



Erasmus+

**Destination**  
evalidation  
FOR VOLUNTEERS

# SHOWCASING VOLUNTEERING SKILLS

Destination eValidation for Volunteers



## DESTEVA PROJECT

[www.validationforvolunteers.eu](http://www.validationforvolunteers.eu)

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# ABOUT PROJECT

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The aim of this project is the visualisation, documentation and recognition of formally, non-formally and informally acquired competences in the field of volunteering. Based on that, the development of an online tool for validation of volunteering competences is made.

## OBJECTIVES:

- collecting, comparing and disseminate information about different NQF and validation tools and their relation to the EQF
- improving access to validation tools for disadvantaged groups by creating a website and an e-book which includes information about different tools and methodologies
- raising awareness of the competences acquired through volunteering and the need for those competences to be validated
- creating an online tool for validation of volunteering competences
- facilitating the recognition of volunteering competences by relevant stakeholders by engaging them in national seminars and transnational conference

Although different target groups can have different motivation for volunteering, depending on their age, gender or life aspirations, as a result they all develop new competences or improve existing ones, gain work experience and boost their personal development. These are competences and experiences which could be used in a variety of different jobs, help achieve new qualifications, build a career or simply gain personal satisfaction. Unfortunately, they are often not properly validated in a way that would be recognized by public institutions, certifying bodies or potential employers. Our partnership aims to develop a methodology for validation of different competences acquired through volunteering.

The EQF was developed to make qualifications more readable, understandable, and comparable all over Europe. Different European countries are developing different NQF and are on different levels of implementation. Finding different validation tools and analyzing the structure of the different tools and their embedment into the NQF and also the EQF will on the one hand show the differences between NQF but on the other hand support the comparison of NQF and gives a chance to include a new European validation tool for volunteers.

Volunteering has always played important role in the many sectors of the European economy and especially in the non-profit sector but for a very long time its contribution was not officially recognized at EU level. In 2012 the role of volunteering in the EU was highlighted in a resolution adopted by the

European Parliament. The resolution stated that "the skills and knowledge gained by volunteers should help them find jobs or be recognized as part of their training".

The European Skills Passport (ESP) was launched as a tool which could bring added value to young people's CVs by officially recognizing the competences gained in voluntary work. The ESP helps document and validate competences by creating electronic portfolio of certificates, attestations and other evidence of competences and qualifications.

The guide „European Guidelines for Validating non-formal and informal learning“ written by European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) should be considered within this project analysis as well as the YouthPass, which is a great example of what can be included within a presentation of an volunteer.

Taking into account the current priority areas of the European Agenda for Adult Learning and in particular Priority 1 - Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality, Member States are invited to focus on "putting in place fully functional systems for validating non-formal and informal learning and promoting their use by adults of all ages and at all qualification levels, as well as by enterprises and other organizations"

The need of this project has a European benefit but also an individual benefit for every country.

**Germany** - Including an online validation tool for volunteers into the national qualifications framework which is not mentioned at the moment.

**Finland** – Exchange experiences about online validation tools and support the NQF with new information.

**Italy** - Analyzing the volunteering field from a research point of view and gain experience in online tools. Improve NQF.

**UK** - Improve the knowledge about online tools and their dissemination through an existing network. Improve NQF, compare different NQF from UK.

**Turkey** – Considering the volunteers competences within an easy used online tool to support them with their personal development.

**Spain** – Getting to know more about validating competences which are learned informal.

**Portugal** – Learn more about validation tools considering informal and non-formal competences.

**Romania** - Considering validation tools for volunteers during a transformation process to improve the NQF.

**Bulgaria** - Improve project management competences and create an online validation tool for volunteers.

# **VOLUNTEERING IN TURKEY**

**by, Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Ankara İl Müdürlüğü**  
**İkbal KARAMAN-Esra BAĞCI SELÇUK**

Volunteerism is a very old tradition and it is the phenomenon seen in every community on earth. Volunteerism, being the efficient way in coping with the development problems, has such a feature it can change the nature and speed of the development, and brings solidarity and the human resource, a great richness, into existence. The volunteer studies make significant contributions to the global matters and to being in full accord of the community. Further, such studies help to reach the opportunities and services easier, to develop the services, to enable a greater participation and to motivate the communities, so it shows the valuable improvements to humanitarian development. Consequently, Volunteer studies wholly contribute to the community to be in accord.

We have been seeing a number of definitions of volunteerism. Volunteerism; in order to increase the quality of life for the ones other than his family or close relatives without expecting any material benefit or profit, or in order to reach a goal considered to be good for the society, it is to supply support to any social effort by feeling by heart and believing it to be true. The term of volunteerism; in order to increase the quality of life for the ones other than his family or close relatives without expecting any material benefit or profit, or in order to reach a goal considered to be good for the society, it is to supply support to any social effort by feeling by heart and believing it to be true.

Volunteerism is the inclusion of the individual to the society. Not only do the individuals take their place in volunteering studies for their own ambitions and benefits, but also for their beliefs and values. From time to time, volunteerism can be a reference point for human beings; then, thanks to this, they can create the changes/transformations in the atmosphere they live. Thus, the ones doing something for others, tomorrow, they could get rewarded what they had done.

A young girl, a university student, volunteering to be an envoy of affection; by saying "I think I am good at communicating with the human beings and especially with the children. Therefore, As much as I can, I'd like to help our friends at the orphanage in Istanbul, our handicapped friends or in any area where help is needed. This may be book reading, studying lessons together, spending time together, having a chat or do some theatrical studies, etc. May I offer help as you recommended. I want to spend some time with them; I at least want to help.'



The ministry of Family and Social Policies pioneered on strengthening the need for human sources by promoting the volunteerism which is still existing in different levels of the society and on how beneficial are these voluntary works and started "the Voluntary Envoy Project in the development of the community" on the 19 December 2012 in order to increase the number of volunteers who will make contribution to the development of the community. This Project has already been carried out simultaneously under the coordination of the wives of the governors in 80 provinces and the governor in 1 province.

The individuals wishing to make contributions to the needy people and humanity have been

described as "Voluntary Envoys<sup>1</sup>" within the scope of the Project. The target group of this Project is composed of mainly the wives of local authorities, the officials in decision making positions and their wives (public institutions, the universities, the private sector), the NGOs and the trade associations, the retired, the young people and students. "The Voluntary Envoy Project in Social Development " consists of different sub-projects which are planned to last for two years. Such sub-projects as

1. Child (Foster Family Service Project)
2. Women and build-up (Vocational Training Project for Women)
3. The Handicapped and Access to Services
4. Quality Aging and adaptation between Generations
5. Family and Poverty,

"Voluntary Envoys' Handbook" for the umbrella project; "The Foster Family Guidebook for Children" for the foster families in relation to "The role of the Voluntary Envoy in the Foster Family" and also in relation to "the Foster Family Service Project", a sub-project, and "Foster Family" introduction books, placards, films and brochures for volunteers were prepared. For the Voluntary Envoy Project and the Foster Family Service Project, two separate websites ([www.gonulecileri.gov.tr](http://www.gonulecileri.gov.tr)) and ([www.koruyucuaille.gov.tr](http://www.koruyucuaille.gov.tr)) were prepared, and besides the related films, all related documents were posted on each website. Further, for the purpose of using the admin panel of the webpage, a person in charge was designated from all provinces and a password was given in order to have Access to the data base in their

province. For the purpose of creating awareness on the daily life regarding the volunteering and enabling more children to have foster families, two intro films prepared in the areas of "The Voluntary Envoys" and "The Foster Family Service" were broadcasted on the national/local TV channels.

As a result of the studies executed between the dates of 19 December 2012-7 June 2013, 516.394 individuals from 81 provinces made an application as a voluntary envoy. Within the given dates 4389 families also made an application as a foster family. At the moment, 999 children were placed at the foster families during the implementation of the Project.

When it was looked at the gender and age distribution for the applicants wishing to be a voluntary envoy, it can be seen that 49.88 % are males and 49.43% are females, both the males and the females had mainly the birth dates of 1990 and onwards. This data shows us that the volunteering studies are now developing under the interest and responsibilities of the younger generations approximately 55% of the voluntary envoys are married. Thus, there isn't a big difference between the point of the participation of the voluntary envoys and the marital status, this state, beyond generally being married or single, represents the ones whose sensitiveness are higher to the social responsibility projects as a reflection of the younger generation. When it looked at the education levels of the applicants wishing to be a voluntary envoy, it was found out that 35.97 % were the graduates from secondary school, 44.06 % were graduates from primary school and approximately 19 % were graduates of bachelor's degree and master's degree.

The individuals expressed their feelings and opinions as voluntary envoys:  
*"Hi, I'm Müberra A. I am a physics teacher at Mehmet Niyazi Altuğ Anatolian High School. Together with my students, we started a project "Will you hold my hand if I extend?" and within the scope of this Project, we collected clothes, toys and stationery materials and delivered them to the needy children. As well as financial aid, we'd like to give moral aid. Can my students and I become a voluntary envoy? If you can inform us about this matter, we will be very pleased." (07.03.2013)*

*"I am a junior student at the Department of Mechanic Engineering of the engineering Faculty of Erciyes University. We have a club "Sharing and Enterprise for Awareness" at our University. The most significant aim of our club is to help creation of awareness on the topics the University students group required, If the topic is on the handicapped, we want to do studies on it, if the topic is on the environment, we want to do studies on it, if the topic is on education, we want to do studies on it, How can I as the head of the club, provide support to the Project of your ministry with my friends? How can we join this project? I'd like to learn about this. We want to provide support to this beautiful project by making studies. Take it easy. Good work." (Yusuf Ö. )*



*“Before the voluntary envoy project, when I looked at the people around, I felt sorry thinking that we were living in a society which was selfish, considering his own interests, avoiding sharing and helping each other, and that we are losing our values day by day. Now I am hopeful. Due to the fact that the university student, the housewife, the state servant and the self-employed people come and ask “Is there anything we can do for the people in trouble, “when I see them do something, I feel confident for the future. Thanks, voluntary envoys. By becoming a voluntary envoy, we woke the fairy godmother sleeping inside us” (Sema Başer Ö. Kırklareli).*

*“One day our teacher said, “Let’s start a campaign of help.” After stating our opinion on this topic, suddenly, this PROJECT occurred to me. Sign in, he said. I was the first one to sign in in the evening of that day. I felt both joy and pleasure having provided help” (Özgür A. Kayseri).*

Results from the field of volunteering showed that there were different obstacles to voluntary activities. The lack of visibility, recognition and appreciation of voluntary activities prevent volunteers from participating in this kind of activities. Hence, they needed an online tool for the visualization, documentation, and recognition of their formally, informally and non-formally acquired competences in the field of volunteering. Thus, we decided to include our volunteers in the national project to the DesTeVa project for validation of their volunteering competences.

Our volunteers in the national project shared their experience in the field of volunteering and this made a big contribution to analyze the different countries’ National Qualification Framework (NQF) and their relation to the European Qualification Framework (EQF). They had an opportunity to examine the various NQF in different countries. Additionally, within the scope of the online tool for validation of volunteering competences, the volunteers could appraise their ability and skills in several voluntary activities. Therefore, the participants validated their volunteering competences and skills by using online tool and they had a certificate of competency as a volunteer which could be used for general employment opportunities. In the light of this information, the DesTeVa project validated and documented the competences of our volunteers in the national project by creating an easy used online tool.

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# VOLUNTEERING IN ITALY

by, *Cooperazione Paesi Emergenti*

**"My one year National Civil Service"**, By *Suheli Chrouda*, Civil Servant at COPE-Cooperazione Paesi Emergenti NGO, Catania, Italy.



