introduction and can make exercises before their skills and competences are being 'translated' in a professional HR language)
- Creation of a double communication network: A network of volunteer experts and a network of associations and partners in 7 European countries. At the same time, there are yet distinctive networks on the national level.
- Usage of a simple, non-professional and easily understandable language for the portfolio

3. Steps

... of the project

- Volunteer associations were consulted on the basis of a questionnaire to test the benefit of the AVE process. A list of main skills and qualifications gained through voluntary activities and the ways to identify them were collected over one year and crystallized to a general list of 26 main skills
- Testing: assessment/validation of these skills and qualifications.

...of the portfolio

- Introduction: knowing what volunteering means and how far a voluntary experience may be used in a professional perspective
- Volunteer biography: compiling a chronological list of important events connected with his/her volunteer activities
- List of training and seminars attended: collecting all the useful knowledge learnt through different trainings
- Collecting voluntary activities: explaining the different roles, functions, missions fulfilled by volunteers
- Identifying skills: reflecting about the voluntary involvement and its benefits – mind map
- Skills tables: selecting, explaining and ranking the different

skills acquired or developed through volunteering

Action plan: giving goals to achieve to improve specific skills useful in a professional perspective

- Summary of portfolio: presenting in one sheet the work done in the AVE process,
- Summary sheet: compiling in one sheet the skills/competences useful on the labour market
- Annex: glossary; samples of documents to be provided by the volunteer

... of the tutor

- Explaining the process, the conditions (being a volunteer and having a professional perspective), the method used (assessment of skills)
- Going through the portfolio with the volunteer: (presentation of the general context and expression of a professional project by the volunteer, compilation of the portfolio, evaluation of the process)
- Helping the volunteers for the compilation of any document referring to his/her volunteering proving his/her experience

4. Barriers and obstacles identified

- Lack of resources in organizations to perform the identification and the assessment of skills – self assessment necessity
- Lack of resources for the promotion of the tool
- Lack in the terminology and understanding of 'volunteering', the portfolio and terminology around 'skills' and 'competences'. Low level of public awareness of the benefits of volunteering and the need of life-long learning

5. How to overcome the barriers

- Create a European basic tool
- Adapt national tools to suit the national context

6. Transferability

The experience of the project shows that a European portfolio is only useful to give a framework and a common language – but that the instruments used at national or even local level have to be adapted to the respective context.

7. Outlook

The challenge is to match the skills with typology of competences used by businesses. The project opted to use the most simple way for the volunteers to fill

in the portfolio – but this might mean in the end that the receiver (business) do not find it 'usable'. Furthermore, it is crucial to match the CV with the portfolio: Human resource practise shows that the experts consult the CV rather than the Portfolio that serves for the volunteer only.

Within the portfolio process, the volunteers should be encouraged not only to reflect their history, but to think over their future professional carrier. The extended reflection part together with the support of an external tutor fulfils the 'hidden function' of rising the self-awareness of the applicant and orienting him/her in their future career plans

The value of AVE is a completely new approach to volunteering. Volunteering is not yet seen as something that can be measured and described in terms of learning outcomes. A lack of awareness that voluntary work can be a way of improving qualifications goes in pairs with a comparably high unemployment rate. In this context, volunteering can be seen as an opportunity to gain some 'work' experience; on the other hand volunteer organizations are confronted with citizens de-motivated as there 'are no jobs for which I should get trained'. A follow-up project "Volunteering – 1st step to the labour market" funded under the European Social Fund is taking up the legacy of AVE (2007-2008).

3.2.2 Workshop A2

Presentation 1)



Debbie Walker, Danielle Hird, (Imperial War Museum North, UK) and **Adele Finley** (The Manchester Museum, UK):
"Skills for life" - Social Inclusion through volunteering in museums

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Name of the project: 'In Touch' Volunteer Programme Short Background

The Volunteer Programme springs from Imperial War Museum North's strong belief in the importance of social inclusion and access for all. The first volunteers joined the programme in March 2002, before the Museum opened. Since then the Programme has worked with over 200 individuals from the local community who are, or in risk of, social or economic exclusion. The programme has been externally funded from the start and has had a number of short-term funders.

The volunteer programme is currently in phase 4 of its developments and has successfully secured funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to deliver a collaborative volunteer programme with The Manchester Museum called 'In Touch'. The partnership will be funded until January 2010 and will recruit 180 volunteers.

All volunteers joining the 'In Touch' Volunteer Programme follow a Cultural Heritage course that has been specifically designed to meet the needs of the volunteers. The course is delivered at both Museums in partnership with local colleges and has Literacy and inter-personal skills embedded into the training. On completion of the course Volunteers gain a recognised literacy qualification.

Volunteers help guide and assist visitors to the Museums in a variety of roles such as: visitor liaisons, running an online research area and manning an information desk that incorporates objects from our handling collection.

At both venues a team of two full time, fully trained, motivational staff (Volunteer Co-ordinator & Volunteer Assistant) work on the programme.

Project description

1. Aims of the project:

- To develop self-esteem, interpersonal skills and confidence combined with literacy skills and core skills to improve quality of life and employability
- To remove the barriers and preconceptions that stop people visiting and actively engaging with their local culture venues
- Volunteer become community ambassadors for the museum gaining a real sense of ownership and proactive engagement with the Museum

2. Good practice components:

- The Programme provides 'out of pocket expenses' without which many of our volunteers would not be able to attend
- Using participation –led evaluation and consultation with learning providers has allowed us to develop a course ideal for individuals who are lacking confidence, up to date skills and feel that museums and culture organisation are not for them
- By inviting staff to attend the training to talk about their roles within the museum volunteers become fully integrated into the staff team
- The programme is shaped by the volunteers through continual volunteer consultation and evaluation
- All volunteers achieve an Entry Level 3 literacy qualification on completion of the Cultural Heritage Course
- Volunteer also have the opportunity to develop their skills further by enrolling on additional Literacy, Numeracy and ICT courses delivered at the Imperial War Museum North once a week. volunteers who attend these sessions work towards a Level 2 skills for life National Test, which is equivalent to a G.C.S.E
- The Museums provide a friendly and informal learning environment. If the courses were not being run at the Museums it is doubtful that many, if any would choose to register at a college

- Providing external training opportunities helps build new skills
- The programme has developed Successful partnerships/relationships with external groups/organisations and learning providers

Innovations:

- Phase 1: Individuals were recruited from the local communities to start volunteering months before the Museum opened in order to encourage a sense of participation and ownership, volunteers were offered a Level 2 Cultural Heritage NVQ Qualification as part of their training
- Phase 2: Continued to recruit a diverse, non-traditional range of volunteers, an additional pre NVQ certificate was delivered to introduce the Level 2 NVQ
- Phase 3: Decided to offer a course specifically designed for volunteers who have low and outdated skills. Worked closely with a local college to embed an Entry Level 3 Literacy qualification into a short 10-week course
- Phase 4: Secured Funding from Heritage Lottery Fund to work in partnership with Manchester Museum. Continue to deliver 10 Week Cultural Heritage Course at both venues

3. Assessment

The course for volunteers

- The Cultural Heritage course acts as an induction to volunteering in the Museums. Its aim is to help volunteers develop the key skills and knowledge required for the role - customer service, communication and museum knowledge
- The Cultural Heritage course is mapped to the *Skills for Life* core curriculum and is delivered at the Museums by a literacy tutor from Salford College and Trafford college. It uses the rich resources of the museum to provide an enjoyable and stimulating learning experience. (see dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus for further information on the literacy curriculum and Skills for Life agenda)
- Part way through the Cultural Heritage course individuals begin to volunteer. They are buddied up with an existing volunteer who works with them through a series of sessions, putting into practice what they have learnt on the course and supporting them through their first steps of volunteering
- Volunteers become community ambassadors for the museums gaining a real sense of ownership and proactive engagement with the Museum after completing the course

- Volunteers also have the opportunity to continue their training by following various **additional courses**:

- ➔ Advanced English and Maths courses
- ➔ ICT Course
- ➔ Customer Care
- ➔ Presentation skills
- ➔ Conservation training
- ➔ First Aid
- ➔ Buddy training
- ➔ Basic Sign Language
- ➔ Refugee Awareness
- ➔ Information and Advice
- ➔ Help to further develop skill base and confidence
- ➔ Volunteers and Staff train together

4. Impact assessment

Benefits for the Volunteer

- Enhances quality of life
- Make new friend
- Get involved with community
- Boost self confidence
- Sense of pride and ownership of museum

Benefits for the Museum

- Community Ambassadors
- Volunteers trained to meet needs of organization
- Audience Development

Perspectives

- Additional training that volunteers gain is recognized by employers and further education institutions

5. Key partners:

- Salford College and Trafford College provide Literacy tutors to delivery the Cultural Heritage courses
- Referral agencies within the Greater Manchester area; Job Centre Plus,

Connexions, Refugee Action, TNG, Breakthrough UK, Jobshops, Mind, Information Advice and guidance workers, Voluntary Action Trafford, Greater Manchester Community Voluntary Service's, Mental Health agencies

- Manchester Museum
- Various community groups

6. Barriers and obstacles:

- Employment agencies are reluctant to refer clients to the programme because they felt their time should be committed to job searching and being available for interviews
- Confusing legislation in the case of asylum seekers and refugees with regard to employment and volunteering
- Support workers lack of knowledge about the Programme can prevent target groups being recruited

7. How to overcome the barriers:

- Ensure employment advisors are fully aware of the opportunities on offer and how it can benefit clients in terms of employability
- Stress the stepping-stone effect into further employment
- To ensure full public awareness of the programme
- Contact Home Office and Refugee Action to highlight the concerns regarding asylum and refugee involvement

8. Transferability:

Working closely with relevant agencies, community groups and target participants to develop and deliver relevant training, skills and work experience is easily transferable to a wide range of job roles.

Any one who wishes to run a similar programme needs to determine what their clients needs in terms of training and development and make sure it is recognised in the education and employment market.

Presentation 2)



Beth Stone (Natural History Museum London, UK):
“The learning volunteer programme”

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Short background:

Natural History Museum involves volunteers since its opening in 1881. Museums put a lot of efforts into providing professional volunteer recruitment, management, supervision and support. England has a “Museum-wide Volunteer Policy” designed by Volunteering England providing information on volunteer roles, recruitment, training, retaining, problem solving and links to other Museum policies and procedures.

1. Aims of the project:

- Establish a program of volunteering to supports and add value to face-to-face learning experiences for Museum visitors and provides rewarding life-long learning opportunities for the volunteers
- Engage a team of volunteers diverse in age, background experience, culture and ethnicity
- To demonstrate the value of volunteering through a programme based on best practice

2. Good practice components:

- Commitment of mutual benefit
- Committed budget supporting reimburses out of pocket expenses
- Full support from senior management
- Integration of a brand new volunteer programme into the established activities of a large museum learning department
- Specialization of roles for the volunteers

3. Assessment

- **Personal development plans** are created together with the volunteer in order to monitor and assess the competences. These plans are guided by the idea of having mutually beneficial experience, but as well as to help the volunteer with the future employment and transferability of the skills to the other contexts.
- **Accreditation** is still informal and includes references leading to paid employment. During 2007 it will be transformed into a formalized procedure.

4. Impact assessment

- A range of both **generic and particular skills developed** by the volunteers: communication skills, science communication skills, presentation skills, natural history/science knowledge, team working skills, including working with a large and diverse group of individuals, leadership (this is encouraged in order to make the programme sustainable, to encourage volunteers to develop further roles in order that they can look after themselves – this includes mentoring other volunteers), confidence, including demonstrating initiative and the ability to work as an individual
- Progression into paid employment or other volunteering, experience of being in a workplace, experience of facilitating learning and working with children.

5. Key partners

- Trade unions representing paid staff within the museum
- Senior management within the museum
- Other Museum departments
- External volunteering organisations

6. Barriers and obstacles

- Anxiety of potential threat to jobs of paid staff
- Common outdated view of volunteers and volunteering

7. How to overcome the barriers:

- Ongoing dialogue with staff during the initial development of the volunteer programme
- Not to duplicate the roles of volunteers and staff

- Development of a Museum-wide Volunteer Policy with our legal team to cover every aspect of involving volunteers at the Natural History Museum which stakeholders cleared and adopted
- A transparent, open and honest process was adopted from the start
- Sensitivity to staff concerns and strategies for addressing issues

In particular, the department has kept the trade unions informed with any new programme developments and has agreed to involve them in the development of any new initiatives. As a result, there is now a good relationship between staff and volunteers.

8. Transferability:

The experience is directly transferable to other learning organizations and relevant to anyone responsible for motivating and inspiring volunteers. It is also transferable to the experience of other museums and cultural institutions that involve volunteers in the delivery of their services and engagement of their visitors.

9. Recommendations for the European debate:

It would be very interesting to investigate the potential of a European volunteer exchange programme between museums or other learning organisations. This would enable volunteers, from across Europe, to access more wide-ranging and enriching experiences. Further, it would promote the value of volunteering to a very large audience.

It would also be useful to develop generic role descriptions with their associated competencies that could apply to many different areas of volunteering. This could then lead on to widely recognized accreditation schemes for those wanting to pursue museum / informal learning as a career, or simply recognition for those who enjoy museum volunteering.

Discussion Session – challenges ahead

‘Risk of Mercantilisation’: The volunteering sector used to be reserved for the spare time activities done out of good-will and for the common good; ‘using’ volunteering for skills development might ‘economize’ the non-profit aim of volunteering.

‘Risk of stepping stone’: The trend of accreditation of skills does push the volunteering sector into a role of preparing for their future employment – meaning also that they might well leave when the ‘mission’ is accomplished and they have found a job.

3.2.3 Workshop A3

Presentation 1)



Saskia v. Grinsven, Marjet v. Houten (MOVISIE, NL):
‘Developing APL (Accreditation of prior learning) for the volunteer sector in the Netherlands’

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Project description

1. Aims of the project:

APL (accreditation of prior learning) is a positive contribution (not a negative measurement) for all those that make a contribution to society. It is nationally recognised and shall be accessible for all volunteers (in different sectors and different age / social groups). It is deliberately **not designed in cooperation with educational sector**: Discussions with representatives of the formal educational sector in the preparatory phase around definitions were not successful – and the volunteer sector opted to prove that it is a strong sector

in its own right that does not “need” formal education sector in order to be a legitimate ‘place of learning’.

APL needs to take into account specific conditions of the volunteer sector:

- Not too much bureaucracy
- Voluntary access (volunteers do not have to do it)
- Focus on general (not specific) competences and key skills: to make an easy bridge to the labour market
- Refrain from making distinctions between volunteers (those that are skilled and make it visible and those that do not)

The project has been funded by the Ministry of Health care, Welfare and Sports with three phases:

- Phase 1 Research into desirability and feasibility (2003-2004)
- Phase 2 Making APL possible; developing instruments and building an infrastructure (2005-2006)
- Phase 3 Implementing VPL on a larger scale, building bridges to other sectors (2007...)

1. Aims of the project:

- Encourage people to continue to participate in volunteering – volunteering has a value in itself; society has the benefits if people learn
- Raise employability (but only as ‘second priority’)
- Personal development and self esteem

2. Good practice components:

- Working step by step, not going to fast
- Take very seriously what volunteer organizations and volunteers themselves voice about conditions that makes it work to
- Focusing on a good balance between accessibility and quality
- Avoid bureaucratic procedures
- Involvement of Key partners such as the national Knowledge Centre on APL and IVIO, as well as a wide variety of national, regional and local volunteer organizations and supporting structures

3. Assessment

- The VPL pack for general volunteer competences that includes
 - ➔ Portfolio for the volunteer
 - ➔ Instructions for the volunteer coordinator
 - ➔ Instructions for the assessor
 - ➔ Instructions for the volunteer organisation
- Specific procedures for specific tasks:
 - ➔ Activity coach in the care sector
 - ➔ Volunteers in sport, regional organisers
 - ➔ Public relations positions

12 generic / key competences have been identified through conferences with volunteer organisations – ownership and make it look it what volunteer centres want it to look like:

- Working systematically
- Demonstrating reliability
- Dealing with Time and Pace
- Solving problems
- Compliance with Health & Communication
- Safety regulations
- Presentation
- Contributing to good work relations
- Cooperation
- Accepting praise and criticism
- Application of Language and Maths skills
- Learning while doing

- Decision how to use the instrument:
 - ➔ APL is focussing on **volunteer work** (not family, etc)
 - ➔ Proofs of competences have to be found in the volunteer work – and will **not be assessed**
 - ➔ **Separated roles of coach and assessor:** To ensure quality of the procedure but may make it more cumbersome!
 - ➔ Assessors can be Human Resources experts or come from educational sector; they assess only the portfolio and proofs – not the person; the assessment is not job-related nor “targeted”; its aim is to make visible what the is “in the volunteer”; its main aim is raising self esteem and personal development

5. Main conclusions so far:

- Investment and commitment needed from organization and volunteer
- Small scale implementation increases chances to succeed
- Cooperation between organizations and other stakeholders crucial - notions and definitions shall be "translated" to make it meaningful to all sectors / stakeholders
- APL gives volunteers self esteem and encourages further development – they are sometime surprised when realizing the potential that they develop while volunteering

6. Barriers and obstacles:

- Lack of time to coach volunteers in the APL process
- How is it possible to increase the status of the procedure / its recognition?
- It has proved difficult to keep the instrument general – volunteers tend to quickly focus merely on job-hunting
- Structure to ensure quality has to be in place

7. How to overcome the barriers:

- Investment and commitment needed from organization and volunteer
- Small scale implementation increases chances to succeed
- Cooperation between organizations and other stakeholders crucial - notions and definitions shall be "translated" to make it meaningful to all sectors / stakeholders
- VPL gives volunteers self esteem and encourages further development – they are sometime surprised when realizing the potential that they develop while volunteering

Presentation 2)



Nick Ockenden (Institute for Volunteering Research, UK):
"AVE - the development of a tool for the accreditation of volunteers' skills and experiences within an established volunteering culture; the UK experience"⁵

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1. Short Background :

Volunteering in England / Wales: 44% people volunteer formally in 2005 (this involves people volunteering through a group, club or organisation), 17.9 Mio people; evidence suggests that numbers are increasing. 22.5 Billion £ of economic value created through volunteering in England and Wales (based on average wage).

