



Guidelines

For a Competence-Oriented Learning approach in Volunteering

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Foreword

Volunteering is an important way for people to develop themselves, by building new relationships and gaining a whole set of life skills that can improve their employability. It serves to gather important experience in unknown fields and to develop social, personal and organisational competences.

The common perception is that “hard skills will get you an interview, but you need soft skills to get - and keep - the job”. Unlike so-called “hard skills”, which describe a person’s technical skills and abilities to perform specifically defined tasks for a job, “soft” or “transversal skills” are broadly applicable across job titles and industries. During their volunteering experience, the kind of skills volunteers acquire dominantly are those “soft skills” rather than “job-specific skills” or “basic skills” (numeracy, science, literacy).

The challenge related to soft skills is their recognition and validation. The recognition and validation of volunteers’ competences and experiences is still very limited in the EU. The reason is that the skills volunteers acquire are mostly soft/transversal skills and therefore are in general harder to measure or evaluate and there is little shared knowledge or longitudinal studies around successful assessment or validation methods in this field.

In the context of the 2-year EU-project Job Bridge the partners developed a fully-fledged user-centred approach for validating non-formal and informal learning processes in volunteering activities based on the validation system LEVEL5, including a well proven web-based documentation, both for learners and those supervising them, the “facilitators”. The approach is based on two concepts: The concept of competence-oriented learning and the validation of competence development. Competence-oriented learning is based on the idea that the learners learn by experience and discovery, while validation aims to make this learning visible and give more recognition to the learning process and reveal the learning potential of volunteering settings.

These Guidelines will give guidance on how to implement competence-oriented learning in volunteering and explain how validation of learning can take place and what benefits learners can generate from the validation of their learning progress.

Introduction

These Guidelines are addressed to organisations hosting volunteers (public or private) and the staff working in these organisations such as facilitators of volunteers. More precisely the category “public and private organisations or entities hosting volunteers” can include youth organisations, volunteer-based organisations, NGOs, European networks, companies, public administrations and public bodies.

This guide aims to provide Guidelines to those organisations on how to better enhance and value the competences of volunteers using a competence-oriented learning (COL) approach. It also explains how to support the learning journey of volunteers from the design and implementation to the evaluation, by setting up “learning projects”.

Competence-oriented learning is based on the idea that the volunteers learn by experience and discovery. They are actively involved in the learning situation and learn in cooperation and interaction with others. In a competence-oriented learning approach we focus on improving a person’s actual performance in an actual situation. This means that the volunteers acquire and construct knowledge, check and cross-check their newly constructed ideas with those of others, whereas the facilitators provide appropriate feedback and input needed to help the volunteers raise their level of performance.

Why implement the competence-oriented learning approach and validation with your volunteers?

Implementing the competence-oriented learning approach and validation in volunteering offers many benefits both for the **organisation** and for the **volunteers**.

Benefits for the Organisation

- ✓ Improve the quality of training and support provisions to the volunteers (e.g. by better identifying their individual or collective needs).
- ✓ Improve the recruitment process and the retention of volunteers (e.g. as an outcome of valuing the accomplishments / progress of volunteers).
- ✓ Improve the external reputation of the organisation.
- ✓ Enhance professionalism of the staff and the facilitators of volunteers.
- ✓ Support the organisation to improve its own social impact measurement (both quantitatively and qualitatively).
- ✓ Demonstrate the impact of volunteering programmes to financial donors or other sponsors or partners.

Benefits for the Volunteers

- ✓ Reinforce their competence development e.g. by helping volunteers to set goals and self-assess their progress.
- ✓ Improve competence and learning awareness (identify and recognize key and transversal competences).
- ✓ Strengthen their employability by developing soft skills and building non-formal learning experiences.
- ✓ Fuel their personal development (self-confidence, social inclusion, etc.) and “life skills” (interpersonal, social skills).
- ✓ Increase their feeling of being recognised, with improved self-esteem.