My national civil service experience began Sept. 6, 2015. Before starting to expose my experience I would like to explain what the national Civil Service is and how important it is. As the official website write: The National Civil Service operate according to the principles of solidarity, participation, and inclusion of 'social utility in the services provided, also for the benefit of a youth employment enhancement. The areas of intervention of the National Civil Service are related to the areas of: environment, healthcare, education and cultural promotion, artistic and cultural heritage, civil protection, civil service abroad.

Aims of the civil service are: to contribute, as an alternative to (ex-mandatory) military service, to the defence of the homeland (and other countries) with peaceful means and not-violent actions, to facilitate the realization of the constitutional principles of social solidarity, promote solidarity and cooperation at national and international level, with particular regard to the protection of social rights, personal services and the education for peace among the peoples, participate in the preservation and protection of the heritage of the nation, particularly with respect to environmental, historical, artistic, cultural and civil protection, contribute to the civic, social, cultural and professional integration of young people through activities even in institutions and administrations operating abroad.

All these values and aims have been put in practice during my experience. As a graduate in international relations, I had the opportunity to study the world of non-governmental organizations and to know their function in the geopolitical. However, I felt the need to move from words to the facts. I felt that my training needed to be put into practice, to test the theory in reality. So, when the opportunity presented itself, thanks to the civil service project "VOLONTARIA ... MENTE INTERCULTURALE" I decided to accept the challenge and to prove myself. The job/training profile that was proposed to me once selected, has been that of project manager assistant. I have been excited because from the very beginning I understood the great educational potential that this year brought with it.

The first step after the talks and the selection was an intense week of training took place in Rome and held by experts and co-operators who work in the world of cooperation in Italy and abroad, and are part of the FOCSIV

federation of NGO. The topics covered were varied and touched more general topics as well as specific. If the first part of the training was focused more on theory: from the history and evolution of the civil service in Italy to the history of cooperation and its evolution.

The second part was mainly concentrated on technical and practical aspects. Starting from the description of the nature of a non-governmental organization, we then moved on to analyze it in every sector, from communication to development education sector, Fund raising and project management, with the help of experts both technical and academic. We then addressed the issue of group dynamics, through interesting activities supported by a psychologist and then we dealt with, always with him, the resolution of interpersonal conflicts.

No doubt this week gave us useful tools to better carry out our work. Moreover, these moments also have allowed the meeting with people from the most different experiences. This has fostered an intercultural and very important professional exchange that has definitely enriched my knowledge. In this week, followed by another three intense days of special training, carried out by the NGO COPE I work for. Also this training has been important because i knew pretty much the work done by the sectors we talked about in the previous week, how they are interconnected within an organization and the specific responsibilities that each of them possesses.

The communications staff and the sector of fundraising they explained the work they have done and active campaigns, in practice I learned how they are structured and take place the development education projects in the relationship with the schools. Finally, I got to know for the first time to the projects with which I had to work. Within the COPE my position is that of project manager assistant. I work with the project manager in planning, monitoring and evaluation of active projects in the search for calls and then in the formulation of new project ideas. Training occurs daily, through the analysis and the drafting or tracking problems, this also took place thanks to events like the workshop of April at the Department of Political Sciences, at University of Catania, held by Dr. Manuel Manente, project managers and volunteer trainer at the NGO I work for, and sponsored by the master of Science in Global Politics and Euro Mediterranean relations. In this course we've got to separate the project cycle management and to analyze its components, not only through frontal lessons but also active laboratories where we tested our skills. The training course also gave us a participation certificate released by University office, useful to validate the skills acquired. This year has been regulated by a atypical contract (atypical contracts are those contracts not governed by civil law but created ad hoc by a public national and the volunteer to work for a third accredited body, the NGO, according to their specific projects and needs).

In this case the National office for Civil Service signed this kind of contract with 30.523 volunteers in benefit of 15.099 no-profit associations. Thanks to this contract I can validate my year of civil service and present it as a professional experience. I am very happy to have had the possibility of making this experience, and for me, this represent a great example of how a formal and at the same time non formal voluntary competences can be validated.

## WHY VOLUNTEER?

by, *Eco Communities*

Liz James MA, BA(Hons)



Apart from getting people out of the house and into the local community, there are personal benefits. Self esteem is raised, new skills and competences are gained which can be used in other situations. Volunteering gives vital experience in being in a working environment; important if a person has not worked before or for a long period of time.

The UK has a culture that encourages those out of work to volunteer with a view to aiding personal development and, where appropriate to getting work. In London, Eco Communities hosts library services in six buildings. Some of our volunteers would not be able to hold down a job when they come to us. After a few months they report that those supporting them in the community can see an improvement in their ability to function in the community. Volunteering gives others the self confidence to go onto further training or paid work. Some make a niche for themselves and regularly play a vital role in the buildings where they volunteer.

Bettina<sup>1</sup> turned up one day, looking for a few hours volunteering. She gradually increased the hours she offered and ended up being one of our supervisors. At the same time her confidence was increasing and she decided to go travelling before enrolling on a course to learn how to teach English as a foreign language (TEFL) with a view to working in Spain.

Fitz was an experienced IT support worker. He came in regularly to provide IT support in one of the libraries. Over time, his confidence built and he was able

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<sup>1</sup> Real names are not used in this article.



to return to work. However, his first job fell through and he was welcomed back with open arms to volunteer at the library again until he was able to get a permanent job.

On the other hand, Phil close to homelessness. We were able to link him up with an organisation that took him under their wing and provided long term support. He had useful IT skills and an interest in catering. He started providing IT support, but when the café needed new management, he stepped in to run the café and build up a friendly clientele who regularly come in to see him.

All three would have benefitted from being able to use the Destination eValidation (DesTeVa) project's validation tool. It enables a person to think about and reflect on their voluntary work and other work experiences that they have had. Entering this onto the validation tool and having it validated provides a credible example of what they have achieved.

Because their experiences are linked to national and European qualification frameworks (NQF and EQF) and an estimated level is suggested. Therefore the resulting document will be useful across European countries if a person wishes to look for work because it gives the employing organisation an idea of what the interviewee can achieve.

While volunteering the volunteer may receive training and other personal development opportunities which can be put on the validation tool. They can ask their supervisors, colleagues and beneficiaries to validate what they have written – effectively providing a valuable reference.

How volunteering experience is obtained is important. In the UK, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) state that volunteers should complement the work done by paid staff, not replace it. Even better, where volunteers are actively seeking work, organisations should be helping them towards that goal. If a volunteer leaves because they have found paid work then the organisation has succeeded, even though it means they have lost a valued volunteer.

All volunteers could potentially benefit from using the validation tool to explain about their volunteering experience. Now the tool has been developed and tested, it is ready for use. Who do you know who will benefit?

## **INTERVIEWS WITH VOLUNTEERS**

*by, Fundación de la Comunidad Valenciana del Pacto para el Empleo en la ciudad de Valencia, Spain.*

*Raul LINUESA MONTERO*

### *Interview with Emelyne Brühl*

I realized a volunteer work in Guatemala in 2015. I thus worked with two different organizations situated in Guatemala City. One of those organizations aimed at the Promotion of more sustainable consumption mode, particularly regarding food, in Guatemala City and the other one carries out social and educational activities with disadvantaged young people of a slum in Guatemala City and indigenous populations of poor villages close to Antigua.

**In what context did you start the volunteer work? (Age, level of study, employment status)**

I was 24 years old when I started this volunteer work in Guatemala. I studied Political Science and have a master in International relations. Before to start this volunteer work, I was working for an Insurance Broker as an administrative secretary and had an experience working in a Human Right NGO.

**What kind of volunteer work did you do? (short- or long-term volunteer, traineeship, school exchange,...)**

It was a long term volunteer work (5 months).

**Why you decided to become a volunteer?**

I am really interested by North-South relations and International Development issues which was the subject of my minor during my studies. I was curious to discover the reality on the field, after having read a lot about the situation of indigenous people and small farm workers. Moreover, I've always loved travelling and I wanted to discover a new culture and meet new people. Besides, I had been involved in different social movements before leaving and wanted to discover the actions of movements in Guatemala as well as learn more about the challenges encountered by the civil society of region I didn't know much.

**What would be the 3 most important skills you have acquired during your experience?**

- Speaking Spanish
- Autonomy and more self-assured
- Being aware of what means living in a developing country, which is totally different from reading materials on the subject

**At the personal level, what did this experience teach you?**



At personal level, I may say I've met impressive people who are still very important and influential in my current life. It left me time to think about what I wanted to do of my professional life and motivated me even more to intend to achieve those objectives. Living out of my normal context also pushed me out of my comfort zone and obliged me to know me better. After this experience, I feel much more confident about what I'm able to do and more eager to try things I don't know or that would have scared me before. So, I think that thanks to the experience, I'm more self-assured, open-minded, independent and daring.

### **And at professional level?**

This knowledge of Spanish enabled me to get a job in Spain and I think those international experiences, which are plus on my CV.

### **Do you feel more prepared for (re)integrate the labor market after this experience?**

I think I'm better prepared because now I've a clearer idea of what I want or expect of my professional life. Also, I hope that having learned another language will help me to encounter a job in the future. Finally, I feel more autonomous and, as I want to work in International Development, living some months in Guatemala could be a valuable experience to valorize on my resume.

### **Have you received any training before / during your volunteering?**

Yes, I had been trained on team work and intercultural matters and also had to participate to a workshop about international development issues.

### **Did any company / entity valorize your volunteer experience when we hire you?**

Yes, the Belgian Development Agency, although the hiring process is still on process and I'm not sure to be hired.

### **Imagine that your interview is read by a person who is hesitating in volunteering. What would you say to convince him/her?**

It may sound a little clichéd, but I really think that this experience was one of the best of my life and if I had to repeat one experience of my life, it would definitely be this one! I've traveled, discovered marvelous places and met amazing people, I've learned to manage my life on my own, acquired useful skills both for my personal and professional life and it gave me time and space enough to think of what I was expecting of my future life. For those reasons, I feel now much more self-confident, independent and I have the feeling to have a better control on my life.

I would also add that I was terrified before leaving my country and all my close relations, and of course I also encountered some small difficulties,

nothing is perfect, but it was worth it, definitely, and the problems I faced at that time are now subjects of jokes and part of best stories of that adventure.

### *Interview with Carmen Martí Marco*

**In what context did you start the volunteer work? (Age, level of study, employment status)**

31 years old, university master and already working.

**What kind of volunteer work did you do? (short- or long-term volunteer, traineeship, school exchange,...)**

Long-term.

**Why you decided to become a volunteer?**

Because it was something I had always wanted to do. Help other people doing what I can do.

**What would be the 3 most important skills you have acquired during your experience?**

To coordinate a team, to be multitasks, and teamwork.

**Did you receive any training before to start your volunteer work?**

Yes.

**At the personal level, what did this experience teach you?**

It is very satisfying to work on what you like without expecting anything in return. You give the best of yourself, try to make your work shine, and the reward is always greater than for an ordinary work because of the recognition of your work by the organization.

**And professionally?**

Professionally, it allowed me to complete my experience in another company without having to leave your job. In my case, it also meant a shift in my career, because I had the opportunity to join the organization where I worked as a volunteer.

**Do you feel more prepared for (re)integrate the labor market after this experience?**

Yes, totally.

**Did any company / entity valorize your volunteer experience when we hire you?**



I haven't had the opportunity to verify it.

