



## VOLUNTEER CAREER GUIDE

2017

Project Partners:



Supported by:



## **Content:**

- 1. Introduction / 1**
- 2. Benefits for the volunteer / 4**
- 3. Benefits for the organization / 5**
- 4. The career guidance training / 6**
- 5. How do employers deal with non-formal learning outcomes / 7**
- 6. Linking learning outcomes to the European Qualifications Framework Levels / 8**
- 7. Glossary of terms / 9**

---

***This booklet supports the Volcar online and face to face training elements and explains validation, recognition, competences, & EQF. It explores the value of validation for volunteers and for volunteering organizations through the framework of career guidance using the CH-Q method and how employers deal with non-formal learning outcomes from experiences such as volunteering.***

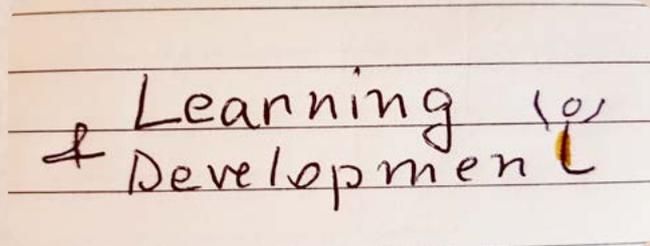
# 1. INTRODUCTION

Volunteering provides a rich learning environment, where motivated people of all ages contribute to society in a way and context that they have freely chosen. At the same time, people can gain skills and competences that have value for their personal and professional development and career. In this way, volunteering offers a unique mixture of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

The value of volunteering for people's employability is already mentioned by the European Commission in their 2012 press release "Volunteering: passport to a job."

However, the results of the public consultation "Towards a European area of skills and qualifications", published by the European Commission on 17 June 2014, show (among other things) that there is lack of guidance for those who want to benefit from these non-formal and informal learning processes through having their learning recognised and validated. Also the link between these processes and the European Qualifications Framework is considered as "weak", which might mean that in the near future these learning outcomes will have less value on the labour market than their potential suggests.

With the "Volunteer career guide", we deliver guidance to volunteers who want to raise their employability. The focus on clear goals will increase their personal development rewarded by the validation and recognition of their learning outcomes from volunteering. We also give them capacity to match these learning outcomes to the European Qualifications Framework levels, which will make them more useful and applicable in job-seeking processes. This will create added value for their volunteering. For volunteering organisations, this will create the opportunity to make volunteering more attractive, and attract new categories of volunteers. Even though it implies more input and investment on the part of the organisations, all the indications suggest that it will be worthwhile.



Learning for  
Development

Translated to the world of volunteering, this means that:

- There should be more attention on guiding and coaching volunteers in their **personal and professional development** (instead of simply developing more tools and methods for recognition and validation of their learning outcomes).
- The starting point of the validation process should be the **individual needs and interests of the volunteer**.
- We should **build bridges between the outcomes of informal and non-formal learning** processes on one side and the European Qualifications Framework on the other side.

In Cedefop's "European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning" it is written: "One of the weaknesses in the validation methods in the voluntary sector is that they are not linked to NQF/EQF, and that good support for the volunteers is missing."



The **"Volunteer career guide"** aims to deliver guidance for volunteers to raise their employability through triple support in the process of getting their learning outcomes validated and recognized. This concept is inspired by the CH-Q method for competence management, with special focus on matching competences that volunteers gained through their volunteering into a structure and understanding that would be useful for their careers.

The "Volunteer career guide" **consists of 3 parts:**

- **Introduction booklet** for volunteers about aspects to have in mind when matching the competencies acquired through volunteering into a useful framework to be relevant for the labour market;
- **Online training** to start to think about how competencies gained and develop through volunteering relate to careers and career aspirations of the volunteers;
- **Face to face training** to learn how to identify competencies gained through volunteering and present that as evidence when searching for career development and progression.

The added value of the VOLCAR project is that, besides being **helpful to enter the labour market**, it can also be **useful to improve personal growth** and apply for developing of a volunteer's career.

## 2. BENEFITS FOR THE VOLUNTEER

Volunteering not only contributes to a volunteer organisation's objectives but also to **volunteer's personal and professional growth**. The volunteers are not always aware that volunteering also benefits themselves as an individual.

The VOLCAR approach combines tools and methodologies that can contribute to increasing their self-awareness.

The volunteers will document their competencies leading to a greater understanding of the voluntary role, an increased motivation within that role and a deeper sense of confidence.

Recognition of competences can be a stepping stone to a paid job, and the "Volunteer career guide" can **help volunteers accumulate a portfolio of accomplishments and skills** that will be useful for job applications and interviews.