More information on the benefits for volunteers and organisations can be found in (cf Job Bridge [State-of-play study Report](#)).

The Guidelines give details on the different steps and tools needed to set up a learning path for the volunteers.

In these Guidelines, you will...

- get to know how to apply a competence-oriented learning approach to a volunteer’s “learning project”;
- discover practical methods and tools for the recognition and validation of skills and learning outcomes;

- find step-by-step instructions to support the volunteers' competence or learning development from the recruitment procedure, to the end of their mission, in order to facilitate the recognition and validation of their competences.

The Guidelines are complementary to the Job Bridge online training course for facilitators of volunteers. [You can register to the e-learning platform here.](#)

What is a Competence-Oriented Learning approach?

Competence orientation implies a new approach to teaching and learning that differs from the traditional, content-oriented approach. Competence-oriented learning is based on the idea that the learners learn by experience and discovery. The learners are actively involved in the learning situation. They learn best in meaningful contexts, and in co-operation and interaction with others and with their environment.

The **key features** of a Competence-Oriented Learning approach* are:

- **Meaningful contexts:** For learning to take place it is recommended that facilitators/trainers create or look for meaningful contexts in which learners will experience the relevance and the meaning of the competences to be acquired in a natural way.
- **Room for initiative and creativity:** In order to acquire competences it is required that the learners are given room to take initiatives. It is a vital condition since competence implies taking initiatives, being creative, seeking to fulfil one's own ambitions.
- **Constructive learning:** Learning is conceived as a process of constructing one's own knowledge in interaction with one's environment, rather than as a process of absorbing the knowledge others try to transmit.
- **Cooperative, interactive learning (with peers, teachers and other actors):** The basic idea behind competence based learning is to help learners develop and construct their own knowledge and seek ways to make optimal use of other people's competence in their own learning itinerary. This is what social constructivism is about. Co-operation and interaction are both domains of learning, and vehicles of learning.
- **Discovery learning:** Open learning processes require learning that may be characterized as active discovery as opposed to receptive learning. This does not imply that learning content should not be made available and accessible. It means that the way of acquiring this knowledge or these competences, cannot be just a process of providing information, but should always be embedded in a discovery based approach.
- **Reflective learning:** Competence based learning requires also an emphasis on the learning processes as such. By reflecting on one's own needs, motivation, approach, progress, results etc. one develops learning competences/strategies that may be considered meta-competences.
- **Personal learning:** In competence-oriented theories learning is conceived as a process of constructing one's own personal knowledge and competences. Information, knowledge, and strategies only become meaningful for a person if they become an integral part of his/her own personal body of knowledge and competences. In education this implies that learners need to be able to identify with the contexts, the people, the situations and interests which are included in the learning domains involved.

(* based on an article of Jaap van Lakerveld, EU Leonardo project PROVIDE)

“From learning to act towards acting to learn”

If we relate these key features to **volunteering**, we can see that volunteering offers an ideal framework for a competence-oriented approach: volunteering occurs in the real world and involves real people. It requires interaction of the volunteers with the voluntary organisation, the facilitator, other volunteers, and people with or for whom the volunteer works, sponsors, employers etc. Volunteers fulfil tasks that have a purpose and respond

to a need. They have the opportunity to experience different challenging situations, putting into practice their own skills and getting wide experience and new competences.

Voluntary organisations must set the framework that supports volunteers and enables personal growth and learning. This includes ensuring that volunteers are given meaningful tasks and sufficient room for initiative. They should give feedback and motivate volunteers to reflect on their learning and experience.

The process which leads to competence acquisition involves **four basic elements**:

- Motivation
- Room for initiative
- Action
- Reflection

In general, voluntary activities have a defined start and a defined end. Thus, they can ideally be planned as a project - a **learning project**. The learning project is in fact “a project” that includes major phases of a project life cycle such as:

- Planning - designing the learning activity, formulating competences to be improved, preparing reference systems, etc.
- Implementation - application of what has been planned in practice – implementing the volunteering activities.
- Evaluation and Documentation - evidencing what has changed / improved.