**Imagine that your interview is read by a person who is hesitating in volunteering. What would you say to convince him/her?**

That it only has advantages. Of course it is. That 's an enhancement at professional, personal levels and improves relationship with the other. Everyone should do volunteer work.

# **THE MOTIVATION BEHIND VOLUNTEERING**

*by, Kerigma, Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos*

*Victor Seco and Joana Carvalho*

The reasons why people get into volunteering are as varied as the individuals themselves.

I've always been an enthusiast of the relationship between children, young and elderly people. It seemed a very important contact hypothesis narrowing the generation gap and the passage of testimony. That's why, at some point of my life, I became a volunteer of charitable institution with day center and home care center services. My participation addressed the development of a theater group composed of users of the institution.

The old idea of a volunteer being somebody with lots of time to spare and who is looking for something to do is a long-vanished stereotype. Primarily, people volunteer because they want to help others — it's a valuable and important motive — but in my case the motivation was also to compare the staging, with elderly people, of a small play, I had already written a few years ago, with other experiences already taken place with youth groups.

Volunteers may want to learn new skills, share a skill they already have, or practice a skill in order to be ready for a paid job that may require it. Some are devoted to a particular cause, others have a passionate attachment to their local community, while many just want to do something they love.

Taking on a job for a few hours a week can be an excellent way to build self-esteem and confidence after a period away from work. And everybody benefits from meeting people, making new friends and having new experiences.

Most people get more out of volunteering than they expected. Find out from some of our volunteers what volunteering has meant to them, how they have used the Volunteer Centre and the organizations we work with, and see how volunteering can change your life.

And what can I do with all this experience? Is it possible to recognize those experiences...? The validation of skills to the volunteer is an individual process that can bring innumerable benefits to the person who wants to see validated their skills acquired during the volunteer activity, but also to the organization / institutions that hosting volunteers (or want to host volunteers), if we think that this process may, for example, be part of a process that contributes to the quality of a service inside the organization / institution.

The development of tools or instruments that allow the recognition of skills gained through the volunteering work are important, and it's even more important that these tools should be:

- *Functional* whose function is intended to serve a practical purpose and easier to use;
- *Universal*, capability to include all users;
- *Accessible*, reachable to all users and without any associated costs;
- *Recognized* by all users.

The online tool developed in this project is the instrument a) functional - includes several videos that help the users; b) safe - to access the platform the users should register in advance; c) "individual documentation center" - the person's documents and highlights of the work as a volunteer; d) promotes self-reflection - the person is "invited" to reflect on the skills that have been developed over the completion of a task and how these skills can be useful for the future.

This tool is a way to help people in process of recognition of the competencies gained through the volunteering work...

# WORKING ON THE METHODOLOGY IN DESTEVA

by, *Opintotoiminnan Keskusliitto ry*

*Marion Fields and Hanna Alaniska*

The Finnish partner, Sivis Study Centre, was responsible in the Desteva project for designing the methodology and guidance questions to be used in the validation tool designed in the project. As the study centre has plenty of experience in training volunteers and NGO staff, promoting learning in the voluntary sector and also of its validation, we felt that we could make a good contribution to the project.

As one of the specialists at the study centre is also a registered specialist in competence-based vocational qualifications, we were able to draw on her knowledge on how learning outcomes are described in Finnish vocational qualifications in designing the guidance questions.

We set off from naming individual skills that can be used in many volunteering activities. Our list was relatively exhaustive with over 40 different skills that could be combined in a variety of volunteering activities. The list of skills was combined by doing research into our institution's almost 70 member organisations and how they define their volunteering activities.

We focused a great deal on defining transferrable or 'soft' skills such as team work and time management, as it has been discovered in many studies (e.g. Fields 2005) that these are typical to all kinds of volunteering tasks, regardless of the purpose, size, location and membership of the organisation where the volunteering activity takes place. Organisation-specific learning outcomes, on the other hand, open up a wide variety of topics, as the scope of civil society is very wide. Therefore, we felt it was important to leave open fields for the volunteer to fill in to describe some of the outcomes. The idea was to have a ready-made list of typical learning outcomes (like communications skills) as ticked boxes. This was later on modified so that the volunteer describes the skills herself within a wider competence framework.

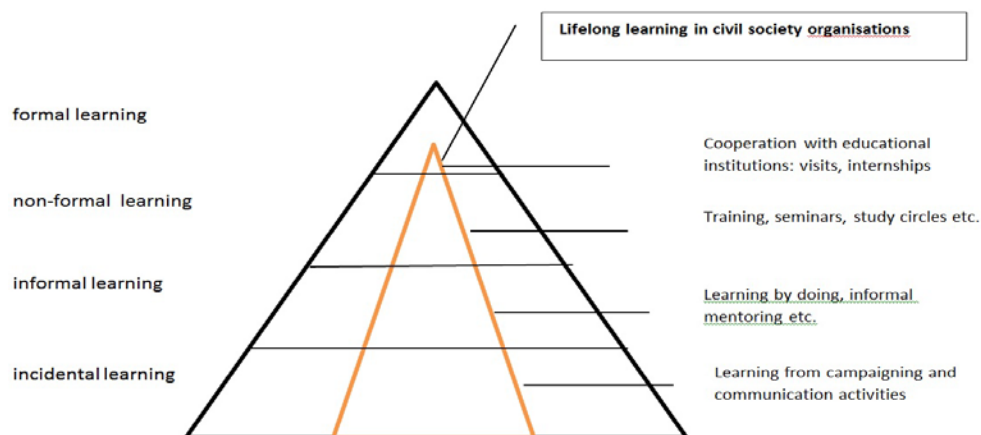
Our aim was to develop a methodology on basis of the structural analysis in WP 1 to guide the volunteers to become aware of the competences they have gained through volunteering. This was a challenging task, as learning outcomes in volunteering are not always easy to define using ready-made competence frameworks.

For example, we quickly became aware that many of the guidance questions we initially designed focused on the skill of doing something as part of a competence, as the learning is often a 'by-product of doing', and has

often been discussed with through the learning by doing concept, which can be traced back to John Dewey. For instance, the notion of skill presented in David Bills's (2004) book the Sociology of Education and Work as an ability to get things done is very well suited to the world of volunteering: people demonstrate their learning outcomes in activities, for instance organising a fundraising event.

In commonly used lifelong learning terms, this element of learning in civil society organisations and other volunteering situations falls mainly in the realm of informal learning (as opposed to formal and non-formal learning), as it involves activity, i.e. learning by doing. However, most volunteers prepare to act in their chosen tasks during courses and other training events, which are intentional educational activities, even though usually not leading to qualifications, and can thusly be named non-formal. In addition, the volunteer observes, shares things and reflects upon their activity, resulting in competence in volunteering – our experience is very close to the holistic model of the volunteering learning process (that embraces all these elements) presented by Cheng (2016). The task itself and a volunteer's motivation play a great role in how a volunteer chooses to learn.

For a typology of learning in the voluntary sector, here's the iceberg model of learning in civil society organisations adapted from Fields (2005) – learning by volunteering can indeed be seen as an iceberg, mainly invisible. The model goes further in separating informal learning into informal (learning by doing, which is usually an internal organizational process) and incidental learning, which is the outcome of, for instance, people learning new things through campaigning activities (reading about organisational issues on social media, being handed leaflets etc.)



Many volunteering activities involve situations where the learning process moves across levels of formality. A great example of this is peer learning. Whereas we often see it through informal learning-by-doing situations where, for example, a more experienced volunteer acts as a mentor to a new one, there are non-formal elements to it as well. In Finland and the Nordic countries the study circle is commonly used within the voluntary sector as a pedagogical approach. Study circles have traditionally been conceived as



intentional educational activities with specified learning outcomes, regular study activities and evaluation taken on by a study centre or other provider under which a circle operates. At the Sivilis Study Centre, study circles always operate under an association or other civil society organisation with volunteers as participants, and the majority of study circles (CA. 75 %) are also facilitated by volunteers.

The model devised in this project has adopted a broad sense of competence (knowledge-skill-attitude), so when the volunteer and his or her assessors consider the skills they have gained, the assumption that guided us is that the knowledge has built up during training, which is often partly theoretical and partly practical, and the rest resulting from more action-oriented learning.

In a previous project managed by the same consortium, Volunteering Validation Highway (<http://vvh.euroinnov.eu/>), it was commonly agreed that in a European context the Key Competences of Lifelong Learning (Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December, 2006), make an apt framework for discussing learning outcomes by volunteering, as they can be matched quite well. Hence, this framework was also agreed as a general frame within which volunteers could describe the individual skills they have acquired. The eight key competences are:

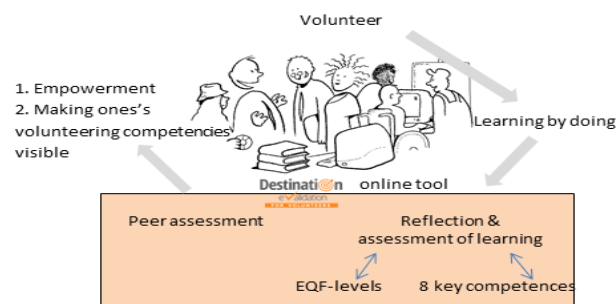
1. communication in the mother tongue
2. communication in foreign languages
3. mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology.
4. digital competence
5. learning to learn
6. social and civic competences
7. sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
8. cultural awareness and expression

When using the tool, the volunteer is able to describe individual skills and competences inside each key competence area (e.g. handling money in fundraising events might fall in both mathematical competence and entrepreneurship, or communication in the mother tongue may include skills like giving directions to other volunteers or writing a press release about a fundraising event).

What was also learned during the previous project through a matching activity where volunteers described their activities and gained competences and their supervisors assessed the level of these skills is that volunteers have a realistic view about what they learn. It also became obvious that the closer the cooperation between the volunteer and the supervisor, the more realistic the assessments. Therefore, it was decided in this project that the questions and tools focus on levels of validation aiming for personal development and the social sphere, instead of formal validation, even though the individual can use the portfolio also for formal accreditation (Destination eValidation 2015).



The idea of the tool is that the volunteer creates a profile in the system and answers guidance questions inside the system to have their competences validated at a certain EQF level (the common decision after initial research was to validate them on levels 2-5). After this, the volunteer chooses at least three peer validators to assess their skills, after which s/he can access a portfolio. The idea is to choose people who have enough knowledge about the volunteer's activities and abilities, as the described skills are usually manifested in the activity itself. This requires a closeness between assessor and volunteer, which cannot be reached if, for instance, a specialist at an educational institution was involved in this kind of validation process. The process can be summed up in this figure:



Due to the predicted success of the tool, it was also agreed that it operates a high level of automatism so that none of the partners have to name a person to validate the volunteers' self-assessments, as it is predicted that many users will come from outside the partner organisations and they need assessors who know them.

Once the volunteer has had an assessment, s/he can use the portfolio for many purposes, for example a job application. The portfolio can also be used as part of a more formal assessment leading to a qualification. Previous projects have taught us that there are plenty of differences between European countries concerning the credibility of validation. Therefore, we have set out to design a tool that serves the volunteer primarily in their personal development but that can be adapted for other purposes, as well.

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Photo: Jarmo Siira/Opintokeskus Sivis (Sivis Study Centre)

# THOUGHTS ABOUT VOLUNTEERING

by, *Societatea De Geografie Din Romania Filiala Suceava*  
*Ruxandra Grigoras*

*Volunteering is the ultimate example of democracy. You vote in elections, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.*

Marjorie Moore

In developing as well as in underdeveloped countries, governments along with NGOs are working to help and develop communities and its people through social programs and campaigns on education, culture, employment, health or human rights.