In addition to recording competences acquired through volunteering, the "Volunteer career guide" is also a **great way for organisations to demonstrate appreciation for the volunteers**.



### 3. BENEFITS FOR THE ORGANISATION

When a volunteer asks for a reference or certification of their competencies, the organization does not have to develop an extra document. The portfolio developed in the training can take the place of a reference and be developed with the volunteer.

The “**Volunteer career guide**” is a framework to support volunteers. The voluntary organization and the volunteer create an agreement outlining the volunteer responsibilities and roles and the guidance that they will be provided with. Together they also **record the competences and skills** which are important for the role.

The use and offer of this framework can make an organization more attractive to potential volunteers. The explicit attention paid to the development of volunteers also gives **social impact** to the concerning organisations.

## 4. THE CAREER GUIDANCE TRAINING

### Learning objectives

The participants can:

- **Evaluate, establish and document** their skills, competences and qualifications in a systematic and well-organised manner
- Identify important **personal strengths** and core competences
- Draw conclusions for the **further career** from their learning progressions
- Recognise perspectives for their career and **plan realistic steps** for the further personal and professional development
- Sustainably implement the management of the personal competences with **support of the portfolio tools** and under personal responsibility.

### Content:

- **Establish, assess and evidence competences** and other benefits from various areas of activities (training, paid and unpaid work, family), with a special focus on volunteering, verify learning processes, draw conclusions
- Analyse / evaluate the implementation of **the personal targets**

## 5. HOW DO EMPLOYERS DEAL WITH NON-FORMAL LEARNING OUTCOMES



The learning outcomes of volunteering are seldom recognised by employers whereas they could greatly increase (young) people's chances in the labour market. In this context, the Life Long Learning Platform carried out research among employers in all types of sectors (public, private and non-for-profit) to find out about their needs and expectations regarding the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

To better understand their expectations, data was gathered through desk research, interviews and meetings. A survey was also published to put light on employers' perceptions of volunteering and on the tools/ways to better recognise the non-formal and informal learning taking place during this experience. Indeed, in order to develop tools to support a better recognition of non-formal and informal learning, it is crucial to understand the expectations and needs of employers taking into account different sectors.

The survey on recognition of competences gained in volunteering revealed that employers usually value the fact that an applicant was active as a volunteer in the final decision to hire a job applicant.

This optimistic result is supported by the fact that half of the respondents are flexible in allowing employees to take an active role as volunteers by providing flexible hours and authorise absence leave. What is more, the survey shows that the existing tools to support the validation process are mainly unknown. It is crucial to broaden the understanding of these tools for employers and raise awareness of the benefits of volunteering for their businesses or organisations. Regarding volunteers, it is crucial to help them increase their employability skills and understanding about employers' expectations.

Not all employers give the right value to volunteer experience and not all organisations and volunteers are aware of the possible impact of validation and recognition. This shows the importance of more and continuous attention for these topics amongst all target groups.

Source: GR-EAT project

# 6. LINKING LEARNING OUTCOMES TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK LEVELS

## Introduction:

A qualification framework helps to understand the **level of qualifications**, and to **compare qualifications** of volunteers with qualifications on the labour market. **The European Qualifications Framework** is a model for this, all EU member states are expected to develop their National Qualifications Framework, based on /related to the European Qualifications Framework:

Source: the EQUFAS-project

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
responsibility	<b>Responsibility</b>	carries out tasks under supervision	responsible for the tasks	responsible for his own actions - preparing, carrying out and closing	responsible for the full cycle of doing tasks, including reflection	responsible for the full cycle of doing tasks, including reflection on the tasks done by others	responsible for a team or a project	responsible for one or more teams, projects or a company	responsible for the strategy, vision and coordination of programmes
	<b>Autonomy</b>	carries out tasks under supervision after clear explanation	carries out tasks under supervision after clear explanation	carries out tasks autonomously after directed explanation * fully responsible for carrying tasks and shows initiative	carries out tasks autonomously in deliberation	has a mandate to carry out tasks autonomously and shows initiative	independent in the way they think and act * carries out tasks autonomously, entrepreneurial	independent in the way they think and act	fully responsible for carrying tasks and shows initiative
range	<b>Public</b>	I, you and he	students in classroom	colleagues and customers	contacts in the working environment	colleagues and customers	diverse people from layman to specialists	all employees and regional contacts of the company	employees, national contacts of the company, critical customers, government and NGOs
	<b>Timeline</b>	Hours	Days	Weeks	Months	Months	1 to 5 years	5 to 10 years	next generation, 10 to 30 years, historical awareness and being able to deal with the short term and longer term commitment