Volunteering is undergoing tendencies of formalisation and professionalisation – volunteer management is becoming a profession in its own right.

Accreditation in the UK: Accreditation becomes very popular; it is still in its "early days" but clear demand for tools.

- Variety of individual tools being created – e.g. "Volunteering Plus" of BITC
- Survey in 2002: 59 organisations asked – did nearly all some training for the volunteers and in 30% this led to a certification
- A lot of award schemes but no national policy / framework on accreditation in place

2. Assessment of a tool for accreditation in the UK

- b. AVE toolkit (Assessing Voluntary Experience) as part of a European project (funded through Leonardo focusing on volunteers seeking paid employment) – different to the Dutch example

⁵ Please refer also to workshop A1 that presented the outcome of Hungary and Poland within the same European project.

- c. Contents / Stages of the project:
 - ➔ Diagnosis (identifying skills)
 - ➔ Evidence (gathering examples) - portfolio
 - ➔ Action (next steps)
- d. Piloting with "Kew Gardens", 300 volunteers
- e. Low uptake in the UK

3. Barriers and obstacles:

- Diversity of the target audience – in this case volunteer managers
 - ➔ Variation in their roles
 - ➔ Variation in their capacity and ability to "deal with" or use such a tool
- How to reach smaller and volunteer-led groups? (Especially in environmental volunteering)
 - ➔ Lack of support networks or volunteer managers
 - ➔ Lack of resources (time and money)

4. How to overcome the barriers:

- Diversity on motivation and variability in suitability: some volunteers have a clear desire to gain relevant experiences and references, others precisely do not want accreditation and are "only" interested in the altruistic nature of their activity
- False reputation that it is only for young people – however, there have also been cases of 85 year-old volunteers that have sought and obtained accreditation
- Some volunteers find the procedure too cumbersome – and to "work-like", whereas volunteering precisely is about getting involved in a non-employment context

5. Recommendations for the European debate:

- **Danger of being "generic"**: Tools have to be flexible enough to be relevant to different organisations / and to volunteers; to recognize the respective motivations of volunteers and maintaining the free will of volunteering / using the tool
- Design a tool that fits it in the **wider context of life long learning / non-formal** and informal learning

■ Need of further research

- ➔ Attitudes of volunteers towards accreditation – we do not know enough about the motivations of volunteers regarding accreditation, what their attitudes are towards it and whether they actually want it or not
- ➔ What is the attitude of other stakeholders towards accreditation and non formal and informal learning

- Developing a **national framework concerning** the recognition of nf/if happening through volunteering – Currently there are multiple accreditation toolkits, which can risk competing for the same volunteers. Addressing this is currently on the agenda of Volunteering England, which has seconded a member of staff for two days a week to work with ASDAN to complete a strategic overview of their Certificate in Community Volunteering and also to explore opportunities for a national framework for accreditation.

6. Discussion Session:

Dissemination and accessibility of the tool: In the Dutch it has been opted for training the trainers and making the tool known with volunteer managers while in the UK no hard copies have been disseminated but the tool is freely downloadable on the website and can be completed by the volunteers themselves. No conclusion has been drawn as to the "right" way to assess impact: Both online tools and human resources intensive methods such as personal conversations have advantages and disadvantages – Free and easy access on the one side – reliable and through assessment and coaching on the other.

A challenge in both cases was how to deal with volunteers that find the procedure / document too bureaucratic and formalized?

Benefits: The volunteer organisation itself has to see a benefit in getting involved in the procedure and investing resources (especially time but also money) into this kind of procedure.

- ➔ The prospect of actually attracting new target groups and new volunteers that are motivated in making visible their competences can motivate organisations to implement this kind of tools
- ➔ Also it is part of the "social responsibility" and professional treatment of volunteers to provide them with development opportunities

Accreditation schemes and recognition have to follow different traditions in countries: In the UK award schemes are very much appreciated whereas the Dutch do not seem to give too much importance to them

Raised awareness and self esteem: A recurrent conclusion is that even if the procedure is general and not related to a specific goal (obtaining a job, preparing for a university course accession) one of the most important outcome of recognition procedures is the awareness of the volunteer him/herself when starting to identify / assess knowledge, skills and competences – this might then in a next step actually empower or incite the volunteer to apply for a job or look for opportunities

However, both tools are based on the conviction that that a common language is necessary in order to create “ownership” by the volunteer and the different stakeholders / sectors that may be receiver of the document

3.2.4 Workshop A4

Presentation 1)



Eva Hambach (Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk):
**“Recognition of Volunteer’s competences:
 The case of Volunteer Leaders”**

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NB: In this presentation the word APEL will be replaced by the word competences.

Name of project: Detecting volunteers’ skills

Short background:

This was an intersectoral one-year project taking place in Flanders, Belgium, in collaboration with volunteer supporting structures in different sectors, with a special contribution of the socio-cultural supporting centre and the Flemish government.

1. Aims of the project:

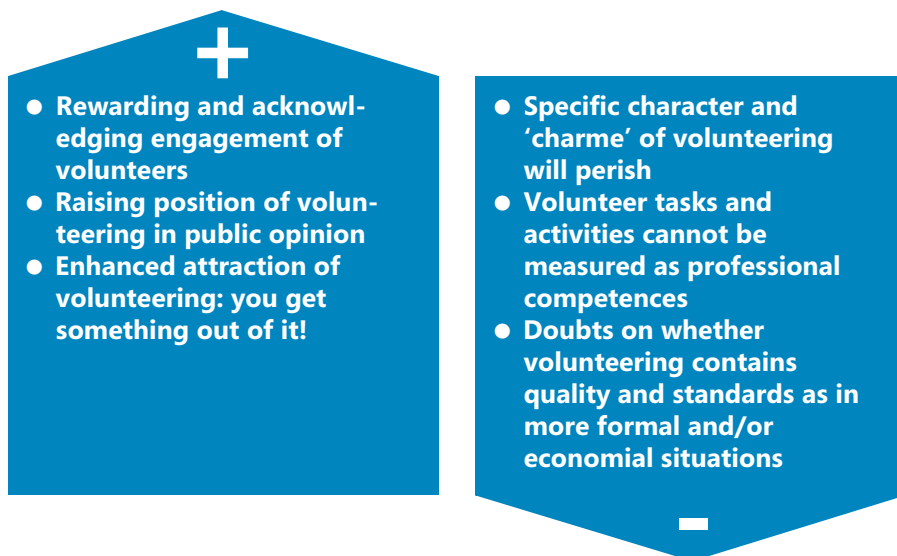
- To prove that volunteering is a place of non formal education processes
- To detect opinions of civil society and concerned parties on volunteering as an educational environment To inform the volunteer sector about volunteering as a space for life-long learning

Steps:

One-year project in two tracks:

- **Track I:** Inquiry of civil society on attitudes and opinions on Detecting volunteers’ skills (Interviews and focus groups) Description of challenges, opportunities for volunteer sector towards competence assessment (Recognition of competences, evaluation of volunteers’ competences, certification of volunteers’ competences)

Different, sometimes opposed opinions



■ Track II - Development of a tool for volunteers

Targeted at 'Leading' volunteers (managing organisations or serving on boards of trustees) and focused on recognition of volunteers' competences

The tool:

- Volunteer makes overview of main competences
 - i. Will be guided further towards detailframes
 - ii. Detailframes: each competence divided into subcompetences Examples of proves delivered
- Volunteer receives overview of his/her competences – Extra tool to discover which competences are gained through volunteering
- Volunteer can detect 'weaker' points: work or action points-Portfolio can be filled in individually
- Weak points:
 - ➔ No standards were allowed
 - ➔ No outside evaluation was possible
 - ➔ Remains: self-estimation of volunteer
 - ➔ Tool itself requires already substantial skills to work with- Key competences: Methodology of feedbacklists

- ➔ Volunteer fills in list
- ➔ Person close to volunteer fills in same (empty list)
- ➔ Comparison of results between both lists
- ➔ Volunteer can detect strengths and weaknesses

2. Good practice components:

- 'Volunteers competences' concept. The volunteers' competences concept was launched as well as a broad discussion within the work field of volunteers, third parties, giving a starting point to develop more initiatives on volunteer's competences in certain sectors (youth, adult education)
- Cooperation and a Tool Creation. The cooperation among different sectors, where volunteers are active, was recognized as essential, as well as the development of the tool, as it gives a good overview on volunteers' competences
- The 'Two-tracks approach' (see above)

4. Barriers and obstacles:

- Different points of view as an barrier to find a universal way to describe functions and connected competences
- Different views on Volunteers' competences (positive: as an asset for volunteering, negative: volunteering 'misused' for economical reasons)
- Lack of knowledge on the concept itself...
- ... Misunderstandings as one of its results

5. How to overcome the barriers:

- Make the process slowing in order to enable everybody to participate and adapt
- Maintain the discussion
- Reconsider the final aims of the project (identification, evaluation, without the last step of certificating)

6. Transferability:

The experience is transferable; the used methods can be easily adapted towards other situations and countries. The extended list of volunteers competences can be seen as a very steady and good base of volunteers' competences, regardless the country or organization. The methodology to support volunteers filling in the instrument and working with it, can be recommended as well.

7. Recommendations for the European debate:

What needs to be maintained is a wide and open debate with different, but still engaged stakeholders, such as the volunteer sector, employers, educational centers and institutions and policymakers.

Presentation 2)



Göran Sjöberg (Europeanminds, Sweden):
The OCN (Open College Network) method

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1. Short background

The OCN-method has its birthplace in industrial England at the end of the 1970s, over 700.00 Brits having passed through the OCN method ever since. It came to Sweden in the beginning of 2000 and OCN Sweden was formed in 2005. Today the OCN-method is used actively by a wide range of Swedish enterprises within trade and industry, local government as well as various other providers of non-formal education and training programmes. It has been introduced in Denmark in autumn 2006 and further European expansion expected in the near future. Partners of the project are companies, local governments, sporting organizations, student bodies, youth recreation centers etc.

2. Aims of the project:

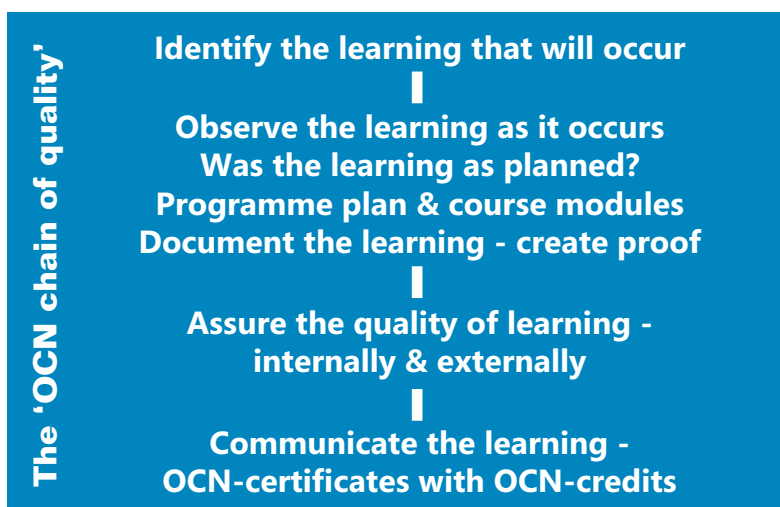
The documentation, recognition and communication of knowledge, skills and competences achieved within non-formal learning environments, in a quality assured manner.

The OCN-method is applicable primarily to the recognition and communication of **non-formal** learning, but can even be used in various informal learning situations. It is also our ambition that *OCN-certificates* with *OCN-credits* will be

useable for gaining entrance to higher education in the future, thereby even having a role to play within the formal education system.

Core values and principles:

- ➔ All learning is worth acknowledgement, regardless of **where** or **how** it occurs.
- ➔ Education and training is shaped by a **learning centred approach**. There after follows an acknowledgement of that which is learnt.
- ➔ Education and training as well as the acknowledgement thereof should occur in **small steps**. All people should receive **equal opportunities** to learn regardless of circumstances. The basis for quality and legitimacy is the network and panel processes.



3. Good practice components

- Carefully developed programme plans, identifying the purpose, target group(s), resources available and expected learning outcomes
- Carefully developed qualitative methodology methods for the documentation
- Ensure the active participation of the stakeholders in the design of non-formal education and training programmes
- The internal and external moderators
- Branded certification. OCN-certificates with OCN-credits as a legitimate and communicable proof of their actual knowledge

- OCN-certificates used in the recruiting process to improve the matching process with the labour market
- Co-operation with providers of formal education needed for the OCN-certificates to become approved criteria for acceptance to higher education

4. Assessment

- The organization providing the education and training develops a program plan with supporting course modules to set out the objectives of the education
- The OCN-panel, consisting of various stakeholders such as employers, local government representatives and others with knowledge relevant to the programme or target group in question are presented for review and approval
- The education and training is provided in accordance with the approved programme plan and course modules
- Internal and external moderators assure the quality of the programme
- Once the programme approved by the external moderator (approval on correctness of documentation and guidance), the OCN-certificate with corresponding number of OCN-credits is released

5. Impact assessment

The quality of the education and training provided is raised partly through the application of OCN's methodology and principles regarding documentation and recognition of non-formal learning, partly through the expert input provided by the panel in relation to the subject(s) and/or the target group(s), and partly through the quality assurance process provided through the work of the internal and external moderators

The participants receive a proof of their actual knowledge, skills and competences, a proof that receives legitimacy and status through its recognition by and communicability to employers and other stakeholders; the result being increased employability and/or access to higher education for the participants.

Employers can use OCN-certificates as a tool in the process of recruiting new personnel; thus improving the matching process and bridging the gap between non-formal education and the labor market.

The unique aspect of the panel process ensures that society's different stakeholders actively participate in the forming and content of non-formal education and training programmes; thereby ensuring that such programmes are relevant to and meet the actual needs of the labor market and other sectors of society

OCN-certificates and OCN-credits shall be approved by the providers of formal education and training as criteria for acceptance to higher education

6. Barriers and obstacles:

- The low status of the non-formally acquired skills as a barrier to be largely implemented
- The lack of effective tool within non-formal education for the participants to communicate their actual knowledge, skills and competences

7. How to overcome the barriers:

- The active participation of employers and other stakeholders during the panel process to raise the validity and legitimacy of these programmes
- The provision of OCN-certificates with OCN-credits as a proof of actual knowledge to be legitimate and communicable to employers and other stakeholders

8. Transferability

The OCN Programme is considered to be highly transferable because of well-known conditions on the labor market. Such conditions exist not only in Sweden but more or less in all European countries. That is why the project is assessed as widely applicable for the OCN-method regardless of specific country or context.

9. Recommendations for the European debate

The effect of the various stakeholders' participation seen in increasing the legitimacy of the tool proving achievement of particular skills. What is to be taken into consideration is the amount of the quality that can be assured by the work of moderators. Standardization of the tool regardless of branch and country to increase the individual labor mobility is without any doubt a challenging issue

10. Discussion session:

National differences concerning self-evaluation: How volunteers evaluate themselves depends largely to the national context; the experience of the presenters suggests Swedish volunteers tend to under-estimate their skills and competences while in Flanders the observed volunteers seemed to be very self-assured, tending at times to exaggerate their competences.

Common grounds: Despite the diversity of volunteering activities, there are some core skills/soft skills to gain through all forms of volunteering. These competences can make the difference when it comes to applying for a job – the volunteer having bigger chances of being accepted all other elements being equal amongst candidates.

Identifying the process of learning: There is still a widespread opinion that it is impossible to identify the non-formal and informal learning. Also, the OCN method of assessment might be applicable only in the case of particular administrative skills. The OCN method realization depends on learning in process as its necessary condition. While in Scandinavia a “learning tradition” with Folkhögskolor (Folk High Schools) can be observed, this is not the case in Europe, where a different approach needs to be implemented.

3.3. Panel II

Volunteering to raise skills and competences for employability: Mutual recognition by volunteer organisations and business?