If one knows which cause wants to volunteer for, it's already the best possible scenario. Otherwise, like in my case, all the volunteering experience could come from very different backgrounds. And as a young volunteer, I strongly believe it is healthy both for your body and spirit to try several volunteering activities.

Volunteering for me means action and interaction at the same time, getting out of your comfort zone, meet the world and everyday challenges along with other different people. Help in building something greater than you, and feel like that little piece of the puzzle which makes the whole picture complete.

From personal experience, I can say that volunteering helps primarily to overcoming shyness, especially when it comes to teenagers or young people who are not too keen to express their views for fear of the reactions of others. On the other hand, one can learn countless skills from communication or even technical ones. Most of the softwares I work with now were learned during my full-time voluntary activities.

From a professional point of view, volunteering helps in networking, by meeting people with whom you work in other areas, people from different parts of the country or world that will become friends that will support your cause when you need. But more important than that, volunteering helps you find yourself a job, and for me it definitely worked in this matter. It is not the same when you go to an employer with a list of things you've done in college with some very good academic results or you just go with the environments and theoretical knowledge.

Moreover, those who are courageous enough and want to level-up on the voluntary field, are able to work on their own start-ups or NGOs. Another method of paying forward, while still showing to people that volunteering does not start from the leadership and ends with public speaking, as most of

the people believe. Actions can be taken by joining a shelter for elders or animals, aiding local institutions or involving in educational or cultural projects.

But as we grow , there is one issue that casts doubts on most of us. The biggest problem of people who want to volunteer, is the lack of time. A busy schedule can greatly reduce the options for those who want to get involved in volunteering. But busy people find solutions for volunteering. Once we say that you have to look carefully non-profit organizations projects and programs. In today's society, you can become a volunteer in countless ways. And even now, after two yers of corporate life, I still manage to be a part-time volunteer.

To sum up, volunteering means to discover yourself in others, because there is only "we" instead of "I". And if your goals and principles in life is to help you by helping others, volunteering is the perfect place to start..



# VOLUNTEERING IN GERMANY

by, *Universitaet Paderborn*

According to the results of the Freiwilligensurvey<sup>2</sup> 2014 by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth more than 40 % of people over 14 years volunteer in Germany. But how do organizations and people wanting to volunteer get together? From where do the organizations take their knowhow about coordinating volunteers or working professionally with volunteers stem?

## Volunteering in Bavaria –

### Introduction of the Landesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement Bayern e.V. (LBE)<sup>3</sup>

To be able to get all important information about volunteering from one central source – regardless of whether it's about finding out where one can volunteer nearby, in which fields volunteering is in demand, whether one is searching for specialized information on the subject, looking to inform oneself about further training opportunities in this field or model projects or as an organization, association or municipality in need of advice on developing volunteering: the Landesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement (LBE) is the contact for Bavaria.

The LBE is currently working together with nine network partners (among these associations of volunteering agencies, of family- or motherhood centres, senior citizen offices, support groups and community foundations) both project related and thematically. Together with its network partners the LBE founded an association (LBE Bayern e.V.) in 2014. Furthermore, there are several additional cooperation partners from most different fields (e.g. Bavarian Landtag, Robert Bosch foundation, Technische Hochschule Nürnberg Georg-Simon-Ohm<sup>4</sup>). At the "round table of civic commitment" by the Bavarian ministry for social affairs, in which the LBE, municipalities, churches and other associations are involved, concepts to promote civic commitment in Bavaria are being developed since 2009. Notable goals include:

- Providing innovative impetus to further develop civic commitment
- Advocating adequate surrounding political conditions and advancement of civic commitment
- Contributing to a contemporary, professional understanding of the coordination of volunteers and their management

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<sup>2</sup> Survey on volunteering

<sup>3</sup> Federal network for civic commitment Bavaria (registered association)

<sup>4</sup> Nuremberg Georg-Simon-Ohm Institute of Technology



- Helping to improve the structures of acknowledgement and of possible applications
- Enabling professional exchange of information and political discussion of development, opportunities and problems of civic commitment and civil society
- Supporting the public presentation and advertisement of civic commitment

The LBE sees its tasks mainly in informing about developments in volunteering, advising organizations and municipalities and provide further training, e.g. „working professionally with volunteers“. This workshop, lasting several days, deals with instruments of volunteer management and picks up issues such as finding fields of application in your own organization, public relations and creating volunteering profiles. However, the actual main task lies ultimately in networking: gathering information, making them available and initiating exchange. To do so, in cooperation with the ministry for social affairs, the volunteering portal [www.ehrenamt.bayern.de](http://www.ehrenamt.bayern.de) has been developed. The site offers for example a search engine for contact points in Bavaria that can filter the results by location or type of institution (e.g senior citizen offices, community foundations). Currently there are roughly 500 contact points listed. In addition, there is a platform where one can search specifically for voluntary tasks; currently there are roughly 2,500 offers across all of Bavaria available. Furthermore, it is possible to inform oneself where volunteering is possible, based on given fields of volunteering. Another important information section is “acknowledging volunteering“. Here, the Volunteer-ID, Volunteer-record and the Bavarian Innovation Award for Volunteering are presented. The Volunteer-ID is supposed to be a token of appreciation, is provided by the state Bavaria in cooperation with the rural and urban districts of Bavaria and offers discounts at different municipal providers and institutions (e.g. pharmacies, museums). The receipt of the Volunteer-ID is subject to specific conditions, such as a minimum amount of hours or the duration of the activity. The Volunteer-record, on the other hand, is a project of the associations of nonstatutory welfare in Bavaria. It consists of a certificate and a supplemental sheet, where the duration and fields of activity are noted alongside with the competences corresponding to these fields. The Bavarian Innovation Award for Volunteering was conferred for the first time 2016 by the Bavarian ministry for social affairs. The guiding theme for the application round was „passionately committed! Enthuse and gain volunteers“.

Recognizing and acknowledging volunteering – that is also the goal of the European online tool, which was developed in the course of the project DesTeVa (Destination e-Validation). Thus, it poses a very good addition to the established forms of acknowledgement. The additional value lies mainly in the fact that not only volunteering is acknowledged, but that the competences acquired in that activity are recorded. Particularly notable is the relating to the European Qualifications Framework. Within a seminar in July 2016, which was organized and hosted by the Landesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches

Engagement Bayern, it was possible to test the online tool on the spot und learn more about the project DesTeVa. Target group for the seminar were the volunteers themselves as well as organizations working with volunteers. Participants could get a first impression of the tool and its possible benefit for themselves as well as testing and applying right away.



Theresa Kreidel (Selbsthilfekoordination Bayern), Wolfgang Krell (Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freiwilligenagenturen und Zentren in Bayern), Claudia Leitzmann (Landesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement Bayern), Susanne Veit (Mütter- und Familienzentren Bayern)



Team Landesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement Bayern

Resources:

<http://www.lbe.bayern.de/>

<http://www.ehrenamtsnachweis.de/index.php?id=206>

# DISSEMINATION OF DESTTEVA PROJECT

by, *Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Ankara İl Müdürlüğü*

*İkbal KARAMAN-Esra BAĞCI SELÇUK*

Türkiye is responsible for the dissemination as a work package in the context of the DesTeVa Project. Dissemination and implementation activities aim at ensuring the highest impact of the Project goals beyond the consortium itself, by achieving the uptake of the approach in other contexts. The dissemination work package focuses on ensuring awareness of the Project, its impact among all the potential stakeholders who might wish to exploit the approach in their own contexts. The exploitation work package focuses on encouraging the external stakeholders to do so by providing them tools, in the other hand, for target users such as competence voluntary skills and activities. And in the other, voluntary organizations are provided with information and examples of use cases that help them to adopt and adapt the methodology to their own contexts. Dissemination involves a wide range of actions which are organized into a coherent strategy and timetable in the dissemination plan to which all partner contribute. This includes regional, national and European actions that have the objective of establishing the presence of the project in the desks of all those who could use its results. The strategy involves three different action lines. The first of these involves the use of conventional media. A graphic identity (logo, colors, fonts etc.) is created and a range of gadget and other articles carrying the project logo is produced for use in all dissemination and exploitation actions to ensure the memorability of the project. The online strategy involves the creation of a workspace or website, to inform about the project, post articles and other media about the project and to provide a continuous stream of news about the project using a blog/email newsletter approach. The project web presence is enhanced by the creation of groups in various social media such as facebook.

(<https://www.facebook.com/validation4volunteers?fref=ts>)

Dissemination actions from DesTeVa aims at communicating project results to wide audience, fostering the adoption of project results and its impact, facilitating the exchange of information and the interaction not only with other projects but also with activities in organizations (NGO, public body or no profit,) academia, public institutions and society as a whole. Furthermore, project results should be brought to training and education activities as well.

DesTeVa dissemination activities include classical items, (e.g., website, <http://validationforvolunteers.eu/> scientific publications, workshops and events), but also go a step further by using new ways of spreading information (e.g., blogs, social networks, and information upload to websites). Project plans a wide and effective dissemination of results as one of the strong components of the project and as one of the overall goals to be achieved. In



parallel to dissemination, exploitation of results plays a major role, namely for the major stakeholders, NGO's as this has a stronger impact towards activities, strategies, service development and policies. Exploitation activities of the DesTeVa consortium will take several forms in order to best fit the research results and exploitation opportunity.

DesTeVa Project carried out with the same partners in the Volunteering Validation Highway (VVH) Project was developed because of the necessity. Within the scope of VVH Project, the video as a dissemination activity about what the volunteering was prepared by the partners and you can access it at the following address: <https://youtu.be/rfyke0aD8Jk>

The purpose of the DesTeVa project is the visualization, documentation and recognition of formally, non-formally and informally acquired competences in the field of volunteering. Collecting, comparing and disseminate about different NQF and validation tools and their relation to the EQF; improving access to validation tools for disadvantaged groups by creating a website and an e-book which includes information about different tools and methodologies; increasing awareness of the competences acquired through volunteering and the need for those competences to be validated; creating an online tool for validation of volunteering competences; facilitating the recognition of volunteering competences by relevant stakeholders by engaging them in national seminars and transnational conference are the aims of this project. Different results are obtained during the project:

1. Structural analysis: within these analyses all partners looked for different online validation tools within their country. Within this analysis the partners embed the validation tool within their NQF.
2. Guideline of validation methodology: The partners looked for validation methodologies within their countries and the best methodologies were chosen and analyzed in detail.
3. Online tool for validation of volunteers' competences: An online tool for validation of volunteering competences was created based on the results and from the structural analysis and the guideline of validation methodology.
4. eBook: e-book was created by the contribution of all partners.

Within the context of the Dissemination activities, the one of the most important outcomes of this project is the e-book lead by Turkey. All partners wrote the articles for the e-book. Totally, there are 16 articles about volunteering, validation tools, methodologies and their connection to the NQF in the e-book. The Turkey partner mentioned the volunteering in Turkey and gave some information about the dissemination tools of Project in the article named as Dissemination Activities. The England partner talked about how they created the validation tool and why people want to be a volunteer. On the other hand, the Finland partner gave some information related to methodology in DesTeVa and validation of learning by

volunteering in practice. While the Italy partner focused on volunteering and process of assessment and improvement of DesTeVa web tool for volunteers' competences validation, the Portugal partner collected and organized the information on tools that are used in the different countries and they also examined why people got into volunteering activities and what their motivation was. Moreover, the Romanian partner shared the thoughts about volunteering and initiative and actions to support the civil society. The Germany partner explained how volunteering in Germany is and DesTeVa Project management. Lastly, the Spain partner presented the results of DesTeVa project and their interviews relate to the volunteering.