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
complexity	<b>Tasks</b>	simple sub tasks	simple tasks	several tasks in the same time	schedules - combination of tasks	combines and coordinates tasks	is able to analyze the work that has to be done in several tasks	has an overview of the consequences of his own work and the work of others	has an overview and understands the complexity and diversity of tasks
	<b>Procedures</b>	routine production	basic, explorative, productive	is able to adjust standard procedures	orientation, exploring, productive	is able to adjust standard procedures	develop new procedures	methodically and systematic analyzing	To innovate is a basic strategy
	<b>Knowledge and understanding</b>	knows functional facts	knows facts and is able to understand simple explanations	knows facts and methods and is able to explain	knowledge of facts and methods; applying knowledge in concrete situations	knows facts and methods and is able to explain. Knows facts and methods and is able to apply knowledge in practical situations	knows facts, methods and principles, is able to form arguments to analyze and to deliberate and is able to transfer special knowledge	combine facts, methods and principles and is able to integrate different disciplines to formulate arguments, to analyze and to deliberate...	develops new theories, concepts and models
transfer	<b>Ambiguity</b>	transfer in steady context	transfer in situations with limited changing factors	transfer in situations with several changing factors	transfer related context	transfer in continuously changing context	transfer in a dynamic context	transfer in complex and hard to predict factors	integrates different contexts, making use of temporary... and social-cultural aspects
	<b>Change</b>	changes under supervision	changes after instruction	is able to adjust oneself	is able to adjust the task in changing situations	is able to manage changes and to complete changes	is able to direct changes, to initiate changes, to come with new ideas for changes from practice	is proactive, comes first with new ideas, is able to design changes	is able to develop new concepts and takes the lead in making changes
	<b>Range</b>	is able to transfer within the tasks	is able to transfer within the area of tasks	is able to transfer within the profession	is able to transfer within the sector	is able to transfer in related sectors	is able to transfer between the sector	able to integrate different disciplines	develops from another discipline

## 7. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Source: "European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning" [www.cedefop.eu](http://www.cedefop.eu)

### **Learning**

A process by which an individual assimilates information, ideas & values and thus acquires knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences.

### **Formal learning**

Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (e.g. in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to validation and certification.

### **Non-formal learning**

Learning which is embedded in planned activities not always explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view.

### **Informal learning**

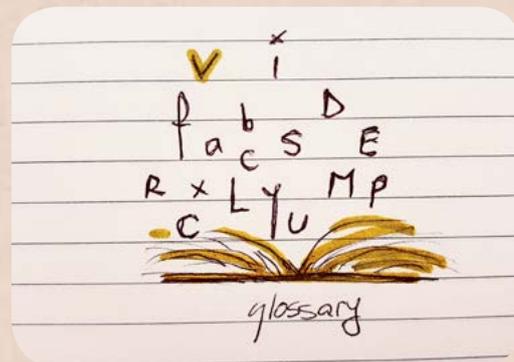
Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is mostly unintentional from the learner's perspective.

### **Learning outcomes**

The set of knowledge, skills and/or competences an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process.

### **Assessment of learning outcomes**

The process of appraising knowledge, skills and/or competences of an individual against predefined criteria, specifying learning methods and expectations. Assessment is typically followed by validation and certification.



### **Recognition of learning outcomes**

- Formal recognition: the process of granting official status to skills and competences
- Through the award of qualifications (certificates, diploma or titles)
- Through the grant of equivalence, credit units or waivers, validation of gained skills and/or competences
- Social recognition: the acknowledgement of the value of skills and/or competences by economic and social stakeholders

### **Validation of learning outcomes**

The confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of a validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification.

### **Certification of learning outcomes**

The process of formally attesting that knowledge, skills and/or competences acquired by an individual have been assessed and validated by a competent body against a predefined standard. Certification results in the issue of a certificate, diploma or title.

### **Certificate (of learning outcomes)**

An official document, issued by an awarding body, which records the achievements of an individual following a standard assessment procedure.

### **Qualifications framework**

An instrument for the development and classification of qualifications (e.g. at national or sectoral level) according to a set of criteria (e.g. using descriptors) applicable to specified levels of learning outcomes.

# COLOPHON

## The “Volunteer career guide” is the result of the Volcar-project. The project partners are:

EDOS Foundation - The Netherlands (project coordinator)

[www.edosfoundation.com](http://www.edosfoundation.com)

BONSAI - local volunteer centre of Dubrovnik – Croatia

[www.udrugabonsai.hr](http://www.udrugabonsai.hr)

European Volunteer Centre – Belgium

<https://www.europeanvolunteercentre.org>

### The project:

- **Builds bridges** between non-formal and informal learning on one side and the European Qualifications Framework on the other side
- **Creates a clear link** between volunteering on one side and professional career guidance on the other side.

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

*Project Partners:*



*Supported by:*