Volunteering as a route (back) to employment? In its different forms volunteering provides excellent learning opportunities, be it social competences, so-called “soft skills”, be it active citizenship or be it technical skills such as project management or hands-on experience in local community development or social service provision. Very often these skills, competences and knowledge remain invisible, as they have not been acquired through a training course or in the framework of formal education. At the same time, business has very concrete demands on skills and social competences for its workforce.

The main questions addressed by panel II were:

- **What is it that makes learning outcomes of volunteering interesting to business?**
- **What should a tool to recognize skills, competences and knowledge learned through volunteering look like? What does a head-hunter or Human Resources officer need to see?**
- **How can collaboration between the voluntary sector and business be promoted?**

Chair: Saskia van Grinsven, MOVISIE

- ▶ **Rob Compton** (Business in the Community, BITC, UK)
“Challenges from a business perspective to value and recognize informal learning”
- ▶ **Kees Schuur** (Ecommovation, the Netherlands)
“The volunteer in power control of the valuation of prior learning”
- ▶ **Erik van Beek** (Ministry of social affairs, the Netherlands)
“Opportunities and threats of recognition of voluntary work – a little less conversation, little more action”



Rob Compton (Business in the Community, BITC, UK):
Challenges from a business perspective to value and recognize informal learning

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Rob Compton represents **Business in the Community (BITC)** (<http://www.bitc.org.uk>), a network of companies with the leadership to translate corporate values and commitments into mainstream management practices. There are over 750 members, who together employ 1 out of 5 of the total UK private sector human resources. In 2006, more than 30,000 employees volunteered through BITC.

**Employee Volunteering
 – benefits for all sides....**

BITC is convinced that employee volunteering **benefits** volunteers, employers and community partners:

Volunteers develop skills in a new environment, understand the community and benefit from internal & external recognition of their work. Additionally, employees often tend to start volunteering when being **“fed up with the rat race”** and when looking for a meaningful supplement to their professional work – this may lead to....

...**employers** having more motivated staff. Employers have realized that Employee Volunteering is a way of showing responsible business practice and a means of attracting open, talented and creative professionals. **CSR without HR is PR** – Employee Volunteering gives CSR a concrete tangible face.

Various partners from the **community** gain from positive cooperation with businesses, tapping into new pools of volunteers helping them to grow and extend their activities; the partnerships created are about **more than just getting a fence painted....**

“60% of employees involved in employee community involvement feel more positive about their company; 45% say their motivation & likelihood of staying with the company are increased (MORI research for Corporate Citizenship Company 2003)”

“61% of Barclays managers reported that volunteers’ communication skills had improved, 56% felt volunteers’ leadership had improved”

At Centrica:

- Positive effect on employee retention & absence - 99.6% (target 80%)
- Increased levels of job satisfaction - from 62 to 67% satisfied
- Improved rating of Centrica as an above average place to work - from 57 to 63%
- Increased advocacy - from 49 to 57% would speak highly of Centrica as an employer

(Source: Evaluation of Centrica & Cardiff Cares: MORI & Corporate Citizenship Company 2003)

Background that emerges demand

Employees get involved in a wide variety of committing their time to activities such as team challenges, mentoring and educational help (with school students), strategic support/advice to the civil society sector, workshops for teaching or improvement of skills, mentoring, job coaching, secondment and project assignments.

Skills and competences gained through volunteering assignments are amongst others

- ➔ *Financial and budgeting skills*
- ➔ *Understanding, influencing and persuading people and organisations*
- ➔ *People skills – caring, listening, negotiating and managing others*
- ➔ *Organisational, time and stress management*
- ➔ *Innovating and taking decisions*
- ➔ *Customer focus and quality*
- ➔ *Communication skills – written and verbal*
- ➔ *Building networks and alliances*
- ➔ *Learning to analyse and summarise clearly*
- ➔ *Developing effective teams*
- ➔ *Planning and achieving business objectives in time*

How can employee volunteer activities and the skills and competences gained be made visible without adding to much administrative burdens on the volunteers and the HR officers?

Proposal on Good Practice Components

- **“Skills and competences mapping”**: identify competency framework and match volunteering activities which skills and competences achieved
- **Setting standards** – fit volunteering experience into the national framework of qualifications
- **Major challenge** is still the recognition and accreditation of these skills gained through employee volunteering.

The Volunteering plus award framework⁶

Volunteering plus provides a framework that captures the learning and development gained from volunteering, which is in turn accredited by ‘City & Guilds’. It helps the employee to assess his/her skills but also the company to identify increases in their own skills base. Formal accreditation involves three stages:

- **Planning**: Group planning session to set personal and professional objectives
- **Implementing**: Mentor support mainly by email and phone (3-6 months)
- **Reviewing**: Signing off and submission to verification



Kees Schuur (Ecommovation, the Netherlands):
“The volunteer in power control of the valuation of prior learning”

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Kees Schuur emphasized the condition sine qua non for VPL being “the volunteer in power of control of his/her portfolio, recognition and values”. **VPL** (Valuation of Prior learning, www.vpl4u.eu) is not about accreditation or validation but a holistic approach about **valuation and valuing volunteers and volunteering**.

The targets of VPL are:

- **Individuals** whose skills have to be recognized stimulating self-investment in learning; the origin of these skills makes no difference (volunteering, private life or paid work) **Organisations** facilitating self-investment of volunteers; supporting articulation of competences and becoming a learning organisation in turns
- Society with a mid effect of learning leading to ‘employability’ and in the end ‘employability’ turning into ‘enjoyability’

⁶ More information on the project are to be found in the Workshop C3.

The professionalisation of a sector

The recognition of skills gained through volunteering will professionalize the sector. It enhances motivations of the volunteers, provides success in education and makes job search more fruitful. Research suggests that national volunteer organizations do strongly believe in these benefits, while local organizations are still rather hesitant or even skeptical.

While working on skill recognition (and professionalisation of the sector) it is important to be aware of:

- Not all of the organisations being interested in the recognition of skills
- Not all volunteers being interested in the recognition of their own skills
- 70-90% of learning being informal no matter of the work one does
- How accreditation can fit 'informal learning'

A danger, a chance and a challenge

Therefore VPL for volunteering represents

A danger:

Formalising the outcome of informal learning, makes it to be not informal anymore.

A chance:

Informal learning represents a much higher share in overall learning than formal learning.

A challenge:

The way back from formal to informal (from explicit to tacit) is a hard way.

Critical success factors for VPL are

- Motivation of volunteer and organisations to get involved Balance between 'need' vs. 'investment' of time Valuation comes before accreditation: the start if the process is self-(e)valuation, continued by external evaluation by the companies and finally validation (formal accreditation) corresponding to the legal regulations and settings Bottom-up & Top-down processes needed Trust in VPL Accessibility to volunteers and organisations Secured financing for the process
- Follow the evolution line:

Ms. Schurr recommends a portfolio that highlights volunteer work, which shall be recognized by organizations and institutions. This should be a volunteer friendly tool that focuses on the volunteer and his/her competences. By doing this, we have to be careful not to lose the value and essence of volunteer work

by emphasizing recognition of skills and competences. A European charter on principles of valuation and recognition can help in this regard.

MOVE
presents

Erik van Beek (Ministry of Social Affairs, the Netherlands):
'Opportunities and threats of recognition of voluntary work – a little less conversation, a little more action'

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Volunteering certainly is a strong learning environment – but it is unique for every volunteer. There is also growing demands from employers for ongoing learning of their (future) staff. The challenge is match volunteering experiences with employability and skills / competences sought for by employers.

The crucial point is when it comes to proof the competences – be it for **empowerment** (e.g. raising self esteem) or **formal validation** through official structures.

Opportunities and advantages of skill-recognition gained through volunteering:



- Being more attractive to new volunteers
- Stronger position of volunteering towards formal educational institutes
- Valuation of the major amount of informal learning within the voluntary work
- Making the non-formal learning infrastructure within voluntary work more effective and tailor-made
- Linking local, regional, national and European levels

Threats of recognition

- Exaggerated regulation and management within voluntary work
- Exaggerated influence of other stakeholders in the nature of voluntary work
- No valuation, but selection through recognition

Efforts of all stakeholders for mutual recognition...

Should volunteering contribute to the employability of an individual and act as a route to remunerated work? Then a couple of conditions need to be fulfilled:

- Start a dialogue with government, employers and educational institute
Show willingness to find a compromise with the stakeholders mentioned above
Stimulate a shared vision on recognition downwards to the local level

Recognition task forces needed...

Mr v. Beek suggest the following **actions for validation on national level**

- Create certificates aiming at the **value of citizenship**
- Clarify their representation and acceptance on national and European level
- **Adapt language** to the world of employers and formal education
- Use certificates to shape internal training with good quality assessment

Suggestions for the action of **empowering & validation on local level**:

- Organise **recognition taskforces** on local level:
 - ➔ organise reflection on learning on local level
 - ➔ visit groups to promote this vision stimulate empowering techniques on local level
 - ➔ start meetings with local education and employers > common under standing
 - ➔ train assessors and guides and create quality
 - ➔ work by targets and a timeframe

3.4 Workshop Session B

The aim of the workshops was to present tools and instruments developed focusing on the following questions.

- Who were the key partners and why were they involved in this project / initiative?
- What were major barriers to collaboration between stakeholders?
- How were these barriers overcome?
- What are the good practice elements of this project?
- How is this experience transferable to other contexts / countries?
- Which results or outcomes of the project could be included in a portfolio of volunteer skills to be used across Europe?
- What kind of recommendations can be fed into a European debate on the mutual recognition of skills and competences learned through volunteering – and into the discussion of a European Volunteer Pass?

The report from the workshops gives the ground information about each project and attempts to tackle the most important answers following the structure of the list of questions.

3.4.1 Workshop B1

Presentation 1)



Elke Schildberger (Volkshochschule Linz):
"From competence to qualification"

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1. Short background

In Austria, the discussion on the recognition of informally acquired skills and competencies has been growing in the last 2-3 years. The issue has even been included in the new government's programme and a number of initiatives within European projects and beyond has developed. The presented project was run in the framework of a GRUNDTVIG project (2001-2003) focusing on the recognition and validation of informally acquired competences of adults in Austria, Germany, UK, Finland, Hungary, Italy and Switzerland.

2. Aims of the project

The project aimed at the exchange and evaluation of good practices and experiences and validation of informally acquired skills and competences, at the research into the different fields of skills and competences. Furthermore it intended to develop suitable tools especially to make so-called "soft skills" visible that are difficult to track and document and to ensure the sustainability of the project results and products – there are ongoing efforts to continue collaboration between the partners beyond the project period.

The target group includes persons in stages of professional orientation and development (women after maternity leave, generation 45+, young adults, etc), volunteers being only one of them. Much of the targeted audience was sent through employment agencies or targeted projects for women.

Project product and results

- The partners have developed a tool for documentation, recognition and validation of informally acquired skills and compactness based on self-evaluation (no official validation) and external evaluation accessible on www.kompetenzprofil.at
 - ➔ Module 1) The self evaluation based on the "CH-Q method" (Swiss qualifications programme; www.ch-q.ch): self-management of competences (within a series of workshops)
 - ➔ Module 2) The external evaluation takes place in an assessment centre – in addition to the self evaluation; it is non obligatory group assessment with a focus on personal, social and communicative competences (comparable to that of employment procedures)

Why the option self-management of competences?

- Dynamic labour market – static competences acquired with diploma not enough
- Technical knowledge in particular fields not enough any longer
- Competences are developed in all walks of life and grow along with experiences
- Most of what we know is not documented in any certificates

The project focuses on a holistic approach to identify sources of competences:

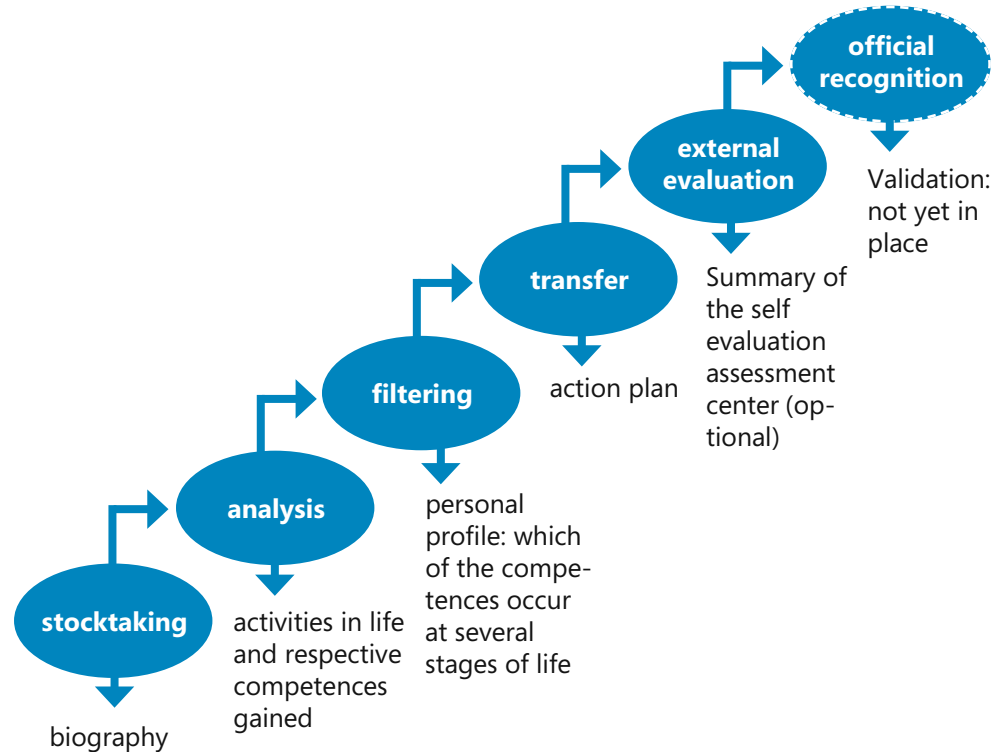
- Personal interest
- Talents
- Education and training
- Extraordinary life situations
- **Volunteering**
- Family work
- Professional experience

3. Good practice components

- 4 steps of the competence profile (each accompanied by a workshop)
- Documentation of competences portfolio (guided process)
- Portfolio works sheets and instructions available online
- Material adaptable to different groups
- Work at home on the portfolio between the workshops indispensable coaching mostly helpful

- Exchange of experience and reflections in group of persons working on their competence profile
- The coach sums up the results of the portfolio process, discusses the results with the participant and hands out a "VHS Linz" competence profile certificate

Process : Steps and output



The whole procedure takes a minimum of 20h, 4 portfolios workshops and the final feedback of coach; costs are of 320 EUR / person, that are deductible to 50% from the Austrian "education account"

4. Impact assessment

- So far 500 participants
- Highly positive short-term feedback
- Low drop out
- Scientific evaluation proving the beneficial medium and long-term effects
- 80% have positive outcome: Either found a job or moved on in their career

5. Key partners

- SVEB-Schweizer Verband für Erwachsenenbildung, Switzerland
- Volkshochschule Stuttgart and Berlin, Germany
- Työväen Akatemia Finland
- Amt für Berufsbildung, Bozen, Italy
- Project council in Upper Austria representing the Provincial government of Upper Austria, the City Administration of Linz, Universities, Chamber of Commerce, Worker's Chamber, LIMAK Management Academy

6. Recommendations for the European debate

Encourage volunteers to keep a close record on their activities with the help of a portfolio, to document exactly what they are doing, what tasks they are taking, what skills they are learning in their voluntary work, to get this confirmed by the organizations they are working for; to make use of this in application procedures.

Presentation 2)



Furio Bednarz (Swiss Council for Intercultural Interpreting):
**"Certification of intercultural interpreters through
 recognition and validation of prior learning"**

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1. Short background:

In Switzerland there is two main approaches towards recognition of qualifications:

French speaking cantons work with a validation model called "bilan de competences": recognition of competences acquired in daily life and in voluntary sector. The German speaking cantons use the "portfolio approach" (CH-Q approach): the role of private guidance and career management centres. A National Platform "Validation des acquis" has been created to work towards a common national framework concerning validation, according to the new Federal Law on VET (art. 32 and 33).

The case study

Intercultural Interpreters (II): An emerging profile

- ➔ People with migration background
- ➔ Act as mediators ensuring better communication between local professionals (doctors, teachers, counsellors) and migrant communities
- ➔ Usually working as volunteers (only in few cases mainly in the legal sector they were hired by the institutions for specific tasks.). These II usually learn "on the job" from experiences building their competences informally, giving value to their biographical intercultural background

Objectives of the project

- ➔ Promoting the use of intercultural interpreters, mainly in social services, education and training, health and care (from pure voluntary work, to professional activity)
- ➔ Defining a recognised professional profile (qualification), in order to assure quality of the service
- ➔ Enhancing the competences of the intercultural interpreters (professionalism)
- ➔ Fostering the "formalisation" of competences usually acquired in a non formal / informal way, allowing intercultural interpreters to better their employability (transition between voluntary sector to professional work) Supporting immigrant interpreters in gaining a qualification, implying both the possibility to spend a recognised "diploma" in the Swiss job market, and the opportunity to enter further training

Key partners

- The Interpret Association ("umbrella organisation")
- Confederation level: such as the Federal Commission for Integration of the Immigrants and the Health Care department of the Confederation
- a wide number of NGOs, Foundation and Agencies providing interpreting services and promoting the role of the intercultural interpreters
- Cantonal and local level: health, training and social services institutions interested to use interpreting services
- The Swiss Federation for CVT (SVEB), a private association promoting and supervising, among the other tasks, modular further training activities at the national level

Steps / deliverables

- **1999/2001:** comprehensive research on field, highlighting the importance of the interpreters and the benefits that could have been produced by the formal recognition and certification of their functions
- **2002 – 2004:** a commission of experts and representatives of institutions and interpreters studied a global qualification system, the system is now managed by Interpret' Association, together with the Swiss Federation for CVT (SVEB)
- **2004 – 2005:** design and start-up of the modular training offer, promoted by accredited bodies, campaign to qualify already active interpreters through validation (about 300 people...)