To sum up, articles about volunteering, validation tools, methodologies and their connection to the NQF were written by every partner. The articles were collected and organized. Therefore, everyone can access the e-book online.



# PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF DESTEVA WEB TOOL FOR VOLUNTEERS COMPETENCES VALIDATION

*by, Cooperazione Paesi Emergenti*

*Manuele Manente*



The test and assessment process of DESTEVA web tool for volunteers' competences validation has been organised and led by NGO COPE – Cooperazione Paesi Emergenti, from Catania, Italy.

The whole process takes two months, divided in different steps.

In order to test the efficiency of the DESTEVA gateway we have decided to organise an assessment in two different phases, and we called these two moments as Alpha-test (internal) and Beta-test (external). For the Alpha test, each partner organization had to choose three people to test the platform within their organizations, for the Beta test, each organization proposed the platform to ten volunteers.

We collected the results and thanks to the advices received, we have been able to improve the platform. Below we report the synthesis of the survey answers that users have filled after the use of the platform in both the alpha and beta test.

**Alpha test took place during two weeks, 2016, February 8<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>.**

People participated the test were 21. We design an online survey to have feedback from users after experimenting the use of the web-tool. It was structured into two parts: the first part was on the quality of the platform in terms of user-friendly navigation, organization, appearance and comprehensibility of information, and the second part was about the general usefulness of the platform in term of validation of competences.

Therefore, concerning the first part, we asked users to express the degree of their overall satisfaction of the platform. They answered:

- Extrimely satisfied: 11 (52.4%)
- Satisfied: 7 (33.3%)
- Neutral: 3 (14.3%)

In the question of the organization of the information, feedback have been very positive, nevertheless we kept in consideration the negative percentage.

- Extrimely satisfied: 12 (57%)
- Satisfied: 4 (19%)
- Neutral: 4 (19%)
- Dissatisfied: 1 (4.8%)

In the closing survey we decided also to put a box in which was possible to give some comments on possible problems, bugs or suggestions. Fortunately we rieved many results and thanks to some advices we have been able to improve the platform.

Here there are some comments:

*"Reflection questions are too generic, and I suggest to specify more the context in relation to key competences".*

*"Questions are too long and there is little space to answer".*

*"It is possible to send the assesment to only one person? Or is it necessary to send it to three persons?"*

The second part of the questions in the Alpha test was on the usefulness of DESTEVA gateway. In particular, one asked if this gateway can be considered useful to extend job opportunities and so on.

Users have answered:

- Completely useful: 9 (42.9%)
- Useful: 10 (47.6%)
- Neutral: 2 (9.5%)

One of the last questions was: " Do you recommend it to a colleague or a friend?" and the **100%** of the users (21) answered "yes".

From these answers, it seems to us that generally the DESTEVA validation gateway works very well. Nevertheless we have modified some parts after the Alpha test. For example, the integration of more examples so it will be easier to understand and answer the questions. We have changed something on the design including more video tutorial and an introduction explaining the whole context and project aims.

For instance, according to the high-relevance feedback received, we modified the part of the "Reflection", trying to specify the context and better lead the users during his/her own reflection phase about personal competence developed during volunteering.

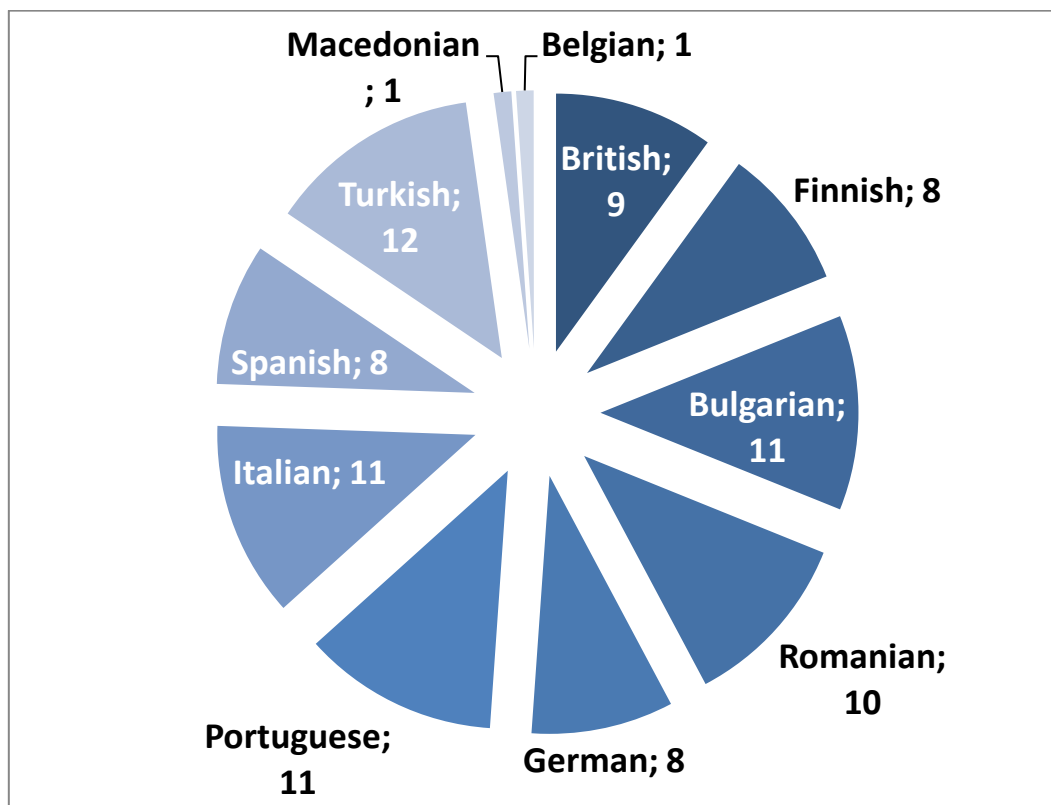
These reviewing processes take part during project fourth meeting in Barcelos (PT), where partners worked in small groups. In particular we added parts to the description of personal competences: communication, in the sense of personal abilities in this field (foreign languages, public speaking etc.); learning to learn( capacity to improve and evaluate, planning time management etc.); entrepreneurship( put idea into practice, leadership, problem solving); ability to use webmedia (communication tool, chat, web pages and blogs); social and civic knowledge (lobbying, campaigning, fundraising); cultural awareness (respect to policy rules, knowledge about religions and cultures) and mathematic skills( ability to collecting money, managing accounts, buying bills).

In addition we have added to the final survey the possibility to specify the nationality of the users, the age and another question related to possible bugs and problems.

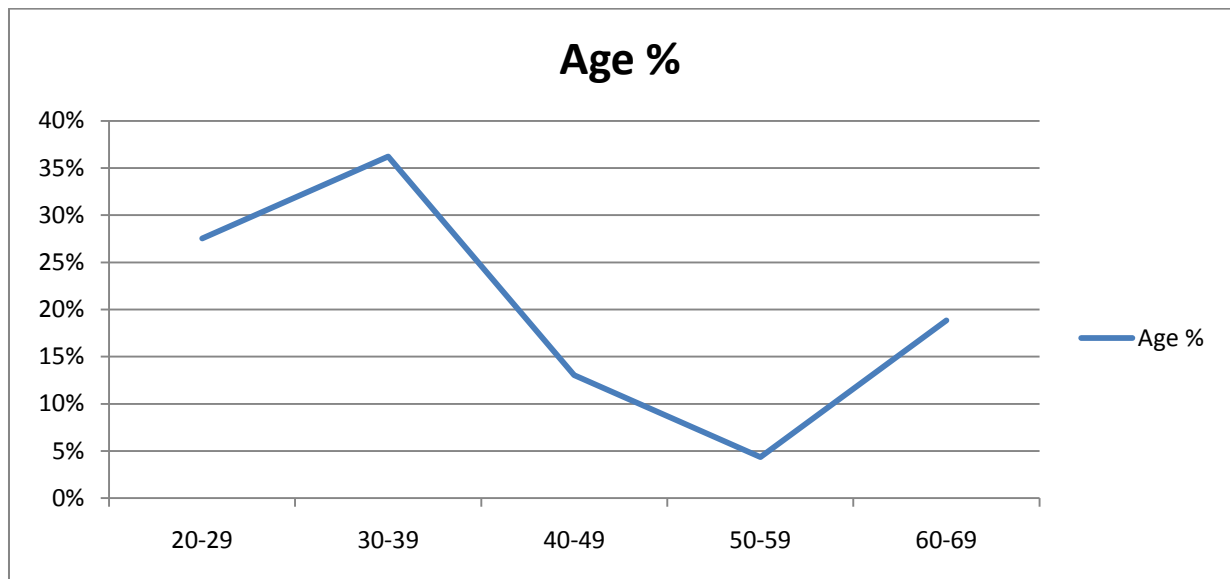
**Beta test took place during four weeks, 2016, May 23<sup>rd</sup> to June 13<sup>th</sup> .**

After a period for the restyling of the gateway we have made the second test, the Beta test, as we mentioned before, to test the platform publicly. In fact, this time participants have been more, at least 90. As already mentioned we have added in the final survey a question about nationality and age of the users. These have been the results:

**N. of feedback received from users per group of nationality:**



% of feedback received from users per group of age:



As you can see, the platform has been used by all countries partners and also by other countries as Bulgaria, Macedonia and Belgium. In addition we have put in the final survey the question on the age of the user so that can be simple for us to analyze the public in terms of age and nationality. Users have been very heterogeneous, in both age (22 to 60) and nationality. This is a sign that the platform has a broad ability to attract public from all over Europe and from different ages.

Questions of the final survey were the same of the alpha test but improved and with something new. Also this time, like the first test, we received very positive feedback. In fact we have collected comments like.

*"User friendly, easy to work and navigate. I hope more employers to check and to use this gateway for potential employee"*

*"I am volunteering for personal motivation, but I think that this tool can be useful for all people that would like to volunteering abroad or, why not, an additional validation useful in job market too."*

*"The tool is very intuitive and easy to use. That's a good attestation for one's competences and experience and could be really helpful in the career development."*

New questions have been appreciated, for example the one related to the video tutorial and on the possible problems and the clarity of the FAQ.