You will get more information on learning projects in the next paragraph.

How to implement a learning project for volunteers by integrating a Competence-Oriented Learning approach?

A learning project is a planned activity that leads to concrete outcomes during the volunteering activities. In order to set up a learning project the facilitator and the volunteer together should identify e.g. learning goals, learning activities, time frame, available sources, expected learning outcomes, assessment methods, documentation of learning outcomes, moments for feedback and reflection, etc.

In the following we explain how to set up a learning project with a competence-oriented learning approach and give some tips for a successful learning project. We have identified **three steps for setting up a learning project**:

- **Step 1:** Designing the experience
- **Step 2:** Monitoring the experience
- **Step 3:** Reviewing the mission

Step 1: Designing the experience

Setting appropriate goals is key to the success of any volunteering project. And yet many volunteers might expect the goals to be provided by the organisation rather than connect them to their own values and personal development plans. An active stance taken by the facilitator at the beginning of the project can empower the volunteer to take ownership of their activities and make the best of the available development opportunities.

We include several suggestions on how facilitators can help the volunteer to set up a project aligned with their goals and abilities, so that they can start activities confident that they will lead to the desired result.

Aims

- effective matching between projects and talents;
- building the process around the volunteer's internal drivers;
- selecting the most appropriate role for the volunteer;
- setting up an action plan with defined goals;
- identifying what kind of support will be needed in the future;
- identifying areas of competence development.

What to do

1. Identify volunteer motivation

Human action is driven by values. This is especially the case in volunteering. That is why we suggest looking for the values that motivate a person to donate their time and skills to a volunteering project. These values will likely continue to drive them towards achieving their goals in the future. Values are a great starting point to identify a suitable project for a volunteer.

A facilitator can use many different tools in order to find out what drives a volunteer, such as an unstructured discussion. However, experience suggests that many people have a hard time consciously thinking about values, and having certain reference points is helpful. Using the Moving Motivator cards, [which are available to download for free here](#), provides volunteers with 10 well-defined types of motivation they can use to start thinking about

what brought them to your organisation. We also suggest using some leading questions, available in the Appendix ([Handout 1](#)), to guide the conversation.

2. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the volunteer, and where their developmental potential lies

Understanding one's strengths, limitations and potential is vital to being able to set future goals. If a volunteer knows what they are good at and what they find challenging, they can more easily see how they could be helpful to their team and what activities would be an ineffective use of their time. By identifying where their potential lies, they can select goals that can maximise that potential. This is the reason why it is important to use an instrument that helps the volunteer analyse how their own qualities are likely to affect their future development and the project in which they are volunteering.

Experience suggests that many volunteers, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, tend to focus on their weak points and have a hard time recognising their own potential. They are the ones who need extra support to guide their thoughts in a more constructive direction.

How to analyse the volunteer's qualities? Some of the more self-reflective among them will be able to do it by themselves. For a more diverse group, relying on a unified supporting structure is useful. One option is the traditional SWOT analysis, which balances the strengths and weaknesses of the volunteer. Another option is the PPCO analysis model which allows the volunteer to place a greater emphasis on the potential of the future. The latter has been supplemented with guiding questions and is available in the Appendix ([Handout 2](#)).

3. Set up a concrete Action Plan

A volunteering project is more likely to succeed in its goals if they are well-defined in advance. Effective preparation will make any future activities much easier to carry out. Once the volunteer knows what drives them to action and where their potential lies, they are in a good position to set concrete goals for their project. The more specific and detailed a goal is, the easier will it be for the volunteer to prepare the activities needed to realise it. Furthermore, a volunteer that knows what to do will feel much more secure and motivated and will require less supervision in the future.

The **SMART goal model** (see Appendix, [Handout 3](#)) provides practical questions that will enable the volunteer to make the most of their experience. It is used in many different contexts, so some of the volunteers are likely to have encountered it in the past. Once all of them are familiar with it, they can put it to good use in many aspects of their professional life as well.