- **as of 2005:** start-up of the first Placement Agencies aiming at promoting intercultural interpreting and providing services in the field
- The system allows both the **partial** and the **full** validation of competences acquired in a non formal or informal way

Validation procedures and tools

- Competences profile as a guide (check list)
- Evidences of the competences are collected in a dossier (CV, declarations, project works, relevant documents and test results)
- Possibility to take in account all forms of learning and experience (independently from the work environment)

3 main areas of competence:

- linguistic competence (European Framework – B2)
- managing intercultural relationship, understanding of the peculiarities of local and foreign “system” in which interpreters work (i.e. be able to translate in an understandable way a question / answer according to the different cultural and institutional frameworks of operators and clients)

The dossier

- CV (with work certificates... when available) and complete list of documented training activities (above all relevant for the validation)
- Evidences of working experience as interpreter (provided by organisations and/or clients – at least 50 hours, of which 35 in one of the 3 specialisation sectors: social, education or health)
- Reflective work on a personal case study
- Evidence of having been supervised (8 hours)
- Validation submission form
- **Linguistic skills**

- ➔ **Formal certification (both languages):** a list of recognised certificates is provided by the web-site; it includes also the possibility to certify the competence through the possession of a diploma corresponding to the compulsory school level
- ➔ **Language test:** phone interview, organised on behalf of an accredited centre: the candidate receives a photo, and the expert conducts a distant call interview asking comments and precisions on the basis of the contents of the above mentioned photo

Assessed items and criteria

1. Competence in identifying expectations, cares, difficulties of both the operator and the client
2. Competence in reacting in front of difficulties rising in communication
3. Awareness of the role (facilitating an effective communication)
4. Pertinent use of interpreting techniques
5. Preparation strategies
6. Awareness of the limits related to the role
7. Self evaluation pertinence and effectiveness

Strong points:



- **Flexibility of the procedure, taking in account both formal and informal learning and experiences**
- **Limited need to bring evidences, possibility to “prove” competences through the dossier and declarations**
- **Reliability and coherence of the assessment process**
- **Transparency of the requirements**
- **Limited costs, both for the institutions and the candidates (ca. 300 € for the 2 Modules + about 150 € each linguistic test, if necessary...)**
- **Some (although limited...) on line helping tools (examples, forms and templates, ...)**

Weak points:

- **No institutional accompaniment**
- **Complexity of some tasks and requirements to be accomplished, above all for the candidates with informal learning paths (reflective case study, supervision)**
- **The level of linguistic competences needed to complete the dossier seems to be higher than the level required for certification (B2) Complexity of the intercultural dynamics occurring in the assessment phase (actual experiences show how assessors could be influenced by intercultural misunderstandings in their function!)**



Lessons learned at this process

- **Formalisation of competences is particularly important in VET and job market frames based on an higher consideration of diploma and certificates.** At this level, the lessons of our case study look to be transferable, to develop reliable “formalisation” procedures of informal and non formal learning, both considering processes and tools
- **In many case the borders between voluntary work and professional activity are difficult to define.** Voluntary work could be an effective trampoline to gain a qualification and a better employability, and we also could turn some voluntary activities in professional tasks
- **We should consider voluntary work as a “normal” area of workplace learning,** aiming at fostering validation
- **Where certifications count a lot, volunteers are interested in validating their competences,** making them visible and possible to spend both to access further formal training and in a transition to market professional activities
- suspicions concerning informal learning validation system (fed also by formal training providers)
- difficulties in admitting the “equality of status” between voluntary work and market services (intercultural interpreters vs. “official” qualified interpreters)
- difficult positioning of emerging profiles, defined according to a competence based approach, in a certification framework still based on a training curricula approach
- “Prudence” in turn voluntary work out in a “market” service: *glad to have professional interpreters, but who will pay for them?*

Questions, answers and discussion

A common challenge in both examples is the “**professionalization**” of volunteering installing new methods and instruments that may be off-putting – as well as the costs involved in filling in a competence portfolio

Especially the accreditation of soft skills is difficult: What should be the criteria applied and the framework used? Does it make sense to compare all different forms of team work for example to identify soft skills gained? Soft skills do very much depend on the context; they shall therefore be operationalized and contextualized

Interestingly, studies e.g. in Flanders (Belgium) show that business is, however, specifically interested in candidates that are able to show good soft (social) skills and these are more difficult to “teach” within the company than professional skills. In Norway, on the other hand, an employers and trade union survey showed that only the hair dressers “employers” were actually interested in mapping soft skills.

Courses offered for volunteers to assess their skills and competences are often perceived to be “boring” – volunteers are not always easy to motivate; especially if the method has been designed for the volunteers and not with them.

Is the solution in countries where diploma are perceived to be so important to create yet another document / diploma, recognizing knowledge, skills and competences gained through volunteering – meaning to continue the tradition of written documents or rather to break these traditions and find innovative ways of recognizing learning outcomes?

Finally, people taking part in LLL activities and making their knowledge, skills and competences gained through volunteering visible are **often those that have already completed a formal / higher education** – the challenge are those that have fallen out the formal education system. The formalization of identifying and assessing learning outcomes of volunteers might create new barriers and cleavages for those excluded rather than helping them to find their way (back) to (working) society

3.4.2 Workshop B2

Presentation 1)



Petra Zwickert (Government of North Rhine Westphalia, Germany)
"The North Rhine Westphalia Volunteer Pass",
 (Landesnachweis NRW: Engagiert im sozialen Ehrenamt)

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1. Short background:

The project was carried out in North Rhine Westphalia as a follow up to activities linked with the International Year of the Volunteer in 2001 as a joint initiative of government (federal state), main volunteering organizations, employer's and trade associations as well as single companies. The project took half a year to come to life and is now in its 6th year.

2. Aims of the project

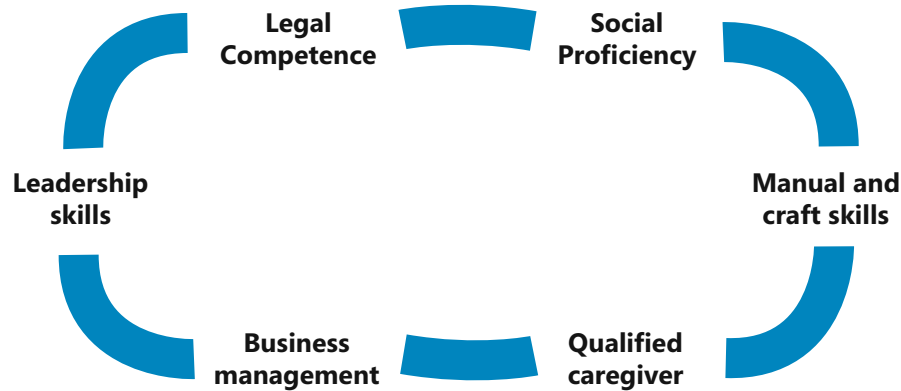
- Recognizing commitment
- Appreciating commitment
- Thank you for the time given by the volunteer
- Documenting competences and skills

Target groups are

Young persons	for professional training and career development
Women after 'family phase'	to facilitate return to a professional career
Employees in general	to support career changes and promotions
Employers	raising awareness on achievements through volunteering when recruiting / promoting staff

Competences and specialized skills





3. Good practice components

- Standardized document for the whole federal state NRW and for all social organizations (the old certificates replaced)
- Joint initiative taken by various partners, many social NGOs concerned
- Easy to handle
- Few formal components: the *Landesnachweis* is only a description of the work done, being the minimum requirement, with both obligatory and voluntary contents
- Promotion of the *Landesnachweis* on the local level by the federal government
- Federal government acts as key partner, but does not dominate the process
- Issuers are licensed by a taskforce at the Ministry of Intergenerational Affairs, Family, Women and Integration of North Rhine-Westphalia; at least two persons are involved in issuing the document
- Based on collaboration and acceptance of various stakeholders

4. Barriers and obstacles

- Employer's and trade associations disapproved of a document with the character of a report or a certificate (no assessments), therefore focus on description of volunteering work

Presentation 2)

MOVE
presents

Monika Oels:
"The Berlin State Volunteer Pass"

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1. Background

The project to develop the Berlin State volunteer pass involved about 50 volunteer organizations, several Ministries concerned at *Land Berlin* level with the Berlin Governing Mayors Office having a coordinating role.

The process started in May 2003 when the Berlin Parliament asks the Berlin State Government to initiate a "**Berlin Volunteer Passport**" (Berliner Freiwilligen Pass) documenting volunteer activities and participation in training courses and expressing gratitude towards volunteers. It also envisages new legal provisions to facilitate access to schools and universities for citizens having engaged in volunteer activities.

The German Federal Youth Minister in line with the European Commission's approach recommends better support and recognition of active citizenship and volunteering of young people as of 2005. Finally, the European "*Europass initiative*", implemented in 31 European countries, documents not only formal, but also non formal learning (as of 1.1.2005).

2. Aims of the project

"**Berlin Volunteer Passport**" (Berliner Freiwilligen Pass), thus, represents a joint expression of gratitude towards volunteers signed by the Berlin Mayor and a Berlin volunteer organization. In addition, it documents volunteer's learning activities for personal or professional use.

3. Good practice components

- Joint initiative of State government and NGOs: Double logo and signature of the Mayor of Berlin and a volunteer organization on the document "Berliner Freiwilligen Pass". Design following the Europass format and colours, presentation in Europass folder, publicity and public events jointly with EU Commission/ InWent
- Equally balanced Commission for guiding and monitoring the future development
- Internet based download, documentation and publication on demand service
- No documentation costs to be paid by volunteers
- Quality assurance mechanisms
- Celebrations to hand over certificates should be the rule, sending them by mail the exception – to give specific credit to the volunteers
- From 12 years on with no upper age limit, Minimum of 80 hours per year regularly or 200 hours in shorter projects, exceptions for pupils (30 – 40 hours)
- All organizations undertake obligatory preparatory courses and are offered guidance to be able to use the "Berliner Freiwilligen Pass"
- No judgment of the skills is included, and there are no exemptions to this rule, but the descriptions are personal and written in careful and respectful manners

4. Impact assessment

- On the so called "Bürgeraktiv" website (<http://www.berlin.de/buergeraktiv/>) there is a possibility for individuals to publish the pass (but so far no one has made use of this...)
- Lack of regular (free) quality learning and coaching opportunities for volunteers becomes more visible
- Highly differing « recognition » practices amongst Berlin volunteer organizations concerning financial support for local travel, fixed monthly payments covering any costs
- Demand for a search tool informing about all volunteer organizations
- Invisible volunteer work within migrant communities – campaigns for giving them full citizen's status and rights

5. Barriers and obstacles

- Additional work on both the side of the state and the volunteer organizations
- Lack of sense of quality assurance with some stakeholders denying the necessity for clear rules and training for writing the certificates

6. How to overcome the barriers

- Personal support by the Mayor of Berlin
- Interventions by committed individual persons from different ministries and NGOs
- Support by the German EU delegation

7. Transferability

The two-signature approach of the *Berlin Freiwilligen Pass* and the rules going with it might be useful working material for other initiatives at local, regional and national level.

8. Recommendations for the European debate

Volunteering should be accompanied more often by exchange and training of skills and competences, as passion for commitment often paves the way for additional new competences. This supplement shall be kept simple and leave out a validation element - a description of tasks performed is sufficient, also at European level.

Volunteer competences of today can quickly turn into necessary professional competences of tomorrow, as ethical business, ethical investment, banks and businesses in corporate social responsibility are becoming more influential pushed by responsible consumers and individuals.

Questions, answers and discussion

The European CV contains the possibility to include informal competences but a reference to an attached document such as the Berlin Volunteer Pass or the NRW *Landesnachweis* will be a supplement to actually prove and explain these competences.

A full-fledged reward culture for volunteers would include

- 1) 'Volunteer cards' comparable to a student card giving entitlement to reductions (local travel, entries, etc)
- 2) A description/documentation of the tasks the volunteer has performed and for how long. This is the case of the two examples presented in this workshop, but the evaluation of the volunteer's performance is left out.
- 3) Validations of how well the tasks have been performed which is something more complicated and requires evaluation.

3.4.3 Workshop B3



Rob Compton (BITC, UK):
 "Volunteering Plus - personal and professional development for employee volunteers"⁷

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Short background:

The aim of Volunteering Plus is to shed light on the evidence that employee volunteering is a "win-win situation": Employee volunteers obtain and develop skills and competences and will get recognition for their engagement; employers will benefit from motivated staff and raised human capital of staff as well as from better reputation being more attractive to talented and creative staff; the community partners will benefit from enlarging their pools of volunteers and the potential of collaboration with business partners.

1. Aims of the project:

The project aims at fostering **continuous professional development** (CPD), matching the employee's need for recognition of the skills in the form of a certificate and the businesses interest in enhancing the human capital of its work force.

2. Good practice components:

- Introduction: Induction and Training for Mentors (selecting assessment method and 'City & Guilds' registration)
- Planning: Group Planning Session, setting personal and professional objectives of the employee volunteers
- Implementation: Mentor support (mainly by phone and email for 3-6 months)

⁷ See also Rob Compton's presentation on Panel II.

- Reviewing: Review Session (sign off with mentor and submission to verifier at 'City & Guilds') 'City & Guilds' emit the certificate, with the support of the BITC. The volunteer receives the certificate via the assessment center.

3. Key partners

- Charity sector: Community organisations chosen according to local urGhent need criteria, e.g. employability, homelessness, job coaching for the homeless people. The choice based on the statistical analysis of the criteria.
- Government sector
- Small and Big Businesses

4. Barriers and obstacles

- Risk of 'classification of volunteers' – those with and those without a portfolio.
- The lack of motivation, even at the NGO and Volunteer Organizations level
- Large diversity in volunteer activities difficult to make comparable
- Time consuming documentation process
- 'Affectivity in the commitment' as the barrier against the perceived professionalization of voluntary activity

5. How to overcome the barriers:

- The project based regionally, corresponding to the local needs
- Well targeted communication: Speak to right strategic partners.
- Explore/Establish the demand for the self assessment in the companies
- In house route: promote the self-support of the company (self-management of the volunteer skills assessment being a very strong argument)

Please refer also to Mr. Compton's contribution on Panel II.

3.4.4 Workshop B4

Presentation 1)



Paul Powrie (Volunteer Development Scotland, VDS):
"Measuring the Impact of Volunteering on
Social Economy Organisations"

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1. Short Background

Volunteers are a crucial resource to **social economy organisations** (SEOs) in terms of their effective management, growth of services, development and ultimately their sustainability. What has been lacking is a way for SEOs to systematically, consistently and objectively **measure the contribution of volunteers to SEOs**. In 2005 Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS) received funding from the European Social Fund EQUAL Initiative to use the **Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit** (hereafter referred to as the Toolkit)

2. Aims of the project

- To grow SEO's capacity to measure the impact of volunteering in helping it to achieve its organisational aims and objectives
- To create a Toolkit that would present a pack of methods and instruments that measure and assess the effects of volunteering
- The learning from the project should empower SEOs to improve and develop the effectiveness of volunteering in their work and to develop inclusive volunteering
- To empower volunteers, users and the wider community to shape the growth and development of SEOs

The toolkit:

...looks at a range of stakeholders

- ➔ Volunteers
- ➔ Organisations
- ➔ Service users
- ➔ Wider community...considers a wide range of impacts

- ➔ Economic capital
- ➔ Physical capital
- ➔ Human capital
- ➔ Social capital
- ➔ Cultural capital

...includes a series of adaptable research tools

...provides guidelines on data collection and analysis

Steps of the project:

3 local authority areas for trainings on the Toolkit (to represent a mix of urban, rural and urban/rural localities in Scotland, Edinburgh, North Lanarkshire & Inverness- Highland were chosen). In January 2006 IVR and VDS delivered a one-day training course on the Toolkit for 52 individuals from a mix of SEOs, Volunteer Centres and public sector organisations across Scotland. The aim of this day was to train participants in the use of the Toolkit and to broaden the target audience for the Toolkit.

After the training, 12 SEOs were identified by VDS to participate in the project by using the Toolkit within their organisations. Three SEOs were from the Edinburgh local authority area, six from North Lanarkshire and three from Highland

In each local authority area a Local Support Partnership was set up, comprising the VDS Project Officer, a Volunteer Centre representative and the lead contact from the participating SEOs. The main purpose of these partnerships was to support the SEOs in their use of the Toolkit and for the SEOs to exchange ideas and support each other. Individual support for the SEOs was provided by the VDS Project Officer. All participants agreed with the Local Support Partnership how they would use the Toolkit within their organisations.