**Do you consider faq clear and complete?**



Yes	63	91.3%
No	6	8.7%

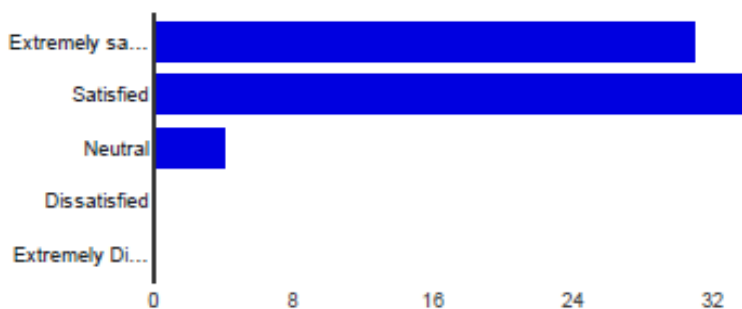
**Do you consider video tutorial clear and complete?**



Yes	66	95.7%
No	3	4.3%

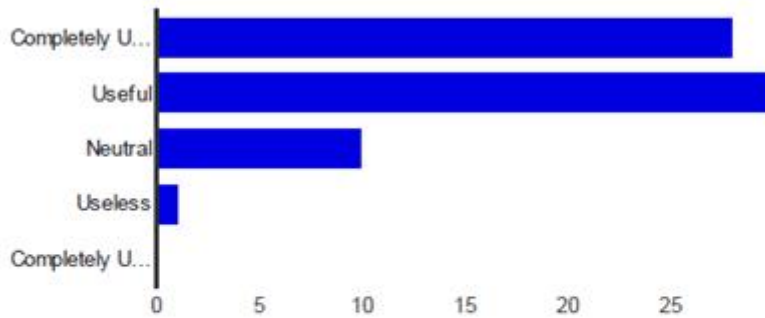
In the evaluation of the Desteva gateway users have shown satisfaction as it result from the final survey:

**Overall satisfaction with the gateway: [Please rate DESTTEVA Validation Gateway based on the following:]**



Extremely satisfied	31	44.9%
Satisfied	34	49.3%
Neutral	4	5.8%
Dissatisfied	0	0%
Extremely Dissatisfied	0	0%

**Do you consider peer review useful for the validation of your competences?**



Completely Useful	28	40.6%
Useful	30	43.5%
Neutral	10	14.5%
Useless	1	1.4%
Completely Useless	0	0%

Once again almost all participants expressed their willingness to recommend the platform to a friend:

**Do you recommend to a colleague or a friend?**



Yes	64	92.8%
No	5	7.2%

All the results showed us that people who used the gateway considered it very useful and more clear after the modifications. For this reason we think that it had no more need of changes and it is ready to work and help volunteers to test their skills, evaluate their competences and being able to present themselves in the labour market in the better way.

We will continue to maintain the final survey at the end of the gateway path because suggestions are always important for us to improve the platform.



The participation and the interest shown to Desteva gateway is a consequence of the centrality that volunteering work has and will continue to have in the future years.

It will become more and more essential use this platform in order transform what is considered a simply volunteering experience in a real skill and work experience.



# **DESTINATION eVALIDATION: HOW WE CREATED THE VALIDATION TOOL**

*by, Eco Communities*

*Liz James MA, BA(Hons)*

The Destination eValidation (DesTeVa) project wanted to find a way to recognise and validate volunteers' informal learning and experiences in a way that they could be used to help a volunteer find employment, either as an unemployed person or as an economic migrant to a new country.

With this in mind, the project had five main outputs:

1. A review of existing validation tools and their structure in relation to the NQF (National Qualifications Framework)
2. The development of a methodology for validation of volunteering experiences
3. The creation of an online tool for validation of volunteering experiences
4. Production of an eBook about volunteering validation tools, methodologies and their connection to the NQF and EQF (European Qualifications Framework)
5. Engaging in stakeholders in seminars and a transnational conference.

The process has taken us two years and we have used a variety of methods to achieve our objectives.

## **Structure analysis**

Work started at the beginning of the project in 2014 and continued into the spring of 2015. Much of the work involved desk research and analysis by the partners in their own countries.

Partners were able to come together at project meetings to share and discuss their findings. Each meeting covered the presentation and review of the work to date and the setting of tasks for the next stage of the output. Sharing and discussing the information researched enabled the partners to see similarities and differences between their own National Qualification Frameworks and with the European Qualification Framework. The research provided theoretical and practical examples for discussion and helped partners to understand how individuals can be impacted differently by a variety of circumstances for the same activity. The process raised issues for clarification, questions about how the work should proceed and enabled new work goals to be

### **Methodology for the validation of volunteering experiences**

Presentation of information at the first meeting in Paderborn about the European Inventory (2010) and European Guidance (2009) set the scene for the start of the second outcome. As with the first outcome, work started at the beginning of the project. It was mainly undertaken by the Finnish partner between partner meetings with contributions from the other partners.

### **Creation of an online tool for validation of volunteering experiences**

Work on the third outcome, was ongoing behind the scenes by the Bulgarian partner, assisted by the other partners. At the third meeting, the Bulgarian partner presented the website and validation tool. This was the first time some of the partners had seen them.

They were examined in detail by the partners and suggestions made about how they could be improved. Having all partners sitting round a table looking at them together was probably the most effective way of fine tuning in a short space of time.

Additionally, it was an opportunity for the Italian partner to present the plan for testing the validation tool, clarifying aspects that were unclear and agreeing, as a group, on the testing strategy.

Each partner tested the validation tool with ten volunteers and fed back the issues that the testing raised so that the validation tool could be refined.

A transnational team of experts reviewed the validation tool and their findings were discussed at the fourth meeting in Portugal. The findings suggested changes and four issues were discussed by the partners;

1. Methodology of the system
2. Clarity of language
3. Didactical reduction
4. Technical problems

and, once agreement was reached, the final work on the tool took place so that the validation tool was ready to be presented to stakeholders.

### **National seminars and transnational conference**

The Spanish partner spoke at the third meeting about the expectations for how the national seminars could be organised, with each partner taking responsibility for their own seminar. It was envisaged that each country should host a dissemination seminar for at least 19 participants drawn from important local stakeholders. The content of the seminars would include:

- An introduction
- Structural analysis
- Guideline for the validation methodology
- Demonstration of the online tool
- Opportunity for reflections and questions

It is hoped to be able to video part of the seminars and interview some of the participants on video to get their reactions to the online tool.

Later, all the partners will come together for their final meeting. As part of the celebrations of the successful completion of the project, a transnational conference will be held to which nominated national representatives will be invited.

Some organisations are already using the tool to enable people without qualifications to explain what they have done as volunteers with the aim of getting paid work. For many European volunteers, use of the validation tool will enable them to present their experiences in a form that is readily understood and linked to the national and European quality frameworks.



# MOTIVATION VIDEOS

*by, Fundación de la Comunidad Valenciana del Pacto para el Empleo en la ciudad de Valencia, Spain.*

*Raul LINUESA MONTERO*

Since Desteva Project is targeting to support the wider volunteering community in the process of validation of all gained competences when volunteering, we have developed different products and events to draw attention of volunteers and trying to raise awareness about the importance of making their competences visible.

In this way, Desteva project has produced a two minutes video in which the volunteer can identify the benefits of validating his/her competences in terms of job opportunities, finding volunteering vacancies abroad and other different positive aspects.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdlkzzHCxZA>

The video has been developed by all partners in accordance with the objectives of the project and shows how a volunteer, called Mark Martinez, finds a job in the labour market through using the on-line tool provided by the website of Desteva:

[www.validationforvolunteers.eu](http://www.validationforvolunteers.eu)

Desteva project is totally committed to disseminate not only all products that have been elaborated during its duration but also creating awareness about the benefits of becoming into a volunteer. So that, Desteva is organizing the National Seminars which are a one day dissemination event taking place once in each country partner in which all products will be presented to the audience.

Finally, a Final Conference will be held in Valencia in September 2016 to introduce all the products and activities developed by Desteva. The partnership will gather at least 100 people with different profiles: policy makers, volunteering associations, volunteers, practitioners working with young unemployed people, partner members and any other stakeholder involved in the volunteering World.

During the final conference, Desteva will organize a Fishbowl session targeting to involve as many participants as possible in the discussion about different topics within the volunteering frame. And finally, a workshop will be developed with different discussion groups to gather all opinions from the participants in the main topics related to the scope of the project: Analysis NQF and EQF, Methodology used by Desteva, Relevance of informal learning in Europe and The role of validation in volunteering.

The main objective of this Final Conference is creating the best possible impact in the volunteering stakeholders. By gathering policy makers with other local and international stakeholders we would like to empower the use of Desteva products and any other kind of tool related to the validation of competences of volunteers to improve the employability and other different opportunities that volunteers could have through showing their competences. In this sense, it is crucial for Desteva that policy makers will get a feed-back directly from volunteers, supervisors, managers of volunteering associations... about the potential direction of the upcoming volunteering policies.

During two years, nine European partners have been working to make easier for volunteers the use of all experiences gained when volunteering. All partners hope that the volunteering community finds useful our job.





# STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

by, Kerigma, Instituto de Inovação e Desenvolvimento Social de Barcelos

Victor Seco and Joana Carvalho

The O1 was led by Portugal with the contribution of all partners (German; Finland; Spain; Italy; UK; Romania and Turkey) the main goal was: review the existing tools in the different countries and their NQF (National Qualification Framework) structure.

An important step in achieving these goals was the collection, comparison and dissemination about different NQF, their relation to the EQF (European Qualification Framework), and about validation tools. In the previous project, Volunteering Validation Highway (VVH), partners looked for the different tools in our countries. In the current project, firstly we have looked for the correspondence between the existing tools and the NQF in the countries. After that we have compared our frameworks with the EQF<sup>5</sup>. Then we have compared the national tools with EQF, if they fitted each other, which one fitted best. Finally, we will take all the good ones and we will make a best practice out of it, which will be reused for our online tool.

As the main tool of Lisbon Declaration strategy about the adaptation of Europe's education and training systems to knowledge-based economy, EQF will establish the connection between the national qualification systems, allowing its comparability, serving as a translation device between different systems and promoting lifelong and life-wide learning, and the mobility of European citizens whether for studying or working.

EQF as an instrument for the promotion of lifelong learning encompasses general and adult education, vocational education and training as well as higher education. It uses 8 reference levels based on Learning Outcomes, statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences or attitudes.

Thus, the development of the document *Level Matrix* shows a description of volunteering skills relating to levels two to five from the European Qualification Framework (EQF). For the development of this level matrix, the consortium used the analysis of several National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) in relation with each other and the EQF as a basis. In addition, the consortium has considered the key competences for lifelong learning adopted by the European Commission and the approach from Rego, Zóximo and Correia (2014) for its development.

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<sup>5</sup> The different national qualification frameworks have been compared with using the structure of: definition of learning outcomes, structure of competence dimension, levels, examples of levels (2 and 5) and correspondence to the EQF.

Four topics were crucial for the development of *Level Matrix*. First, was considered the field of volunteering itself. In the EQF the description 'field of work' / 'field of study' is used. Within this model, voluntary work can be described as a field of work. This in mind, the category 'knowledge' could be, for instance, factual knowledge of volunteering fields in a given country. Secondly, we adapted the modeling of the levels. The EQF and also most of the NQFs analyzed presented the assumptions of 8 levels. The project focuses on the middle levels (step 2-5), because voluntary work cannot be – in the opinion of the consortium – equated (in most cases) with higher education (level 6-8) but often entails more than mere basic skills (level 1). Thirdly, we worked on the linkage between the EQF and the NQFs. A common denominator within the NQFs is the distinction between knowledge, skills and competences or attitudes. These categories are also found in the EQF and were transferred to the model. Finally, we designed the inclusion of the approach from Rego et al.(2014) and the key competences for lifelong learning. That approach, differentiated between three categories, the individual skills, the leadership skills and the relationship skills. All in all, however, the approach focuses more to personal, social and self-regulated skills. Therefore, the linkage to the structure of EQF and NQFs is not clear. So the structure of the NQFs gives the main categories will be used for the final model. Thus, the elements indicated by Rego et al. (2014) were transferred to these categories.

For the purposes of the final model the level 2 was described and main categories knowledge, skills, social competence and autonomy have been used. Then we also considered that the category 'autonomy' should not be used, because it is not available as an extra category in the NQFs or the EQF. The descriptions of the other three categories should be considering autonomy as a kind of separation between the levels. That means, autonomy should not be used as a fourth category but it could help the model to divide the different levels. For example, in level 2 people are "*able to recognize*" different meanings or different cultures; in level 3 people "*develop their first position*" regarding tolerance and in level 5 people have developed a "*high level*" of tolerance.