4. Help identify the resources the volunteer needs to realise their project

The practical implementation of an action plan requires certain resources. If it turns out that acquiring them is not possible, the plan is unlikely to bear fruit. That is why it is very effective to make the best possible use of existing resources. Sometimes the volunteer possesses skills and abilities that can be a key asset towards achieving their goals but fail to realise this. It is good to start with what already is available, because it produces a feeling of confidence. When fewer external resources are required, it is easier to concentrate on them and make the necessary effort to acquire them.

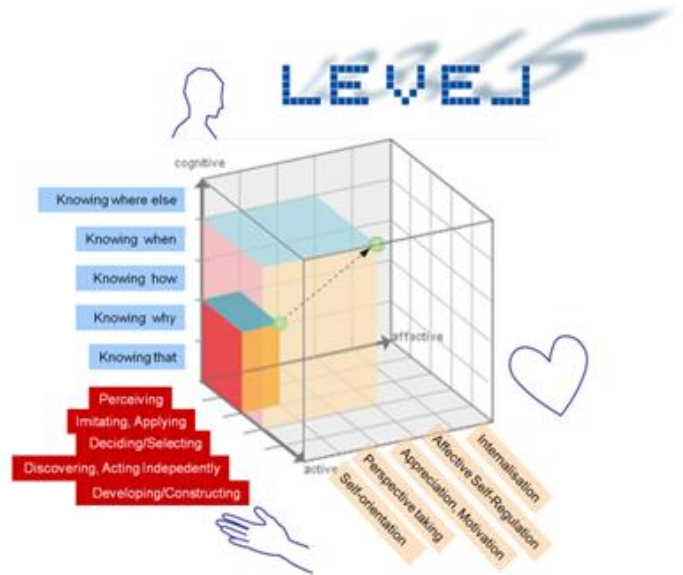
Once again, while more experienced volunteers might be able to perform such analysis by themselves, the majority will benefit from some guiding questions. The Appendix (Handout 4) contains a tool for analysing what kind of internal and external resources are already available to the volunteer and which ones they need to acquire in the future.

5. Identify what competences the volunteer is likely to develop

At the intersection of the volunteer’s motivation, abilities and goals lies the potential for competence development. Once you know in what direction the volunteer would like to develop and what their responsibilities within the volunteering project will include, it is relatively easy to identify the competences they are most likely to improve.

In the framework of the Job Bridge project, we have developed a **Competence Framework consisting of 22 competences** related to volunteering. The Competence Framework is based on the **LEVEL5 validation approach**. In LEVEL5 a competence has three dimensions - that is, learning with head, hand and heart - i.e. the cognitive, the activity and the affective level.

Against this background, each competence is briefly described and contains a list of aspects of what a learner should know, can do and what kind of attitude they should have. In addition, there is a reference system that classifies knowledge, skills and attitudes into **five competence levels**, which you can use as a basis for assessing the competence levels. It is advisable to choose no more than two or three different competences.



While it might help to nudge the volunteer in a certain direction, it is always important to remember that the decision lies with them. Only they can decide in what direction they are going to develop, even if it is not what you as a facilitator see as most relevant.

6. Conduct pre-volunteering competence assessment

Having identified the competences the volunteer is likely to develop, it might be wise to perform an **initial assessment** in order to be able to measure future progress. This might not be practical in all circumstances – sometimes it is better to spend some time exploring the concepts of competence-oriented learning first – see next steps.

If you want to follow the LEVEL5 validation approach you will have to do **two assessments** - LEVEL5 looks at the progress and visualises the competence development within the volunteering activity with regard to the chosen competences. The impact of the volunteering becomes clearly evident, thus enabling the volunteer to recognise the learning outcomes at a cognitive, active and affective level.