3. Good practice components

Internal:

- Organisations have used their impact assessments to highlight to staff and volunteers what volunteers contributed to the organisation
- Leaflets based on the data from the impact assessments have also been produced so that volunteers know more about the service they provide and what they gain from volunteering
- Participants say that using the Toolkit has given them greater confidence to promote volunteering internally

External:

- The findings will be used by organisations to promote volunteering as part of the recruitment process
- Participants say they would promote the “tangible benefits” of volunteering particularly around meeting new people and building confidence and self-esteem to potential volunteers

4. Assessment

- The project piloted with four organisations, two in the UK and two from Sweden
- The Toolkit contains clear guidance on how to carry out an impact assessment in a volunteer involving organisation but also contains a complete set of tools with which to tackle the job
- Tools can be selected from the kit and are easily customised to meet the specific needs of organisations. These include: Questionnaires for volunteers, staff, users and local residents, focus group guides, audit form, diary pages for volunteers

5. Impact assessment

- A greater understanding of volunteering within each SEO
- Demonstrations of Added Value
- The effectiveness of the Toolkit as a tool to grow SEO's capacity to measure the impact of volunteering helping it achieving its aims & objectives
- Empowerment of SEO's to improve & develop effectiveness of volunteering and develop inclusive volunteering
- Attraction of new investment to support and develop volunteering

6. Key partners

- The European Equal Community Initiative to support the development of skills and professionalism in the sector, in order to develop the social economy's role on labour market integration
- Social Economy Organisations, in Edinburgh, North Lanarkshire & Highland, as participating organisations completing a Volunteer Impact Assessment
- Institute for Volunteering Research with input from the London School of Economics, the University of East London and Roehampton University (help with the research and the development of the Toolkit)
- Funded by a grant from the Center for Social Development (CSD) through the Global Service Institute (GSI), with funding from the Ford Foundation

7. Barriers and obstacles:

- Getting information back from volunteers with low levels of confidence and lack of experience in completing questionnaires
- Intensity of the project for the organisations involved
- Learning extends beyond the 'false' timescale set by this project

8. How to overcome the barriers:

- Found the function of the VDS Project Officer: help with analysis and reporting stages, constantly available for support and advice
- Peer support sessions from where organisations mutually benefited
- Time management and help with the language and concepts used in the Toolkit as the areas where the participants gained from support

Findings

The information gathered from the volunteers was very powerful, especially those volunteers with a history of mental health difficulties and the impact volunteering has had on their well-being and confidence. Some staff have anxieties about their service involving volunteers in the future and now these specific anxieties will be able to be followed up and resolved. The impact assessment found how important it was for service users to have someone in their life who wasn't paid to be there and how much they appreciate the fact that volunteers give up their time. Health In Mind also realised how important it is to clarify that people are volunteers. There was a very low response from one service and this illustrates the priority that this service currently gives to volunteers.

In total, the economic value of volunteers' input within health and mind, based on the minimum wage, is **£84,426 per annum**. This is with four services currently involving volunteers in their work. Outlook

The implementation plan includes tasks such as: outlining the skills involved in volunteers management; training for all those staff managing volunteers, and; highlighting the work of volunteers in the organisation. A similar impact assessment will be carried out by health in mind on a yearly basis.

"In the long term we will be able to measure change through comparison of results over time and this will allow us to explore positive and negative, intended and unintended effects of volunteering in our organisation."

*Chief Executive Officer,
Health In Mind*

9. Recommendations for the European debate

The Toolkit framework allows us to identify all the stakeholders affected by the volunteering the main stakeholders (volunteers, organisations, service users & wider community) that are affected by volunteering and classify the major ways in which they may be affected which are grouped into five types of capital:

- Physical capital.
- Human capital
- Economic capital
- Social capital
- Cultural capital

Presentation 2)



Karl Monsen-Elvik (North Lanarkshire Volunteer Development Agency, UK): **"Results of ESF and EQUAL Projects: Volunteering for learning and employability"**

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Short background:

Volunteer Centre North Lanarkshire is situated in one of the poorest areas of Scotland where the unemployment is above the country's average. The project focuses on confidence building, assertiveness and core skills in order to raise employability of people. In addition the project provides the training for volunteer managers. Equal inVOLve projects involves people with disabilities, health issues and young people.

1. Aims of the project:

- Raising the employability of unemployed adults and young people
- Building confidence and personal goals of participants - Identifying transferable skills derived from voluntary action
- Supporting individuals to move to the next steps of their development,
- Development/adaptation of tools to support volunteering and learning

2. Good practice components:

- Individual outcomes achieved in a group learning setting
- Recognition of existing skills as starting point for personal development
- Personal development integrated into practical/popular learning settings
- Use of recognised learning tools

3. Assessment

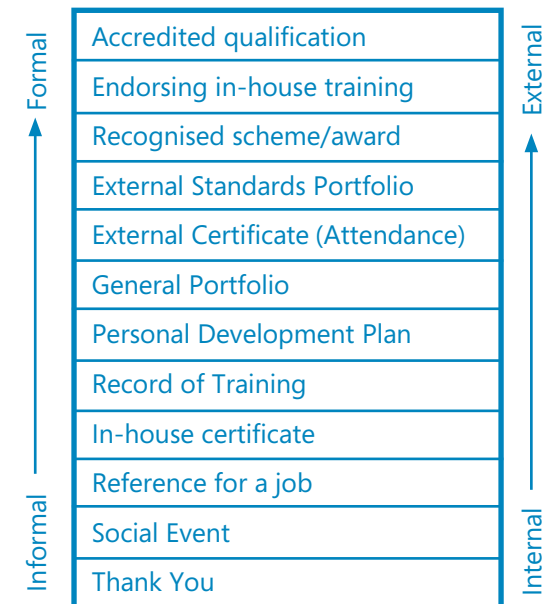
■ Assessment tools developed

- ➔ Personal evaluation statements at the beginning and the end of the programme
- ➔ Skills from volunteering activity that one learns and how they are used to help community or how they can be used to increase employability,
- ➔ EQUAL Transnational questionnaire
- ➔ Rickter Lifeboard
- ➔ Organisational & individual development plans

■ Methods developed

- ➔ Breakthrough course
- ➔ Personal statements for CV
- ➔ Accredited learning courses
- ➔ Volunteering impact assessment toolkit
- ➔ Continuum for accreditation/recognition

Enhancing employability and awareness of volunteers on the skills and competences they have developed can take different forms





4. Transferability

Many other countries have targeted groups requiring additional support to realize the value of learning and personal development achieved by volunteering. Tools could be translated and adapted for use in other countries and contexts. Above all this, approach can be adapted to very specific client groups (young people, disabled, refugees, older people, etc.).

5. Recommendations for the European debate

National and local volunteer centres should be positioned as accrediting bodies for skills and competences where the activity is appropriate to merit recognition.

What are pros and cons to have a common tool at European level on recognition of skills and competences volunteers gain?

Strengths:



- It can balance a society and ensure equal opportunities for people who did not manage to get them in the other ways,
- Could increase people's employability,
- Would simplify comparison of experiences,
- Possibility of some kind of benchmarking,
- European volunteer pass document learning of volunteers,
- Support to the mobility and transparency

Weaknesses:

- A risk to destroy diversity and different levels of volunteering,
- A shift in the meaning of volunteering,
- European tool would consist of some many compromises that might become very meaningless,
- In order to be applicable to every setting, it would be instrumentalist to the very basic,
- Hard to be achieved and far from the realities
- Is it worth with all of the challenges that would need to be faced?
- There are more urgent issues than European pass
- The usage of the link between volunteering and employability as there are already various European programmes (e.g. Leonardo)
- Working recognition to volunteering could 'kill' the volunteering as such.



Recommendations:

- Identify for example common 12 key competences and develop national projects and tools that take into account national reality but also common European framework
 - Consider using 'corporate methods' such as assessment centers to identify skills and competences of – be aware that they might not be applicable to the not for profit sector
 - Volunteers should have the possibility of choice using or not a competence portfolio
-

3.5 Final conclusions – Day I

Reflecting on their personal impressions from the first day of the conference, the participants concluded

- The volunteering sector needs to be **open to new developments** and provide tools and instruments for personal learning development of volunteers – but should not lose of sight the **core values and principles** that make the genuine value of volunteering (personal commitment for the common good, solidarity, active citizenship that is not guided by personal interest or gain).
- VPL / APEL in the volunteering context can be both **a risk and a remedy**: The advantage is that the skills assessment can attract new volunteers keen on learning and raising their human capital; it might be off-putting to others that do volunteer precisely because it does not follow rules as the labour market or formal education. Volunteering shall be seen in any case **not as a supplement to formal training but as a complement** to it.
- Different methods of skills identification and assessment care valid and have advantages: Those that focus on **self-assessment** are cheaper, easily accessible and support the volunteer in self-reflection. On the other hand **external assessment** contains the advantage of being objective, providing guidance to the volunteer and leading more easily to official recognition.
- Skills development and recognition is **beneficial both to the volunteer and the volunteer organisation**.
- The benefit of **European activity** in this area might be developing a **common framework and language** in which national / local tools operate. It will make them comparable and will enhance mobility of volunteers. **A list of key competences** gained typically through volunteering could be established.
- Any activity wanting to raise employability needs to **engage business and recruiters**. Business methods to identify and assess skills and competences might be inspiring – and more importantly the needs and language used by business when recruiting staff needs to be taken into account if a tool is to be useful to a recruiter, being the receiver of a competence portfolio.

- There is still a big need to **raise awareness on the positive learning environment 'volunteering'** – especially with **governmental level**. Not all EU Member States seem to take it for granted that nf/if learning happening when volunteering needs to be recognized.
- The MOVE conference has the benefit of **"thinking outside the box"**; the different tools might not be as such easily transferable to other countries and contexts, but **general principles of good practice** can be extracted and guide new projects / efforts in this area.

4. Thursday 24th May 2007 – Day II

4.1 Panel III

In-formal and non formal learning "versus" formal learning – How to bridge between two worlds?

More and more citizens fall out the formal education pathways; research has shown that still many school and university systems in countries of the EU are de facto highly discriminating against disadvantaged groups. At the same time our society becomes more and more competitive and based on knowledge. And those that do succeed in formal education may feel that school does not teach the skills and competences needed in the labour market

The speakers to focused on the following questions:

- **Is volunteering as non-formal and informal educational experience the remedy to empower especially of disadvantaged groups?**
- **Should non-formal and informal learning outcomes through volunteering be recognized in schools, universities and vocational training? If yes, how?**
- **Are formal education on the one hand and non-formal / informal education on the other "two worlds"? How can collaboration and mutual recognition look like?**

Chair: Alison Hughes, University of Liverpool

- ▶ **Prof. Dr. Michel Feutrie** (University of Lille, France)
"Towards an integrated approach on non-formal and informal learning"
- ▶ **Torild Nilsen Mohn** (VOX Institute for Adult Learning, Norway)
"Visualising and valuating learning- Norwegian initiatives, results and challenges"
- ▶ **Karine Janssens** (Gent University, Belgium)
"Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning in a higher education context"



Michel Feutrie (Université de Lille, France):
**“Towards an integrated approach on non-formal
 and informal learning”**

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**A shift in
paradigms...**

Validation of non-formal and informal learning has been in the center of European debates on education for the last 10 years. Nowadays we acknowledge a multi-dimensional shift in paradigms:

- From teaching to learning
- From formal to non-formal and informal
- From the institution to the individual
- From initial education to lifelong learning

Individuals learn everywhere and increasingly outside formal educations. There seems to be gradually an acceptance that learning outcomes stemming from informal learning can have the same value as those of formal learning. It is anyway most difficult to identify what skills and competences are related to formal, non-formal or informal learning. In addition we know that even a formal learning situation combines, from the individual point of view, non-formal and informal learning.

**A new key competence:
“permanent adaptation”**

On the other hand the increasing speed of everyday life and world communication channels requires adaptability from citizens. Permanent adaptation is new key competence. For this adaptation formal learning seems to be not sufficient any longer.

This context is defined by 5 key elements:

- A focus on learning outcomes
- Changed standards and references (European Qualifications Frameworks/ National Qualification Framework)
- Quality assurance procedures, guarantees for individuals that their learning outcomes are recognized
- Allowing pathways of learning, mobility, progression
- Articulation between contexts and situations

This changed context makes **recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning a necessity**

Validation has follow an individual centred approach and inverts the logic of assessment into a personal skills development logic. Validation becomes a global approach and a process thought as continuous key element of life-long learning.

While our systems have developed secular after secular more and more sophisticated methods to assess formal learning, and while non-formal learning is also rather easy to (as it uses most cases similar methods as formal learning), the challenge is informal learning: It is difficult to identify how informal learning contributes to building the potentials of the individual.

**The need of an
integrated approach**

A potential risk is that informal learning is treated as “learning apart” and that separated ways of identification and assessment are developed, focusing on qualifications directly linked to a specific field. Non-formal and informal learning rather has to be assessed in what way it contributes to the complex creation of the individual and his / her potential. The challenge is to consider the result of the multi-source learning as a whole and to advance from a separated approach to an integrated one, including all dimensions of individual experience. The convergence in the form of unique tool is not a must, various institutions need to be able to read the value of skills and knowledge gained through volunteering.

The aim of the validation needs to be to help the individual:

- To raise his consciousness about the gains from the informal learning
- To apply the tool as a status channel in their professional career

This new approach means a major change for training institutions and formal learning institutions:

- To make possible validation of non formal and informal learning
- To help their staff to acquire new competences:
 - ➔ from training and learning hours to tutoring and guidance
 - ➔ from programme and contents to learning outcomes
 - ➔ from exams to interviews



Torild Nilsen Mohn (VOX Institute for Adult Learning, Norway):
Visualising and valuating learning- Norwegian initiatives, results and challenges

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Background

As a part of the Competence Reform Norway started in 1999 a national validation project with the aim to developing a system entitling adults to document their knowledge and skills without the obligation to undergo the formal testing procedure. The priority areas for the project were:

- Documentation of nf/if learning in the workplace
- Documentation of nf/if learning in the voluntary sector
- Methods for the assessment of nf/if learning (in relation to criterias set in upper secondary and higher education systems)
- Adjustments and possible amendments of existing laws, regulations and agreements on the basis of experiences drawn from the project

Current APEL situation:

- Not a "one-size-fits-all" strategy, competence is contextual
- Common principles and procedure with different assessment methods and tools
- A common tool for the third sector:

The **Personal Competence Document (PCD)** as a tool in the form of a portfolio, based on self-assessment with two parallel functions: 1. Mapping the competences, 2. Raising individual awareness. It is flexible and adaptable to different areas of learning.

A case study...

A case study from 2005/2006 on how non-formal and informal learning is valued in the upper secondary education system: The research focused on What kind of documents are the most commonly accepted? How is the quality and usefulness of the documents perceived by the formal education institution? What is the assessors understanding of competence and skills from other learning arenas? Is there co-operation between the different learning arenas?

The findings show that learning from voluntary work is not documented, and that PCD is still unknown in the third sector; that course certificates are rarely used; that there is very low attention to courses from assessors concerning recognition of voluntary work; candidates are very often not conscious of their competences and skills.

Main barriers and challenges following the case study

- For all: **a need for** change in attitude and awareness
- For voluntary sector: **A need for** more structured and reliable documentation
- For the education sector: A need for better procedures to recognize nf/if
- Who is responsible for improving the situation?

By the individual the choice needs to be made between getting an accredited professional or academic diploma, or a clear indication of competence and skills gained through learning achievements in a well respected organization.

How to overcome these barriers?

- Develop and try out methods and tool for visualising learning from third sector
- Give information to and raise awareness with all stakeholders
- Explain “what’s in it for me”?
- Sort out responsibilities
- Find a common language
- Co-operate with different educational arenas



Karine Janssens (Ghent University, Belgium):
**Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning in
 a higher education context**

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Background:

In Flanders, **Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)** was introduced by law in 2005 on the level of higher educational system, providing validation of informally gained skills. The Bologna process provides the legal framework and quality criteria implemented on an individual bases in the different countries. In 2006 the concept was extended to vocational training. In other sectors, APEL is still in the phase of pilot projects.

Assessment:

The APEL at the University of Ghent consists of these 4 phases:

1. Guidance (Information, guidance, portfolio – free of charge): developed in collaboration with candidates and coordinators.

2. Application (Portfolio, payment: 155 EUR): The portfolio is the match between personal competences (or also of a volunteering experience) and learning outcomes of a course. Evidence of competences is delivered through documentation, certificates, website, article, photos.

3. Assessment (Portfolio, reflection, test, interview): Reflection about portfolio addresses the issues of authenticity, relevance, actuality, variety and quantity. Test (but no exams!) and interviews in case of doubts on sufficiency of proofs delivered.

4. Validation: Proof of competence granted by the validating body of the Ghent University Association. The faculty Board may grant exemptions for certain course units of the study programme.

The call for formalization...

