



Newsletter 2

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What is Job Bridge?

Job Bridge a two-year project funded by the European Programme Erasmus+ and coordinated by the German partner BUPNET GmbH (Bildung und Projekt Netzwerk).

The project is implemented by a consortium of eight partners from seven European countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and UK. The aim is to improve the recognition and the validation of volunteers' competences in the EU by developing a fully-fledged user-centred approach for validating non-formal and informal learning processes in volunteering activities, including a well proven web-based documentation, both for volunteers and the voluntary organisations.

The State-of-play of Validation in the Voluntary sector

In the first project phase the European partners conducted an extensive research combining desk research, two online surveys (one for volunteers, one for organisations hosting volunteers), qualitative interviews and focus groups. The interviews and focus groups also involved employers from the public and private sectors.

Over 1 000 survey answers – 92 individuals involved in the interviews and focus group

Traditionally, volunteering has been classified as “informal education” because there was generally no conscious intention of learning. Nowadays, learning in volunteering is becoming more conscious: Volunteers and organisations establish learning plans, set objectives, and even sometimes assess and certify that learning.

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It is more and more recognised that, in volunteering, you develop the soft and transversal skills most needed in the 21st Century economy and society.

Validation consists of the process of the identification, documentation, assessment and certification of learning and skills. Following stakeholders' push and Member States' **Council Recommendation** (2012), validation of non-formal and informal learning is increasingly seen as a powerful recognition and valorisation tool for competence development. Furthermore, for volunteers acquired competences can be valued in the labour market.



Key findings of the research

- ✚ Most volunteers have learning expectations – they expect to gain competences but less than one out of 10 do it for professional reasons.
- ✚ While most stakeholders agree that recognition is important in the voluntary sector, they do not necessarily think that going through a validation process is needed.
- ✚ Validation in the voluntary sector is perceived to be particularly relevant for young people with little professional experience.
- ✚ Validation brings plenty of benefits making learning visible to the volunteer and to others, building self-awareness and confidence, increased level of motivation, and a sense of achievement. It brings benefits to volunteering organisations: recruitment and retention of volunteers, more effective and quality planning of volunteering experience.
- ✚ Challenges and barriers for implementing validation remain and relate to interest of volunteers and facilitators, resources, support and adequacy of tools.
- ✚ There is no validation tool, instrument or method among respondents that is widely known or used. Youth Pass is the most known one.
- ✚ Most employers do consider positively volunteering experience although they have different expectations for evidence / documentation support.
- ✚ It is not surprising that there is a widespread lack of awareness concerning the available European competence frameworks (e.g. Key Competences) that can be used to develop competences in the voluntary sector.

The report concludes with recommendations for volunteering organisations, validation practitioners, policy-makers as well as for employers. You can download the full report from our website: <https://job-bridge.eu/downloads/>.

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Website

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