The **differences between the levels** should consider **autonomy** as a **form of separating the levels** and on the other hand consider the EQF descriptors.

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# VALIDATION OF LEARNING BY VOLUNTEERING IN PRACTICE: OPEN BADGES

*by, Opintotoiminnan Keskusliitto ry*

*Minna Pesonen and Marion Fields*

Learning takes place everywhere all the time- in educational organizations, working life, free time and also in volunteering activities. Sivis Study Centre works with 69 NGOs supporting and developing their educational and volunteering activities. In the last few years we have, in particular, supported the recognition of learning by volunteering using a new digital method, Open Badges. This has not been done systematically before by any other organization here in Finland. Recognition of competencies may motivate volunteers or even help them to get a job or other volunteering position with the evidence of their learning.

Open Badges are digital badges that include descriptions of learning outcomes/achievements and evidence (documents, videos etc.). You can share your badges via social media (e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Google+) or attach them to your cv. Our idea has been to make some skills gained by volunteering visible in this way, and to bring an element of gamification into learning by volunteering.

## **Sivis Study centre doing pioneering work with validating in-formal and non-formal learning**

Sivis Study Centre has pioneered validating learning outcomes and competencies in the field of volunteering and showing them with open badges. Volunteering badges are developed together with the Study Centre's member NGOs. These badges are used to validate skills relating to a particular task, for example chairperson, event organiser, or 'peer champion' (a person who facilitates peer learning or support groups). The first jointly crated badge, chairperson, is now available for all NGOs.

As an adult education centre, we also issue badges for our non-formal learning activities (courses and training programmes) to a) help learners to show their learning outcomes digitally and b) to familiarise NGOs with open badges. This is how we work with badges:

- We work with our members to develop mutual badges to recognise skills gained by volunteering.
- We give badges as recognition for non-formal learning (courses) as a certificate supplement.
- We support and consult our members in developing their own badges
- We participate in national and international networks and projects to promote open badges

### Sivis badge family



Sivis Study Centre has made three kinds of badges so far: badges for non-formal education, volunteering badges (NGO badges) and different kinds of project badges.

As for the volunteering-related badges, the process is the following: We consult our members about badges that are relevant cross organisational borders – this is how we end up creating badges for general activities such as event management. We have had meetings to discuss commonly acceptable criteria, and then continued working on them with shared files. We have started off from the idea of skills that allow the volunteer to complete their tasks successfully, and haven't applied ready-made qualification frameworks. For example, we have asked ourselves and our members what skills a 'peer champion' needs to be good at the task (the common decision was listening skills, social skills, organising skills), and how these can be demonstrated (self-reflection, testimonials from group members,

examples of work). We then describe the badge, and our member NGOs give them to their volunteers who have demonstrated the skills. As an organisation of organisations we are too far from the volunteers to really know how well they work in the field – their own supervisors are much better at doing this.

## **NGOs' and badge earners' perspectives on Open Badges**

To support NGOs and to give them more adequate advice about open badges, Sivis sent two questionnaires to its members about open badges in spring 2016. The first questionnaire was aimed for open badges earners who have received and accepted an open badge from Study Centre's courses or other events in the last three years. (N =81, 20 respondents, ca. 25%) . The second one was sent to NGOs who had participated in the Study Centre's workshops, events and consultation about open badges in 2013-2016 (N=34, 9 respondents, ca. 25%). This target group also included people who have participated in our joint badge creation process for volunteering badges,

### **Open Badge earners perspectives on Open Badges**

Twenty persons from 16 NGOs replied to the open badge earners' questionnaire. Some respondents have earned one badge, some two or three badges (from our courses).

Most of open badge earners saw open badges in a positive way: they felt that it is nice to have recognition of a competence this way. Badges were new things for them, but it seems that only some of them have had the time or interest to share badges via social media or in other ways. Some respondents are still waiting for the right opportunity to show their badges. In this group there was also one respondent who had earned the badge but thought that it is not useful at all. One respondent also said that open badges are not familiar to people. Some respondents felt that accepting process of the badge has been too complicated for them technically. Nevertheless, the reaction has been overwhelmingly positive, which we find encouraging.

Nine persons from different NGOs responded to the second questionnaire. Seven of them were open badge coordinators in their organisations, while others were otherwise involved in creating or issuing badges. Only three out of the nine participating organisations had actually made badges during the last three years. These badges were issued mainly for courses (non-formal learning), but also for volunteering (informal learning) outcomes. Even though some NGOs are still planning how to organise their badge activities, others have already issued badges, some up to 400 earners.

NGO respondents stated that digital badges are useful for volunteers and NGOs because;



- a) in youth organisations the target groups may use badges for studies and getting a job
- b) open badges can show the results of a person's leisure activity
- c) NGOs can show the tacit knowledge that accumulates in their activity
- d) badges enable them to make visible the impact of volunteering and non-formal learning
- e) increases respect for volunteering
- f) it's modern way to reward volunteers who will don't receive any financial compensation for their effort
- g) they motivate earners

Most of the nine NGOs said that they will continue working with badges, but not all of them. Some said that they will follow carefully what happens with badges and decide later on what they may do.

Our member NGOs' representatives had found some challenges in working with badges. For example, some respondents told that they have very limited time and resources for this activity, and on top of this they try to encourage local associations to join in as well, which have hindered them at the beginning. Some respondents felt that open badges are not interesting from their target group's point of view – in this case, their volunteers were elderly with less direct benefit from badges.

Respondents feel a need to have their badges validated by others, such as Sivis Study Centre, and they are interested in benchmarking their badges and creating new ones with other NGOs. They see that this would increase the feasibility of open badges.

### **Lessons learned about Open Badges**

Open badges are a very promising method to validate informal and non-formal learning outcomes and competencies. Technically, they are easy to create and share, but the idea of using open badges is still quite new in the volunteering field, and so organisations need time to adapt. Using them changes the way in which volunteer supervisors and other professionals see the achievements of their volunteers: some organisations that have taken part in our badges activities have said that their way of thinking is already changing even if they haven't started issuing badges.

Creating an open badge should always begin from the earner's point of view: an open badge is meaningful when the earner wants to earn and show it. It is obvious that the transparency of criteria and evidence bring quality to a badge, so our advice to badge creators is this: explain your criteria and evidence clearly and in enough detail and avoid organisational slang.

Another vital quality criterion is to have earners show evidence that actually matches the desired skills outcome. For example, if you measure social skills, don't rely on earners' self-assessment only. There are other ways of displaying skills besides written portfolios. Encourage people to share e.g. video diaries

made with a mobile phone – some volunteers are intimidated by writing exercises, but are really good at demonstrating their skills by using other means.

Discussion and work in the field of open badges is currently very lively badges are being made and shared in NGOs, companies and educational organisations. Sharing experiences and active benchmarking will help to develop work with badges and promoting them. From the badge earners' point of view, clear instructions on how to earn and share the badges are essential



# **SGRSV - INITIATIVE AND ACTIONS TO SUPPORT THE CIVIL SOCIETY**

*by, Societatea De Geografie Din Romania Filiala Suceava  
Raluca Horvat and Magda Brigras*

Worldwide, millions of people are involved each year in different actions and volunteering programs. In Romania, volunteering began to develop after 1990, when international organizations such as the Peace Corps began to place foreign volunteers in our country, and others such as World Vision, Habitat for Humanity and Save the Children began to establish branches in Romania bringing also with them experience in working with volunteers and also their coordination. In the same period, Romanian NGOs began to involve local volunteers in their activities, and in 1997 the first volunteering centers appeared.

The UNO declaration of 2001 as The International Year of Volunteers entailed in the last 10 years a plethora of initiatives in Romania that have shaped the voluntary movement in the country: more and more organizations involving volunteers in an organized way, new volunteering centers in the country, more and more willing volunteers and volunteering actions, especially among young people, a better media coverage, an increasing involvement of organizations in the celebration of National Volunteering Week, galas for the recognition of the volunteers' merits and efforts, the celebration of the International Volunteering Day on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, training courses for volunteers and their coordinators, conferences, specialized publications, Web sites and blogs for finding volunteers and volunteer opportunities, etc..

The main actors of the volunteering movement in Romania are:

- volunteers;
- NGOs and public institutions involving volunteers;
- volunteering centers, that represent the link between volunteers and organizations that need volunteers;
- companies or institutions that support or initiate volunteering projects for their employees;
- European mechanisms such as international volunteer exchange programs, for example the European Voluntary Service.

In Romania volunteering in an organized form (NGO) was developed after 1990 and today it comprises 14 458 organizations.

In this context SGRSV developed its activity to the civil society and it is actively involved in promoting volunteering. As a first step we became partners in a project entitled SOCIETAL, run by the N.G.O. REPER 21 in Bucharest and funded by F.S.E. through P.O.S.D.R.U. program which was aimed to social empowerment of youth from various areas of the country. We engaged and trained a group of 12 volunteers working in the organization in various

projects, in the organization and development of scientific events. In this way young people involved have understood that they can carry out an interesting and useful activity which could help them:

- to gain experience in order to obtain a better job;
- to maintain 'in use' knowledge or skills that might not be used otherwise;
- to develop new knowledge and skills;
- to make new friends;
- to be with their friends who are already volunteers;
- to spend their free time in a useful and funny way;
- to give back something from what they have received from others;
- to make useful contacts;
- to feel useful;
- to be members of a famous organization;
- to make the transition to a new life;
- to test a new career.

The opportunity offered by the partnership through the Grundtvig project "VWH - Volunteering Validation Highway" to develop the concept of volunteering and to open the way for the validation of skills acquired through volunteering has opened a new phase of our work. We engaged new members and we involved them as volunteers in all our actions while creating a broad cooperation with other NGOs in the country (for example "Save the Children", Educators Association from Suceava County, "Living Earth"). The activity in volunteering has continued by working in another European project, DESTINATION E VALIDATION Funded by the European Commission through the Life Long Learning Programme 2014-2016.

The project, focused on the use of media and other online tools for the recognition and validation of volunteers' competences, has been approached from a European perspective focusing on quality (for learning, guidance etc.) and compatibility with the existing European tools for validation, such as Europass and the new European Skills Pass.

The purpose of the project, to promote and to recognize the competences acquired through volunteering as non-formal and informal learning, the documentation and the use of online tools to validate these skills and competences, helps us to develop both our own activity and our partners' activity from the country that will benefit from the results of the project. Thus we meet volunteers, who will benefit from a system of recognition of skills and competences acquired through volunteering both in Romania and at European level, achieving:

- personal development through the completion of formal and informal education;
- employability growth through skills development which are compatible with the labor market;

- quality improvement of work as a volunteer or as a preliminary step to achieve more complex activities of volunteering.

## **2. At organizational level we will achieve:**

- motivation for volunteers and engagement of new volunteers;
- contribution to the professionalization of how to work with volunteers and thus to increase the organization impact in our community;
- an increase of professionalization indicators.

## **3. The volunteering validation for the potential employers:**

- represents a complementary alternative, motivating and effective for professional training;
- increases the motivation for the employees for a company that promotes corporate volunteering;
- creates a clearer idea about the kind of skills that a person has developed as a volunteer.

Conclusions: By involving adults in volunteering activities, it will raise also awareness of validation and cross-cultural understanding of volunteering. The concentration of information on a web page and the use of communication tools provide an opportunity for adult education and for the non-profit sector to develop the concept of volunteering, educating young people in particular to act as volunteers.