The portfolio takes the format of a CV including information on competences learned non-formally and informally. Volunteering is one aspect of these learning experiences. Its value is recognized. However, the difficulty lies within proofs and evidences of volunteering learning outcomes. **A formalisation of identifying and assessing skills and competences learned through volunteering** would certainly help in this regard. This formalisation may focus on the **the outcome** of learning, giving a clear overview of the competences achieved through volunteering.

Major Barriers and Challenges

- Different goals with recognition of competences on the stakeholders’ level
- ‘Power play’ underneath the debate on the standard and assessment criteria
- Proof of volunteering learning outcomes difficult to recognise
- Confusion in the necessity of formalisation: process or output?

How can these barriers be overcome?

- Highlight the value of each way of learning (informal, non-formal, formal)
- Acknowledge the crucial role that each partner can play in a LLL policy
- Stress the importance of volunteering as a stepping stone for people to participate in other forms of learning
- Volunteering lowers the barriers to take the step towards formal education

Good practice elements:

- Find a balance between formalizing (one common format for a European portfolio) and flexibility to adapt the format to the local situation
- Be aware for over-structuring, a portfolio should reflect the person's whole individuality although nowadays it is often used as a pre-structured form to fill in a standard list of competences

Contribution to the European debate

The University of Ghent is participating in the REACTION project financed by the EU GRUNDTVIG programme developing a model for APEL in higher education focusing on validation of non-formal adult education courses <http://reaction.vdu.lt/>

The European Common Principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning will be of great value for a mutual recognition of skills and competences learned through volunteering. An extra attention to the aspect of 'ownership' of the recognition process by the individual must be paid.

Questions, answers and discussion

Disadvantaged groups of society will not necessarily benefit from new methods of validation and accreditation of nf/if learning in higher education: There is a risk of inventing tools and instruments that will benefit 'only' those that do have access to formal education, not those that have an interest in alternative pathways of learning being recognized as they have often fallen through 'regular' education and access to the labour market. Specific empowerment and the encouragement is needed so that disadvantaged persons may enter a process of recognition of nf/if learning.

The **reliability** of a portfolio depends on the working language: A common language needs to be developed in order to formalize the **process and the output**.

The **institutions of higher education cannot be the only 'assessment centers'** in the process of recognition of skills and competences because of their language and their 'alienating' administration. Volunteer organizations need to be involved as well as volunteers themselves in order to design a tool that fits the reality.

It will be in any case difficult to rely on a **unique official document** to be able to document learning that people go through in their lives. But the process will certainly play the role to make them aware of their range of skills and competences gained.

4.2 Workshop Session C

4.2.1 Workshop C1

Presentation 1)



Anita Prosser, Martin Lockett
(BTCV - British Trust for Conservation Volunteers,):
Volunteer Passports and Environments for Learning.

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1. Short background

BTCV is a UK based charity involving 240.000 volunteers. It has developed a volunteer passport and the 'Environments for Learning' initiative over a period of 2 years together with international partners.

The Environments for Learning project will be a European wide extension of the Volunteer passport whereby the skills achieved by volunteers, be it in UK, Estonia or Greece, will be accredited using the same framework of validation, to make skills transferable but also achievable throughout Europe. The passport is a mechanism for a volunteer to record their portfolio of skills.

2. Aims of the project

Volunteer passport is to be created to provide a map of volunteer competences linked to the National Qualification Framework. It will chart an individual's journey through BTCV, and will be used to access further training, volunteering and employment – hence the name 'passport'. The passport will be a portfolio where volunteers can collect their accredited (e.g. through certificates and qualifications, such as minibuss driving qualifications, first aid at work qualifications) and non-accredited experiences (e.g. projects or participation in BTCV events which

cannot be quantified or represented by a certificate or qualification). Another aim is the research, development and exchange of experiences of validating informal learning in the environmental sector to produce a common European wide framework, methodology and process to achieve this. Part of the project will be to develop the Volunteer Passport to a European scale.

3. Good practice components

- A focus on the volunteers as the main stakeholder and on their experience
- Making the activity the focus for learning
- Provision of a framework to be used for other areas of validation
- Training organizations on how to use the framework
- European wide transparency

1. Assessment

Volunteer Passport:

- The passport links to a qualification framework
- Physical manifestation is a USB stick
- A framework that volunteers can fill in
- The features are easy to use (system of interactive icons)
- Volunteers can upload a wide range of data on their sticks such as documents with minutes from meetings, videos etc.

Environments for Learning:

- The aim of the project is to research, develop and exchange experiences of validating informal learning in the environmental sector to produce a common European wide framework, methodology and process to achieve this (partners come from Iceland, Estonia, Greece and Bulgaria)
- Research existing practice and identify good practice
- Needs Analysis of organisations in the network for recognition, validation
- Produce framework on approach
- Identification of key areas of learning to develop process
 - ➔ Leadership
 - ➔ Project Planning/Management
 - ➔ Introduction to Nature Management
 - ➔ Trail Management
 - ➔ Volunteering/Community Learning/Citizenship
 - ➔ Training Trainers (included because it could grow from an existing BTCV course)

- Testing product sharing with others and training to utilise the approach example 'project planning': Project Planning is covered in the Leader's Training course by a mixture of lecture, discussion and a group planning exercise
- Groups have appointed leaders and have to put a set of action cards into order by negotiation
- They then compare results with other groups and defend their decisions.
- Tutors are thus given the opportunity to observe contributions and assess competences
- Knowledge is assessed by an examination

Title	Learning outcomes Learners will:	Knowledge/ Skill/ Competence	EQF Levl	Assessment method/ Evidence/ Tutor Role
Project Planning	● Know why preparation is important	K	2	Knowledge assessed using ILM written examination
	● Understand the importance of organisation for safety, achievement of the task and volunteer	K S	3 S2	
	● List the key points of organisation for different aspects of a project	K	3	Skills and competence assessed by observation of group work on the project planning card exercise
	● Have planned a project for a given scenario	PC PV	3 3	

Key:

K	-- Knowledge
S	-- Skill
PA	-- Professional/Personal Autonomy and Responsibility
PL	-- Professional/Personal Learning Competence
PC	-- Professional/Personal Communication and Social Competence
PV	-- Professional/Personal Vocational Competence

5. Barriers and obstacles

Risk on the European level: the project stops with the partners and does not develop further.

6. Transferability

Many other organizations in the UK and around the world use the BTCV model of project leadership and working with volunteers and engagement. BTCV takes an important leadership role in the Conservation Volunteers Alliance in setting standards and ideas.

7. Recommendations for the European debate

The methodology of making the volunteer and their experience the focus of the project, not a college system or national qualification framework is key to making the process easy to use.

Presentation 2)



Colm O'Brien (University of Sunderland, UK):
Volunteer development in the conservation and heritage sector

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1. Short background: (Location and duration of project, key partners)

The University of Sunderland is acting through its Centre for LLL as organizer and provider of education and within the University's aim of encouraging greater participation of people within the region in higher education.

2. Aims of the project

- To encourage volunteers to engage critically with their experiences of volunteering and adopt an evaluative perspective used to improve both their own experience as a volunteer
- To enable volunteers to meet to share best practice and encourage engagement with the wider heritage
- To improve volunteers' communication skills so that they can communicate more effectively with visitors
- To enhance communications between organizations and their volunteers for their mutual benefit

The programme is made up of **two core modules** and a variety of optional modules, which are chosen by the volunteers from those provided by the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Sunderland. The **first core module** is based on the volunteers' practical time spent volunteering and gives volunteers the opportunity to reflect on their experiences as volunteers. As part of their assessment, volunteers prepare a journal reflecting on their experience, which can include thoughts on training or guidance they have received, reflections on any

contact they have had with visitors or staff and what they have learnt through volunteering that day. Volunteers are also encouraged to carry out research and to give a short presentation about an aspect of the property in which they volunteer or one object of interest.

The **second core module** encourages volunteers to visit a number of different properties and volunteers are asked to compare and contrast National Trust properties and their audiences as part of their assessment.

For the two course modules, each student is assigned a course tutor, if possible a member of staff from the property where they are volunteering.

Through reflection on their own practice, volunteers bring a more informed approach to their work both on behalf of their organisations and to their dealings with visitors to the organisations' buildings and landscapes.

A richer dialogue and development of mutual understanding between the organisation and its volunteers has resulted in improvements to protocols and practices of volunteering within the organisations.

Insights gained by volunteers through reflection on their own work and observation of others have resulted in new ideas and changes to the ways in which volunteers engage with visitors to the sites and in the ways in which information is presented to visitors.

3. Good practice components

- Provision of an accredited programme of volunteer development which may provide a basis for progression into further learning or work
- Learning needs and interests of individual volunteers as a starting point of the programme
- The use of reflective journals both as a means for volunteers to develop insight into and improve upon their own practice and as a basis for assessment for University accreditation
- Participation of professional staff from the partner organizations in the University's tutorial support to volunteers
- The processes of assessment, feedback and review to ensure that the aims and needs of volunteers, the University and the partner organizations are met.
- Adoption by organizations of ideas and information developed by volunteers on the programme

4. Assessment

- Core element: What do volunteers learn in their volunteering?
 - ➔ A journal kept by the volunteer to demonstrate learning
 - ➔ Self-directed learning with tutorial support

- Volunteering in a wider context
 - ➔ Visit to four other volunteer-involving places or organizations
 - ➔ Interviews with organizers and volunteers
 - ➔ Compilation of portfolio on information and presentation of report
 - ➔ A gift to the volunteer: a selection of courses from the CLL
- Result: formal university certification

5. Impact assessment

- The programme enables volunteers to develop skills which can enhance opportunities for progression into education or employment.

6. Key Partners

- The National Trust – Seeking to make a commitment to its volunteers within the organisation's ethos that it should become a learning organisation
- Northumberland National Park –works with volunteers to achieve its aims of enabling people to understand, enjoy and contribute to qualities of the countryside
- The Wearmouth-Jarrow Partnership – promoting the inscription of Wearmouth-Jarrow on the UNESCO World

7. Barriers and obstacles

- How to devise and constitute in the University a coherent programme of learning to take account of volunteers' places of work, their individual interests and their time constraints
- How non-formal learning through volunteering could be reconciled with a University's requirement for academic quality assurance
- How to provide a satisfactory standard of tutorial support to volunteers which was appropriate to their circumstances
- Finance to support the Programme
- Communicating awareness of the programme and its aims and relevance to volunteers and providing support during the Programme

8. How to overcome the barriers

- Partners developed a programme within the framework of a Customised Modular Scheme, which was already in place in the University, able to meet these three points
- Partners analysed the practice of volunteering and from this they formulated a set of generic learning outcomes which were attainable through volunteering and appropriate in Higher Education; and they developed a form of assignment which enabled volunteers to demonstrate attainment of these learning outcomes
- Professional staff from partner organisations were trained in University tutorial practice and integrated into the tutorial team
- Seeking opportunities for external funding. An external evaluation is now in progress on the National Trust programme with a view to informing decisions on future funding and supporting future funding bids
- Review and improvements made during the course of the programme, in the light of feedback from participants, to programme documentation and to provision of timetable and meeting schedules

9. Transferability

The project has a strong relevance in countries, which require certification for the labour market. Delivery structures appropriate to the credit and funding regimes applying within each country could be drawn up using this scheme as a model.

10. Recommendations for the European debate:

Methods for integrating volunteering and LLL within the framework of academic quality assurance. and also methods for validating and certifying self-directed learning and learning through practice should be discussed more profoundly

1. **Concept:** Start with the individual; fit the task to the volunteer instead of vice versa
2. **Reflection:** Volunteers write diaries and reflect upon what they have learned, for which there is tutorial support.
3. **Self-interactive learning.** Strike a balance between the university perspective with all its formalities and the move towards the individual as the starting point.

4.2.2 Workshop C2

Presentation 1)



Kerstin Hübner (BKJ, Germany):
Kompetenznachweis Kultur – cultural competency
record CCR

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1. Aims of the project:

The aim of the project was to make visible the learning outcome of arts and cultural education programs. The recognition of competences is acquired especially in non-formal education. Another aim was the development of a certificate for young people engaged in cultural programs and to improve the qualifications of educators working in arts and cultural education institutions.

2. Good practice components

- The inclusion of experts, multipliers, business and youth in the development of the CCR and the procedure
- The procedure leading to the CCR, especially the dialogic process
- The training curriculum

3. Assessment:

- First part of the project: special research "Key competences through cultural education" to show how competences acquired in the field of nf education
- Discussion with experts (e.g. institutes, scientists/academics, experts of the OECD) and stakeholders (e.g. businesses and business organisations)
- Discussion with young people and multipliers from the field of cultural youth education

- The CCR and the training curriculum developed
- Classification of competences developed
- Implementation into practice

4. Key partners

- Experts on acquiring competences (scientists, teachers/educationalists)
- Businesses and business organizations (mainly human resources departments) whose task to review and further development of the CCR
- Experts and multipliers of cultural child and youth education
- Supporting ministry (Federal Ministry of Education and Research) to spread and accept the CCR
- A group of various organizations under the direction of the International Youth Exchange and Visitors' Service of the Federal Republic of Germany

5. Barriers and obstacles

- Clarification of the businesses' expectation for the certificate of competences
- The expectation of experts to develop a high-class certificate with a very simple procedure
- The ministry's expectation to issue as many CCRs in the shortest time possible

6. How to overcome the barriers

- Discussions
- Information campaign / PR
- Evaluation of the CCR and the procedure
- Development of supporting materials

7. Transferability

The application of the certificate and the procedure in the field of international youth exchanges has proven the transferability. Within the procedure of transfer a new classifications of competences is to be developed for each new field. The barriers in the transferability are to be found, for example the procedure had been developed for and tested in the area of nf education, not that of informal. It requires a pedagogically trained professional to issue the CCR. Finally, the CCR as a qualitative procedure is time-consuming.

8. Recommendations for the European debate:

As many partners as possible should be included in the development to guarantee high level of acceptance and a set-up according to the requirements. Youths find the process more important than the result. Thus recognising and describing their competences is crucial for them.

The Certificate CCR, the procedure leading to the CCR, especially the dialogic process, the training curriculum, the classification of competences might become an integral part a Volunteer Pass on the EU level.

Questions, answers and discussion

Rich databank of stakeholders is a must. Involvement of uncomfortable stakeholders raises the probability the tool will be recognised by them.

The assessment and valuation are continuous process and need flexible support, e.g in form of face-to-face coaching.

Assessment must be transferable into the real labour condition, being an absolute proof for the labour market.

Awareness rising with the general public is crucial. People are oriented to dispose and operate with tools, but labour market players are not necessarily interested in / aware of key competences gained through volunteering.

The project approach has been changed towards more dialogue (and a less formalized documentation). It still is perceived as very much language oriented, not suitable for younger volunteers.

Presentation 2)



Sofie Verhoeven (SoCiuS, Belgium):
RAC (Recognition of Acquired Competences) in
the socio-cultural work – The learning booklet

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1. Short background:

Competences are acquired anywhere: both within the educational settings and as a result of commitment. Recognition of acquired competences in the social cultural work (SCW) is not an aim in itself but may be seen as an add-on to the value SCW has for society and the individual.

2. Aims of the project

The learning booklet in form of a portfolio of experiences is a method to gather knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences acquired in a nf/if learning environment.

3. Good practice components:

- The low barrier of this instrument
- The multitude of possibilities for the use of the learning booklet (personal professional and personal formation levels)

4. Assessment:

The portfolio process has **a formative and a summative track**:

The formative track:

Participation and development

- ➔ social participation
- ➔ career development
- ➔ personal development by getting insight in the own learning biography

The summative track:

Labour and training

- ➔ access to the labour market
- ➔ mobility on the labour market
- ➔ access to training
- ➔ shortened training courses

In the formative track, the RAC procedure is likely to be carried out through self-evaluation, in the second case clear and verifiable standards are used.

In the portfolio/learning booklet each activity is registered separately – by the organizer or person responsible for the activities of the volunteer. The portfolio comprises a **learning, competence and function certificates – no qualification certificate!**

The **competence certificate** uses proofs to describe the acquired competences and adds the level of the acquired competences. Certification is non obligatory and not the ultimate goal of the courses (but as stated above an add-on). They represent a proof that someone has carried a task as a volunteer in a way both or recognition but also appreciation.

The **learning certificate** demonstrates educational and training experiences. Everybody who has attended a specific course, training, seminar, is entitled to a learning certificate without having to prove that the competencies have indeed been acquired. The learning certificate proves the participation of a determined person and explains the educational goals of the learning activity.

A **function certificate** is a document that demonstrates that a determined function has been carried out as a volunteer during a certain period. With the function certificate one tries to demonstrate what influence the socio-cultural work has had. The function certificate takes into consideration the accumulated effect of participation (sometimes for years on end) in distinct educational activities, the membership or expertise as a committee member. In this respect it should be clear in which organisation the function has been carried out. This certificate is not only recognition of the acquired competencies but also a form of appreciation for the commitment.

5. Key partners:

- Support centers of the different participating sectors
- Experts in working with target groups

6. Barriers and obstacles

- Only ONE instrument useful in the different participating sectors and for the different target groups

7. How to overcome the barriers

- Identifiability of the sectors= to identify the social cultural work, to recognise the value, to rise in the public consciousness
- Unequivocal terminology
- Good monitoring of those who use the booklet
- The monitoring of those who issue the certificates
- Growing period
- Clear deals regarding criteria, standards and certificates
- Must be used without deterring people
- Balance between over-structured and non-structured

8. Recommendations for the European debate:

Global RAC-framework: Europe creates a legal framework and gives incentives to generate a RAC-policy model with a double objective: self-realization and participation in society on the one hand, and availability on the labor market and flexibility regarding education- and training paths on the other hand. To realize this the socio-cultural work should be involved in the development and realization of the policy framework.

Within this legal framework one should also outline the following aspects: quality assurance, use of autonomous standards, issuing certificates, creating and supporting independent monitoring agencies and the right of the individual to be monitored and supported through a RAC-procedure.

4.2.3 Workshop C3

Presentation 1)



Marjan van de Maele (JES, Belgium):

“Discovering your Competences: Identifying and Assessing Competences with Youth Work Volunteers - C-STICK’s”

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JES provides services in three main Belgians cities: Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent. It's main services include training for youth work volunteers, training and guidance, facilitator for youth culture, organisation of adventurous activities in the city, city discovery tours and outreach work for young people and aim at young people. Through these activities young people can gain skills and competences transferable to other contexts. In order to assess these skills and competences, C-STICK's project was created.

1. Aims of the project:

The C-STICK's project aims at developing a digital tool that facilitates identifying, assessing and developing key competences for young people. This tool helps young people to design their own life-long learning experience, to take the right direction concerning their career and personal life and to apply more focussed and self-assured for jobs.

Young people have the opportunity to develop skills through their engagement in JES' activities and afterwards use the C-STICK to identify and assess the skills they have learned. Finally, with the help of software they can create portfolios tailored for specific jobs they are applying for. Assessing and exploring their own competences is made possible for interested JES' volunteers, but it is not an obligation.

2. Good practice components:

Identifying and assessing competences is something very abstract and difficult, especially for lowly skilled young people. In this project, it was tried to create some tools to overcome this barrier. The use of a **C-STICK, a digital device** that is **easy to handle** for young people and that contains the possibility to **update** and **integrate** in other web-applications like the website of the Flemish employment service, vacature.com etc. is an innovative feature.

3. Assessment

- The C-STICK's project has two main axes: to gather and develop useful methods for lowly skilled young people to identify, assess, and develop key competences and to develop a digital portfolio
- Different kinds of teamwork exercises are used to assess competences. Young people learn to translate activities into tasks and tasks into competences

Four folders are made for instructors to help them to effectuate assessments with young people:

1. The first folder contains tools for a standardised assessment of 17 key competences: a list of the 17 key competences and their definition, indicators and scales to measure these competences
 2. The second folder contains a list with group activities that aim at making competences visible.
 3. The third folder contains methods to encourage peer assessment. These are mainly techniques to help young people in giving and accepting feedback
 4. The fourth folder contains methods that can encourage self-assessment.
- The digital portfolio (C-STICK) on a USB flash drive. It has 3 areas: personal information, job applications and personal development plan. In the personal information area different kinds of experiences can be reported: experiences young people have in volunteering, house holding, work and education. Possible information can also be the outcome of an assessment, documents that prove a certain competence (like photo's, little movies, etc.). By gathering all this information, the C-STICK provides an overview of a youngster's competences and their evolution.

Example of a reflection exercise used to reflect on the competences of a youth worker:

The roles of a youth worker – stimulating reflection which role the persons takes at times....

- **Guide** → to be able to take the lead, to have didactic capacities, to guide a group
- **Referee** → to make and defend rules, to give clear instructions
- **Clown** → to be able to motivate, to take initiative, to be funny
- **Construction worker** → to be able to organize, to cooperate, to work independently
- **Friend** → to be able to listen, to have empathy
- **Inventor** → to be creative, to experiment, to be flexible

Example of indicators used for exploring and assessing one's key competences:

	Yes	No
I turn myself to the speaker		
I make eye contact		

	Yes	No
I ask for explanation if something isn't clear to me		
I show that I understand the explanation (f.e. I nod or say mmmm)		
I know what I have to do after the explanation is given		

	Yes	No
I let the speaker finish his explanation		
I listen to the other person, even if I completely disagree with		
I only ask questions if I really don't understand something		
I only ask questions that are related to the explanation		

4. Impact assessment

From the survey conducted, employers expressed that they are open to voluntary work experiences. They are not interested in detailed assessments but for them it is more important that young people can link their activities and experiences to the competences developed through these activities.

5. Key partners

- VDAB (the Flemish Employment Service)
- There was also involvement in other projects that had more or less the same objective (WACKER)

6. Barriers and obstacles

- The lack of a common understanding of competences:
 - which theoretical model is used
 - how are the competences defined
 - which indicators are used
 - different actors use different models
- No consensus on the importance of competences (certainly when developed through volunteering)

7. How to overcome the barriers

These barriers are not yet overcome, but awareness of this problem was raised and the first steps to come to a general model are being taken. From a long term perspective there is a change in mentality concerning competences of volunteers.

8. Transferability

Organisations of all kinds should be encouraged to work with the same model or to collaborate to come to a common model. As soon as another distinct model is developed, communication on competences becomes very difficult and the focus on and possibilities for LLL get lost. What matters is the common understanding.

9. Recommendations for the European debate:

The link between different settings where competences are developed (work, school, volunteering, house holding, etc.) should not be lost if some European tool is to be created. Probably the same competences are developed in different settings that complement and strengthen each other.

Presentation 2)



Gerd Vanmeenen (Formaat Jeugdhuiswerk Vlanderen; Belgium):
"Identification, Recognising and validating competences obtained through youth work"

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Short background:

This organisation provides support to the youth clubs throughout Flanders. The concern, which rose was how to help young people to recognise and identify the competences they gain through their involvement in the youth clubs. The recognition of those skills among their future employers was another issue. They bought tried to be tackled through the project.

1. Aims of the project:

The project aims at helping young people to be aware of the competences they obtain through volunteering in youth work. Another finality is to develop a methodology following the previous aim, the same for an inventory of the competences youngsters can obtain through volunteering in a youth club. Focus on the personal development of young people represents another of goals.

2. Good practice components

- Introduce the 'competence – thinking' to young volunteers
- Competence debate in the Flemish Youth work by organizing the Conference on recognition and validation of youth work experiences

3. Assessment

The project runs from August 2006 to October 2007 and is split in three phases:

1. Research in the youth clubs
 - ➔ The development of a list of the keycompetences (and their most important indicators) that can be obtained in Youthclubs
 - ➔ The development of a methodology to recongize competences of youngsters
2. Introduction of the project to the other forms of youth work
 - ➔ The organization of a conference to introduce the project to other kinds of youth work and share visions about the recognition of competences obtained in youth work
 - ➔ Invite youth workers and organizations to adjust the developed methodology to the context and demands of the broader youthwork
3. Introduction of the project to the job market
 - ➔ The organization of interviews with partners from the employability-sector to learn how they feel about the usefullness of the validation of competences obtained in youthwork
 - ➔ The development of a document enlisting a few important criteria for an instrument for the validation of competences obtained in youth-work

So far, the **list of 23 competences** that can be obtained through the youth work is created. They are divided into three categories: social competences, personal competences and task related competences.

Social competences	Personal competences	Task-related competences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ability to motivate ● Ability to work in team ● Ability to make contact ● Leadership skills ● Communication skills (listening) ● Communication skills (speaking) ● Ability to cope with feedback ● Empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creativity ● Insight on their own competences ● Punctuality ● Autonomy ● Relativism ● Ability to learn ● Responsibility ● Flexibility ● Ability to take initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Problem solving skills ● Ability to plan and organise ● Tidiness ● Accuracy ● Meeting skills

A 'competence game' that can be played by youngsters was created in order to facilitate self-assessment as well as peer assessment of the competences. Youngsters themselves make a summary of their main competences and based on this document they create their Europass CV.

For example: The competence 'Autonomy'

Description: The youngster knows how to plan, carry out and control a task autonomously and asks for help when needed

Example: Joline can take care of an opening night of the youth club on her own.

Actions: The youngster knows what's needed to carry out a certain task.
The youngster can carry out tasks on his own.
The youngster respects appointments

Important goals of a methodology:

- To make clear that young people also learn a lot of things in their involvement as a youth club - volunteer
- To introduce the concept 'competence'
- To learn young people to think in terms of competences
- To stimulate youngsters to reflect on their own behaviour and competences

4. Impact assessment

- Youngsters have a relatively clear view on their competences and how/ where they have obtained them
- Youngsters have put together a 'competence profile'

5. Key partners

- The province of West-Flanders
- Local youth clubs

6. Barriers and obstacles

- Concept of youth clubs and youth work as the way of gaining skills not well accepted among national employment agencies
- Reflecting on own behaviour is often confronting and threatening
- The concept 'competence' is often a new concept for youngstersYoungsters sometimes don't link what they do in a youthclub with learning

7. How to overcome the barriers

- Develop cooperation with employment agencies and make them sensible to the youth work
- By developing creative tools such as games for assessing the competences not to feel like at school

8. Transferability

Project is transferable to the other settings where typology of competences varies among the organisations as it does in Flanders. Creating one tool at the regional or national level might help in development and recognition of common tool for everyone.

9. Recommendations for the European debate:

Policy makers should be aware that it is already a success if we can make youngsters aware of the fact that they learn a lot of things in their leisure time and that they can use these competences for their professional and educational career.

Questions, answers and discussion

Recognition and identification of competences by youngsters is the most important. **Validation** is also relevant, but it is more important that young people are aware themselves of their qualities. By doing so, they are also getting more information on what they are learning in their free time

There should be some **European framework**, which would be able to be translated to the national standards. When there are different tools and methods, companies and employers do not understand nor recognise them.

Using **same vocabulary** is important for learning experience in the frame of LLL

There should be **portfolio of all skills in one**. There is **no need to create special volunteer portfolio**, as it is the most important to have experiences and competences and not where these competences are coming from (volunteering or work). Employers are not interested whether these competences are coming from youth work or some other kind of volunteering. It would be better to invest time and resources in developing common tool.

On local level we have to **keep young people aware** of their competences to use them and defend them when needed.

Every volunteer out of same experience can develop different competences; therefore it is important that the portfolios are able to give some personal reflections.

4.2.4 Workshop C4

Presentation 1)



Carol Stewart, Alison Hughes (University of Liverpool, UK):
Audit of University level learning and Accreditation opportunities for Volunteers.

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Short background

What are the barriers for volunteers to gain accreditation for their knowledge, skills and competences?

- Evidence suggests that volunteers do learn at appropriate and even sophisticated level that can be recognized by universities
- However, there is still very little access to academic learning through volunteering - there must be some gaps
- Is volunteer learning “new”, “different” and if yes, in what way?
- Volunteers do not learn in different “subjects”
- “Level” does not always apply to volunteer learning!

Two “worlds” seem to clash when the topic of accreditation opportunities for volunteers at universities is dealt with:

“Academic learning”	“Volunteer learning”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Classroom based, ● Theory and knowledge oriented ● Input/syllabus led (is tied to pre-set learning outcomes) ● Has admission requirements ● Has assessment requirements ● Has learning broken into neat packages – usually based on single disciplines <p>➔ Levels are assigned to blocks of learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work based, ● About competences (“Doing”) ● Organic – including unintended learning. ● Anyone can be a volunteer! ● Assessment not always desired - Learning is continuous - Interlinked across subjects <p>Learning, over even a short period of Time, can be at a range of levels</p>

Survey on courses for the voluntary sector in UK universities

The survey reflected courses for managers / employees/ volunteers in organisations employing volunteers and (or necessarily exhaustive) Information available to the general public

- Shows gaps in provision of such courses; it is not clear, however, whether this means that there is no demand or whether the demand is just not taken care of
- 23 out of 128 UK universities offer courses directly related to voluntary activity
- 4 universities offer more than one award
- 3 universities offer a single module within another unrelated award
- 7 offer a specific voluntary-related award alongside other awards specifically for charity or community related sectors
- 13 only offer a voluntary-related award, often within a business school
- Most awards / courses at first years undergraduate and Masters level
- Masters often specific masters on volunteer management

Challenges / questions:

- Is there a sufficient match between skills being developed by volunteers and incorporation of these into university learning?
 - ➔ 8 universities specify that they developed modules with input from voluntary organisations, and 2 others require voluntary work as part of the course
- Are there sufficient opportunities for work-based learning in these awards? Despite a variety of assessment formats, many stress traditional assignments as the form of assessment. Is this a sufficient bridge between the world of work / volunteering and the world of academia?

Presentation 2)



Michael Debusscher (CESOR, Belgium):
Screening Youth Work for Generic Competences

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Short background

Specific policy context in Flanders: Policy makers acknowledge that high unemployment goes hand in hand with unfilled vacancies and put more emphasis on collaboration between “work” (employment market) and education. The 21st century sees a shift towards “thinking in competences” and including the youth and culture sector into the equation. A decree for a Flemish Qualification Structure (following the European Qualification Framework EQF) is planned for 2008. From January – March 2007 pilot projects have been carried out to try out the identification of qualification (6 projects mostly professional based à Labor Market but also Youth Work).

CONTEXT

- Thinking in competences -

Formal learning

Nonformal/informal

Education

Work

Culture,youth,sports

- Clear goals
- Objective evaluation
- Quality control

- Skilled employees

- No clear goals
- No evaluation
- No control

“Work” is situated between the realms of formal and nf/if learning.

The qualification of “youth workers” - questions to be solved

- What are the competences of youth workers, leaders and instructors in all the different contexts?
- Is there a common base (generic competences) for youth workers, leaders and instructors regardless of the context? Are the generic competences the key competences?
- If we find generic competences ... can they be recognized in the labor market and formal education? Is this compatible with the Flemish Qualification Structure FQS? Yes! What is the level for the Qualification Youth Worker in the FQS? Level 3 or 4?

Competences in Youth Work - Problems encountered...

- Basic information in the law ➔ framework for training
 - No guidelines for input or output in training
 - Specific definition in function of the FQS
 - Qualification • Training
 - Many projects in Youth Works as C-sticks (labor market), Wacker (personal development)...
- different goals, different purposes ➔ different contexts

The project is based on the assumption that there are ‘generic competences’ and ‘contextual competences’.

Research design:

- Timing: May 2007 – January 2008
- 42 training providers
- Delphi-method
- 4 phases

Proposed outcome of the research:

- Identification of the competences of youth workers
- Identification of “generic competences” and “contextualized competences”
- Suggestion ways in which these competences then be recognized in formal education and for employment
- Discussing pros and cons of the “formalisation”, “standardisation” and quality control; in youth and cultural work

Questions, answers and discussion

How to deal with the great reluctance of the sector that is based in fears of formalizing and standardizing youth work – of “formalizing the un-formal and informal” as a paradox in itself. It is crucial to make clear to youth workers / volunteer managers etc. that they do not have to change their work nor their objectives – but that instruments for making learning outcomes and competences visible are an offer that they can make to their volunteers – or that they can use themselves.

In some cases reluctance is strong because of an unwillingness to change – or to take up a risk: Especially big and well established organisations such as the scouts have a good reputation already and are inclined to feel that an experience in the scout movement is a value as such and does not need an “award” or “competence portfolio”. There would be opposition to a tool that would be implemented in the whole volunteering sector as this could diminish the specific value / reputation of traditional organisations.

On the other hand smaller and not so well known volunteer organisations might find it difficult in getting the same profile and reputation, meaning that volunteers getting involved in this kind of organisations might be disadvantaged when wanting to validate and make visible the competences they have gained as an employer will not “automatically” associate the “good name” of the organisation with a set of skills / competences gained. This might lead to frictions between the well-known organisations and smaller / new / emerging volunteer organisations.

There is still little or no mobility between youth workers in Europe – clearly a reason to develop a set of generic competences that could be recognised in all countries. Also there is no mobility between the youth and the adult sector. Trans-national and trans-sectoral mobility can be enhanced with a commonly accepted set of generic / key competences.

The cooperation between universities and the voluntary sector in the UK is still very much “opportunistic”, i.e. happens when specific courses are designed in consultations / cooperation with volunteer centres. However, the cooperation between formal education and volunteer organisations is far from being structured and / or facilitated.

4.3 Panel IV

The policy perspective: Recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes by policy makers at EU and national level. How to get it official?

- **What is the role of public authorities in better recognizing skills, competences and knowledge acquired through volunteering?**
- **What is good practice in terms of governmental policy towards a better recognition?**
- **How can government promote collaboration between stakeholders from the volunteer sector, business, formal education and accreditation bodies?**
- **Should there be official accreditation of skills, competences and knowledge learned through volunteering? If yes, what should it look like to be both realistic and meaningful?**

Chair: Markus Held, CEV

- ▶ **Monika Oels** (Formerly government of the State of Berlin, currently Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Germany)
"Joint recognition of skills and competences by regional governments and NGOs"
- ▶ **Claude Bodeving** (Council of Europe, National Youth Service/Ministry of Family and Integration)
"The European portfolio of youth leaders and youth workers"
- ▶ **Jens Bjørnåvold** (CEDEFOP, EU)
"The learning continuity – National and European Policies on the validation of non-formal and informal learning"



Monika Oels (Formerly government of the State of Berlin, currently Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Germany): **Opportunities and threats of recognition of voluntary work**

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Ms Oels focussed on the questions how volunteer organisations can feed results and conclusions of the debate around better recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes into policy debates and policy making at different levels.