SGR Suceava is an organization open to the development of interest in knowledge for young people and adults, to encourage and to promote scientific research, to the development of the youth spirit of competition and initiative, to the development of skills and values among its members and the local community as well as to European collaboration with institutions involved in education.

# Informal Learning and the European Qualification Framework

by, *Universitaet Paderborn*  
*Prof. Dr. Karl-Heinz Gerholz*

The European Qualification Framework (EQF) is a new governance instrument in the European educational area. The aim of the EQF is to compare the different educational systems and qualifications profiles in Europe. Learners and Stakeholders like companies or educational institutions can use the EQF to understand qualifications profiles among different countries in the European Union. Thus, the EQF is an important instrument to make a contribution for the development of an integrated European educational area. This is, for instance, also underlined in the Lisbon declaration of the European Union of 2000: "The (European) Union has today set itself a new strategic goal for the next decade: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world (...). Europe's education and training systems need to adapt both to the demands of the knowledge society and to the need for an improved level and quality of employment."

The EQF functions as a meta-framework or translation tool in the sense, that the National Qualification Frameworks (NQF) are related to the EQF. The European Union describes the idea as follows: "The EQF will relate different countries' national qualifications systems and frameworks together around a common European reference – its eight reference levels. (...) It serves as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe (...) and thus promote lifelong and life-wide learning, and the mobility of European citizens whether for studying or working abroad." (EU 2005)

Learning Outcomes: statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

Knowledge	Skills	Competence
Theoretical or factual knowledge in a given field	Cognitive and practical abilities in a given field	Taking responsibility and being autonomous

Table 1: Structure of the EQF

The EQF can be described about two main characteristics: On the one hand, the EQF is an outcome oriented governance instruments. This means that the results of a learning process – learning outcomes – are described in the EQF. For this, the EQF is structured in eight common European reference levels. On every level, a differentiation between knowledge, skills and competences as



terms to describe the learning outcomes is made. On the other hand, the EQF does not only describe formal learning processes and qualifications, also non-formal and informal learning ways should be documented with the EQF. The validation of non-formal and informal learning is important to describe the whole capabilities of an individual. Here was also the starting point of the Erasmus+-project DesTeVa (Destination eValidation for Volunteers), to describe and document acquired competences in volunteering fields as a typical field for informal learning. The project consortium consisted of nine partners (Germany, Bulgaria, Finland, UK, Italy, Portugal, Rumania, Spain, and Turkey), who are working hand in hand to reach the goal: the development of an online tool for the validation of volunteering competences. Here, the EQF was an adequate framework to compare the acquired competences in volunteering fields in the different European countries.

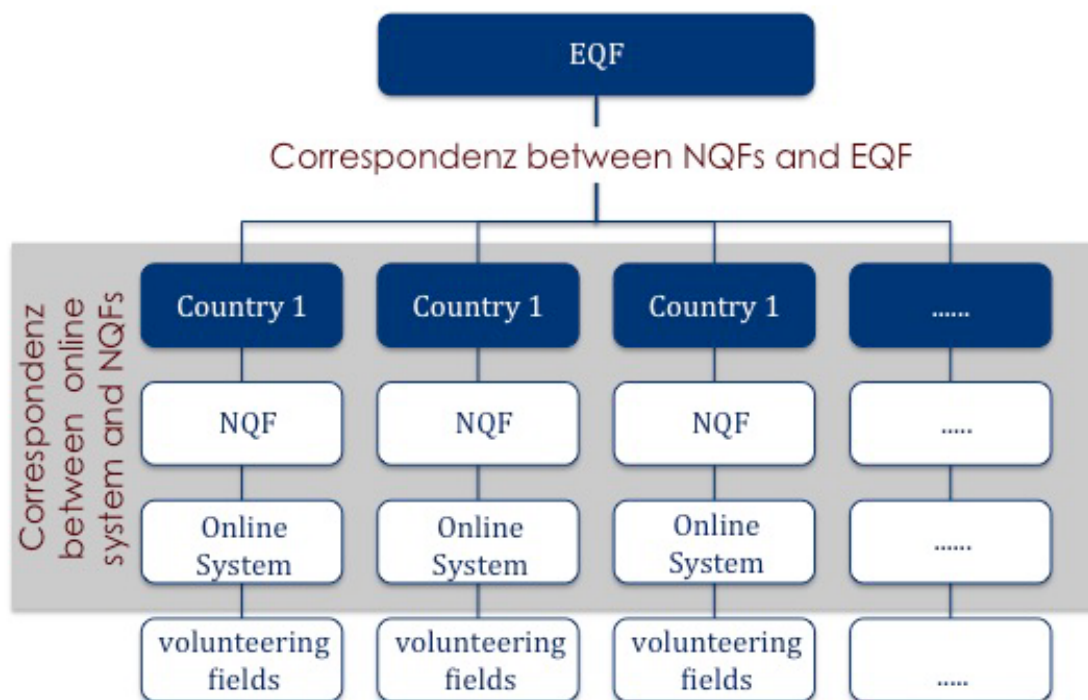


Illustration 1: Logic of the DesTeVa-project

To reach the aim of DesTeVa, it was important to have an individual perspective and not an institutional perspective at the beginning, because the project is not going to target the educational system, but focuses on individual volunteers instead. For this reason, the project focuses on the quadrants from seven up to eleven in the matrix of illustration 2. The matrix offers a structure of the management of learning processes from an institutional perspective as well as from an individual perspective.

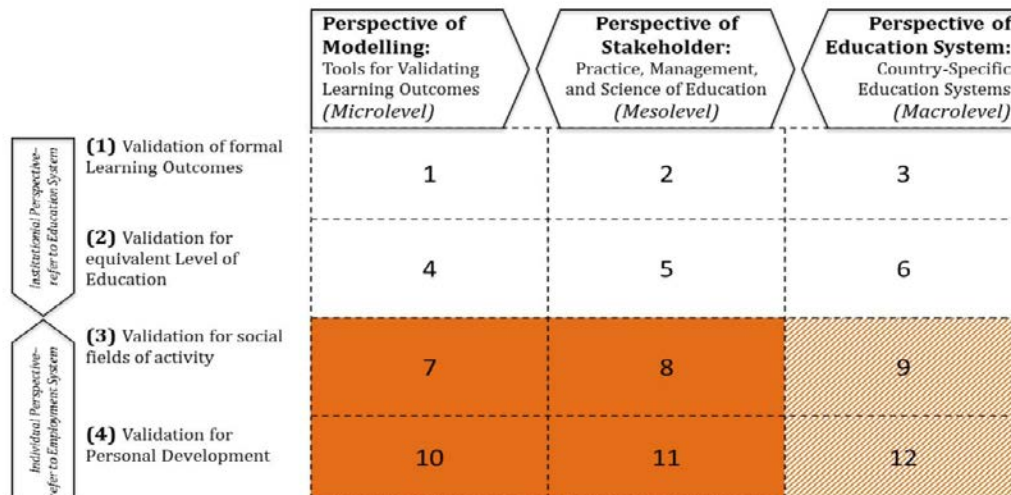


Illustration 2: Structuring of the idea of validation of learning outcomes

Concerning the micro, meso and macro levels, the DesTeVa-project focuses on the first two levels. Within the micro level we shall concentrate on modelling, which means the focus is on the tools or instruments for validating learning outcomes. Here the EQF was the frame to describe and arrange among the 8 levels of the EQF learning outcomes in volunteering fields. The meso level, on the other hand, presents the perspective of the stakeholders, which means that the meso level includes the stakeholders in the education sector and the society. In the context of validation, stakeholders play a role within the meso level, including practitioners, managers, administrators and academics in different institutions. In the project, it was decided to orientate on the European Key Competencies for lifelong learning (i.e. learning to learn, digital competence) to get a content structure for describing learning outcomes in volunteering fields. The European Key Competencies represents a common structure that fits with stakeholders' interests.

All in all, in the DesTeVa project, the EQF as a governance instrument and the European Key Competencies as a structure to describe competences, work as main orientation points to reach the aim: the documentation of learning outcomes from informal learning processes. The result is an online system that is described in this book and is open for all volunteers in Europe on the homepage: [http://validationforvolunteers.eu/online\\_tool](http://validationforvolunteers.eu/online_tool).

The online system was developed among different working packages (see articles from the partners in the DesTeVa consortium in this book) and fits to the EQF. The next step is to find ways to implement the online system in the different countries. This is a question of negotiation with the relevant stakeholders in the field of education and employment. For this, a culture of recognition for acquired competences in volunteering fields and for the relevance of this for the society is needed. Therefore, we hope that, with the online system as a main product of the DesTeVa project, the discussion about validation of informal learning outcomes is ongoing in the respective national countries.

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ONLINE TOOL

by AlphaVision, Bulgaria

Kamen Banov



Web-based applications are widely used in the modern age for variety of reasons. We all see that traditional software moves to the “Cloud” and users can easily access their personal information and use services from a computer or a mobile device which is connected to the internet.

AlphaVision is a company that specialises in the field of web development and joining DESTEVA project was a big honor and also a great challenge. The goal was clear – to create a modern platform that volunteers can use to validate their skills and improve their portfolio.

Our first task was to create the project’s logo and website. Knowing that the first step in finding the best solution starts with evaluating the options, we created several different logo proposals and two website designs. We presented our proposals during the first partner’s meeting in Paderborn, Germany. The discussions were very productive and thanks to all partners’ opinions and suggestions we managed to improve and complete the final designs.

For the beginning of the second partners’ meeting at Helsinki, Finland we were ready with the website development and we were fully focused on the main aim – the online tool for volunteers. We wanted to share our ideas for the user interface and for that purpose we created design mockups. Although not final, the mockups demonstrated the main idea – a light and modern user interface, intuitive and easy to use. The main navigation was placed in a top menu and the left menu was used as secondary navigation. To improve the usability and help the users understand the workflow we placed numbers before every main section – 1. Activities, 2. Reflection, 3. Self-Assessment, 4. Peer-assessment. The tool home page had four panels containing brief information and the status of each section.

After the second meeting our team had a green light to continue with the implementation of the user interface and we had enough information to start working on the database design and the back-end. We’ve used the latest trends in web development to create responsive interface optimised for all popular web browsers and screen sizes including support for mobile devices. For the back-end we built the platform using AlphaVisions’ custom-build

content management solution. To host the platform, we setup a Linux-based server in one of the most advanced data-centers based in Amsterdam.

During the third meeting in Catania, Italy we presented the alpha version of the platform. Our partners were pleased with the progress and the discussion was very creative. We focused on improving the platform and the preparations for the beta test. All partners agreed that we need to create a motivation page and video tutorials.

For the fourth meeting at Barcelos, Portugal the web tool for volunteers was close to its' final stage. At that time we've already received many positive opinions from the beta testers and we discussed the testers' suggestions for improvements. We've also come to the conclusion that to make the tool even more useful we should allow volunteers to download a certificate when their profile is validated.

Between the fourth meeting and the final conference we were focused on finalising the web tool. We improved the registration and the peer-validation processes, we resolved all reported bugs and we added the translations provided by each partner. For the validation certificate we used an open source library to generate a password-protected PDF document. We added "share" option to the web version of the DESTEVA portfolio which allowed volunteers to send it via email or share on the social networks.

The work on the DESTEVA project and the web tool for volunteers was a great experience for our team. We proved that with united efforts organisations from different EU countries can generate a worthy outcome. The final conference in Valencia, Spain put an end to this project but we will make sure the web tool is hosted and available for every volunteer willing to use it.





## LEGAL NOTICE

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