According to Ms. Oels, the policy agenda is favourable towards better recognition of non-formal and informal learning: Policy-makers at UN and EU level engage more than ever in dialogue with NGOs and volunteer organisations. And in German context there is an ongoing reform for NGO's involvement on a national policy level.

Why should NGOs be admitted to official meetings of policy making? The reason is that they add content and challenges. Unfortunately criteria of NGO selection representing related fields remain still rather invisible. More attention must be paid to include a wide variety of representatives.

One example of positive activity in this respect is the work around the Global Compact on CSR that is implemented on a national level and has been an opportunity for NGOs to raise issues in relation to CSR.

EU Presidencies are a good momentum for initiative in relation to better recognition of non-formal and informal learning, especially the Slovenian presidency in 2008.

In terms of EU initiatives, the GRUNDTVIG programme (lifelong learning projects), the PLOTEUS initiative (Portal on Learning Opportunities throughout the European Space) are promising actions to be tapped into and thematic clusters created at DG Education and Culture in the European Commission.

The LLL policy including the accreditation is soon about to become decentralised: the solution will be sought again on the level of cities or clusters of metropolitan cities (London, Paris, Berlin, etc). And finally, national implementation agencies such as the EUROPASS agencies can be interesting targets for volunteer organisations to raise the profile of learning outcomes of volunteering.



Claude Bodeving (Member of the expert group to elaborate the European Portfolio Council of Europe, National Youth Service/Ministry of Family and Integration):
The Council of Europe portfolio of youth leaders and youth workers.

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Background

At the 6th European Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth (Council of Europe, 2002) the promotion of non-formal education/learning of young people as well as the development of appropriate forms of recognition of experiences and skills acquired notably within the framework of associations and other forms of voluntary involvement at local, national and European levels was officially accepted.

Moreover, the ministers agreed on a resolution on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field (Resolution of the Council of the European Union, 2006), aiming to encourage public bodies and NGO's to use and, where appropriate, to adapt comparable and transparent instruments for recognizing competences of those active in youth work and youth organizations, in accordance with the **European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers**.

As the Council of Europe represents 46 Member States these declarations have a big potential of impact on countries in Europe.

The European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers has the following functions:

- To describe of competences of a youth worker
- To provide evidence of practical experience
- To provide youth workers / leaders outside the formal qualification system with a voluntary assessment tool
- To enable self-assessment assistant guideline

- To give guideline for external feedback
- To put into practice Youth work principles of the Council of Europe
- To provide a concrete example of recognition of non-formal learning
- To help to the informal and social recognition of youth work
- To deliver a model for other organizations to create their own portfolios with the CoE label

The portfolio is based on the conviction that non-formal learning serves three major functions: promoting **active citizenship, employability and personal development**.

In the framework of the portfolio, the following **key functions** of a youth worker / leader have been identified (functional analyses):

The ability to

- Empower young people
- Develop relevant learning opportunities
- Accompany youth in intercultural learning
- Organisation & youth policy development
- Use evaluative practice

For instance the function "to empower young people" means that a youth leader/worker enables young people to participate through developing collective action and learning; involves young people in planning, delivery and evaluation of activities; enables young people to work towards their goals; develops confidence, knowledge, skills and understanding of young people; gets in touch with young people on an emotional level; and widens their awareness of the concepts of power and change.

For each of the five functions, the portfolio sets out a list of competences needed to performing them.

Good practice elements:

- (Self) evaluation
- Dialogue basis
- Voluntary basis
- Possibility to develop a Personal Development & Learning Plan

Assessment:

- Identification of functions that a competent youth leader must have
- Description of activities covered by each function
- A list of competences and the aid to the self-reflection in the form of the scale apply to me – not at all apply to me offered to the applicant

Major barriers and Challenges (concerning in general the issue of recognition of non formal education):

- Need to further develop the definition and concepts of non formal education
- Common language concerning competences has to be developed

Barriers to overcome

- Dialogue with youth organisations
- Cooperation between the sectors formal and non –formal education

Recommendations can you feed into a European debate on the mutual recognition of skills and competences learned through volunteering?

- Take care not to formalize the non formal education (for ex. Tests, levels)
- Certification should be based on self-evaluation
- Dialogue with youth NGO's

The portfolio is available at <http://tinyurl.com/2oeju3>



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A paradigm shift...

In last years we have been witnessing shifts in perspective: the importance is now being put on **learning outcome** and not on the **learning input**. In this context the outcome based learning deals fundamentally with the question of what the individual is expected to know or able to do after the completion of a learning experience. This approach to the qualification represents a profound change for the educational institutions. Accountability, comparability and transparency become key issues.

This paradigm shift opens space for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning that leads to the required learning outcome (no matter where and how long the person has "learned"). The recognition of nf/if has been developing for 10 or 15 years in several European countries (France, Portugal, Finland, UK, Ireland) focusing on the question how these learning outcomes can be validated. Now we are in the period of implementation of tools with necessary qualities including credibility, validity and reliability.

European principles for recognition and validation

On European level the principles of the recognition of nf/if learning were adopted in 2004, being now largely accepted. The principles are as follows:

- **Validation must be voluntary**
- **The privacy of individuals should be respected**
- **Equal access and fair treatment should be guaranteed**
- **Systems should contain mechanism for guidance and counselling of individuals**
- **Systems should be underpinned by quality assurance**

- *The process, procedures and criteria for validation must be fair, transparent and underpinned by quality assurance*
- *Systems should respect the legitimate interests of stakeholders and seek a balanced participation*
- *The process of validation must be impartial and avoid conflicts of interest*
- *The professional competences of those who carry out assessments must be assured*

The European Qualification Framework:

- A pillar of the recognition pillar of the recognition is to assess learning outcomes in the formal certificates
- Simplified access to the educational system improves the value of the nf/if
- A 'translation device' for comparing qualification
- Neutral reference point
- System for placing and Positioning of qualification

The EQF is based on 8 levels that are covering the full span of qualifications from end of compulsory school to highest academic and professional qualifications – identifying knowledge, skills and competences needed for each level.

Recommendations for the European debate

Single instruments appear to be less important provided the shift in the thinking focused on the outcome is recognized. What needs to be done is the recognition of the outcome and its articulation. The recognition is related to the development of national educational systems. This represents also one of barriers and challenges. From this emerges the need for the concentration of the activities of Member States, monitoring their way of using the tool, their relationship to the labor market and involvement of volunteering activities.

Volunteering can be related to the different levels of the EQF – but could also find its way into other initiatives such as EUROPASS that provides the possibility to voice "other skills and competences".

Questions, answers and discussion

Several European policy initiatives and programmes can be channels for better recognition of knowledge, skills and competences gained through volunteering: GRUNDTVIG, the EQF and also the programme 'Europe for the citizens'. It will be crucial to follow-up the work at European but also national level in order to ensure that the positive change in paradigms impacts on better recognition of volunteering.

Summary:

- Not a single tool for all, but the possibility of having a framework in the common language
- Strong call for the documentation and reliability
- Call for putting different sectors together as there is the need to be recognised by all actors

4.4 Action Groups

The participants were given these two questions focused in the final action group sessions on the following questions:

- 1) What are your personal conclusions of this seminar? What is it that you take back home and what are the activities/actions you plan to implement as a result? (Individual level)
- 2) What would you like the follow-up of this conference to be and what kind of contribution are you willing to make to this follow-up? (Collective level)

On the individual level the discussion clustered around these items:

The need of a common language

We all are aware there is a profound need of a common language, not only on the international level, but also on the national policy and stakeholder level. We even risk misunderstanding on the local level among the formal, non-formal and informal education institutions. We somehow don't count with the role of universities and find their language and their structure to be too rigid.

"What stroke me is that there was much input from universities but not from other educational institutions."

"It is a real lack of common understanding. Just using the word "competence" creates misunderstandings, it has such a special meaning in the UK."

"What we risk is the creation of a new but a over-simplified language."

Networking and exchanging ideas

There is a strong call for an intensive contact-making. The network of contacts include different countries but also different sectors.

"A key term is brokerage. 'You have the resource we really want'. New cross-sectoral partnership open up new opportunities."

"One conclusion mentioned several times, is that it might be easier to get acceptance for validation of non formal and informal learning if there were not so many different initiatives, so perhaps we should start some kind of networks."

Diversity of tools

The still increasing number of existing tools is a proof of diversity in the field of volunteering. The disadvantage is that the diversity could have negative consequences on recognition. The question is whether this diversity is really needed and whether a unification of tools is 100% possible.

Raising awareness

Business, government, formal education, volunteer centers – and volunteers themselves need to be aware of benefits of volunteering in terms of skills development. While progress has been made, there is still a long way to go. The lack of representatives from other sectors at this conference is a good indicator for this.

Sharing ideas

The ideas communicated at the conference will be disseminated in our local organizations and towards the network partners and member organizations.

Challenges:

"The risk of exclusion thanks to the certificate: exclusion of those who wont reach it. Do we want create more inequality?"

"Identification of competences in the future as that is a formative task, as a process innovation"

"There are similarities on international level, among the countries. A comparative study is preferable."

On the collective level it appeared to be more difficult to create general clusters but a few have emerged though

Willingness to follow in the debate

It seems that debate is moving on and we want to share info and raise awareness on our experiences from the conference. Everyone is interested in some sort of follow up by establishing a kind of dialogue, for example in the form of a partnership website or an online network with monthly alerts. We would appreciate a written report as a conference output and a mailing list of participants.

Role for CEV : Lobbying and bank of good practice

CEV should become the focal point for the promoting within EU policy making tools and instruments for the identification, the assessment and the recognition of knowledge, skills and competences gained through volunteering and is well placed to coordinate further debate.

It will also be useful to have a comprehensive database of portfolios, good examples, experts as well as a glossary of terms promoting a common language. There is rather a need of a toolkit and criteria of good practice than another certificate.

Other suggestions:

"Thematic network is the solution to continue in the discussion."

"A European Volunteer Pass is at this particular point utopia for me as national differences are too profound. However its creation is a riddle that we try to solve, there must be some solution."

"The consolidation of Good Practice is important to do at national level first and then gather at European level. A step-by-step approach could avoid duplicate efforts."

"Database of the funds and skills = the way how to control the anarchy."

"In this conference we have seen the policy makers say: "Tell us! We know your value!"

"A lot of wasted money on regional certificates instead of having been put together and cooperated together for better common initiative."

"We should spread the awareness among volunteers with regards to the European pass."

4.5 Final conclusions – Day II

The audience and the final panel chair, project manager Markus Held from CEV, drew the following conclusions of Day II's discussions:

- The recognition of skills gained through volunteering can be a way of empowerment and raising self-estimation for volunteers – but it contains an inherent risk of being off-putting for volunteers and volunteer organisations if formalisation and professionalization are perceived as being counterproductive to very nature of volunteering.
- There is also a risk of creating new cleavages between volunteers if formal assessment of knowledge, skills and competences was to become in some way obligatory. Volunteering is a means of social inclusion and empowerment of those that experience discrimination and exclusion in the labour market or in formal education. Tools of recognition must not reinforce exclusion and discrimination between "skilled" volunteers and "unskilled" volunteers.
- The voluntary sector needs to remain flexible to take into account different motivations of volunteers: some do want to "get something out" and to seek official recognition of their learning outcome though volunteering, some appreciate an identification of their knowledge skills and competences for their self-awareness and self esteem, and others do not want any of these. Volunteering needs to remain to any of them – and tools of assessment and recognition of skills will have to be designed taking into account different forms of motivation.
- The sector should avoid creating tools and instruments for the sake of doing so. There is a need of further research into expectations of volunteers of such tools and a needs assessment on whether these tools are actually to be taken up by volunteers. Interestingly, very few delegates of the conference themselves had ever filled in a "competence portfolio" – and they suggest that no tool should be developed without a clear demand of a need for it.
- This also applies to the other sectors and receivers of competence portfolios: What is business and formal education institutions' stance towards such tools? Research in Norway for example suggested that "merely" the hairdressers' sector was interested in social competences gained by applicants through volunteering...

- In order to avoid risks and to make tools and instruments of recognition meaningful...
 - ➔ Demand for tools needs to be assessed
 - ➔ Assessment needs to be voluntary
 - ➔ Recognition needs to be mutual
 - ➔ The language needs to be common (among and even within the sectors)
- The difficulty is to design a simple procedure of high quality...
- ...and a tool that focuses on the volunteer as centre of the assessment procedure and the potential receiver (the recruitment officer, the university admission officer, ...)
- There is a clear demand for a common language to be applicable at a national or even European level – and across sectors; on the other hand, the local reality of volunteer centres and volunteers needs to be taken into account.
- A European Volunteer Pass will be difficult to achieve: How can it fit all kinds of volunteer experiences and the knowledge, skills and competences gained?
- A first step could be, however, to extract common criteria of good practice of how such tool should look like. Some criteria of good practice have been mentioned over the two days:
 - ➔ Ownership of process belongs to the volunteer
 - ➔ The process needs to be voluntary
 - ➔ The procedure needs to be simple and accessible
 - ➔ But also observable to ensure validity
 - ➔ Tools should be designed and implemented locally, but fit into a national framework
 - ➔ The receiver of such a document needs to be taken into account – both at the creation and at its implementation
- Lots of efforts could be pooled if a database of good practices as well as a handbook on do's and don'ts existed – possibly across Europe, to avoid re-inventing the wheel, but at the same time facilitating the creation of tools that fit a local reality

- In order to achieve mutual recognition, the different sectors need to actively seek cooperation and dialogue; this seems to be still difficult due to different organisational logics and functioning, different language and different aims of volunteer centres, business and formal education. The experience with MOVE shows, that it is very difficult to bring the sectors together. Moreover, many of the presented tools are still designed only within one sector. But a common debate is a necessary requirement for a successful tool of recognition of volunteers' skills, competences and knowledge.
- There is much reluctance of "European standards" or tools that are designed in top-down process. However, MOVE itself proved that it is enriching to think out of the box, to get inspired by other country's experiences and to work towards a common understanding of concepts and criteria of good practice.

Final plenary' views of participants...

"When I heard about MOVE, I thought we were going to decide on some kind of European portfolio, what made me pessimistic about it. But then I got very inspired by the discussions and the different points of view during the conference and I am glad I am here."

"Several people coming from everywhere and coming to work together on a common issue - that is what MOVE means to me."

"If people from different countries walk in the same direction, the road develops and we are moving somewhere in this debate."

"Let's MOVE on. There is a lot of positive energy within this partnership which we can use to MOVE further the debate."

"People from the volunteer sector are scared of the universities and business – there is still a lot of work to do here."

"Hearing about the final conclusions of delegates makes me confident that this will MOVE on...."

"MOVE will bring movement into my organisation. It was great to gather different sectors and professionals from all over Europe – who are eager to exchange and collaboration on mutual recognition. Thank you for putting this together."

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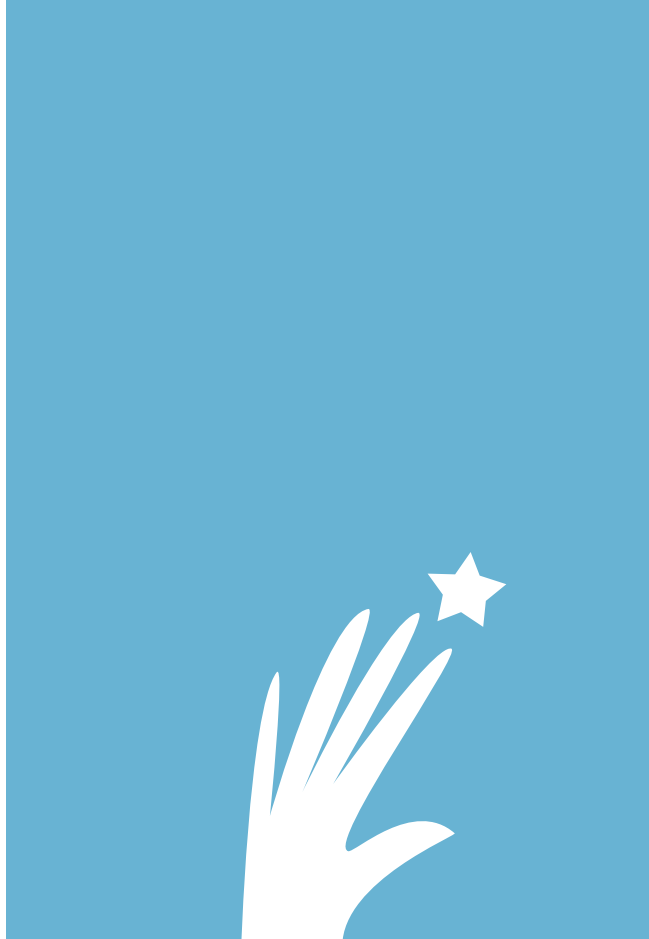
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