What not to do

1. Pursue the organisation’s goals regardless of the volunteer’s potential

Volunteering organisations often find themselves overwhelmed with tasks and too few people to perform them – because of turnover, low volunteer motivation, the changing nature of tasks etc. In these circumstances it is all too often that the facilitators tend to think only of the needs of their organisation and forget that they are working

with people who have their own needs. However, this is a self-defeating strategy, as unless the volunteers are appreciated and given opportunities to learn, they will have no reason to commit to the organisation's goals.

2. Focus on the volunteer's personal goals at the expense of the organisation

Unless you're a career counsellor, your job is not to ensure that the volunteer reaches their full potential. Volunteering is an intersection between the goals of the volunteer and the organisation. The task of the facilitator is to identify those goals so they can best benefit from each other. However, empathy sometimes drives facilitators to identify too closely with the personal aims of the people they are working with. It is wise to remember that your responsibility is to your organisation first. You don't have to accommodate every desire the volunteer has – if the volunteer would like to develop their guitar playing skills, but volunteered to teach the native language to refugees, they will have to focus on their teaching skills.

3. Forget the planning and rush directly into action

There is always work to be done and volunteers are often impatient to leap into action. However, skipping the preparation phase will make further activities much harder to realise. It is much harder to see the bigger picture and to strategize when one is actively engaged in the day-to-day running of a project. The temptation of 'we can always plan later' is great, but that time might never come. So, when designing a volunteer project you should always allocate sufficient time for preparation.

4. Get stuck with the volunteer's deficits

The goal of discovering the volunteer's weaknesses and the resources they lack is to help them know their limitations and avoid certain traps, like unrealistic expectations. However, you should not linger too long on the negative aspects. It is normal to encounter challenges when trying out something new and nobody is perfect from the start. Have patience and allow room for errors and growth.

Step 2: Monitoring the experience

Ensuring follow-up support for the recognition and validation of competences of volunteers meet a number of objectives to ensure the quality of the volunteering experience, including:

- Supporting the volunteers in their commitment;
- Ensuring that volunteers are aware of their progress and the challenges they face;
- Being able to adapt the Competence Framework during the mission, in agreement with the volunteers, according to the objectives they are pursuing.
- Capitalising on the memory of the volunteer's career path and competence development.



What to do

1. Create a volunteer support calendar to plan the time devoted to the recognition and validation of their competences.
 - Inform volunteers and integrate support for the recognition and validation of their competences into their volunteer experience

It is essential that volunteers feel supported and that they are given the opportunity to discuss the difficulties they encounter, their successes and challenges and to see their progress.

From the start of the mission, the facilitator can draw up a calendar of all the interviews or meetings that will be devoted to supporting the recognition and validation of the volunteers' competences. Both will reassure and motivate the volunteer - who knows that time will be devoted to them - and enable the facilitator to organise their support in the process of recognising and validating the competences of the volunteer.

Example of a provisional calendar, which enables the duration of the mission to be calibrated according to the volunteer's planned activities, the deadlines and constraints linked to the project and the host organisation (events, annual closures, etc.) and the time required to support the recognition and validation of competences:

Total duration of the mission:			
Weekly duration (in hours):			
Days of mission:			
	<i>General activities and deadlines within the organisation taking place during the volunteer period (General Assembly, festival, closure of premises, etc.).</i>	<i>Activities planned as part of the mission carried out by the volunteer. Deadlines within the volunteering project (organised activities, preparation of teaching materials, etc.).</i>	<i>Support time for the recognition and validation of the volunteer's competences</i>
Week or month 1			
Week or month 2			
Week or month 3			
Week or month 4			
...			

➤ **Maintain flexibility in the timetable achieved**

Of course, this projection in time must remain adaptable, according to the needs observed, it could be necessary to add interviews or postpone appointments according to the variable timetables of the facilitator and the volunteer.

2. Organise regular interviews with the volunteer to assess their motivation and progress and to be able to adapt the volunteer's mission according to their aspirations and the possibilities of the host organisation

➤ **Preparing the content of the volunteer's support interviews**

During the interviews, different themes should be addressed in order to assess the volunteer's progress. You can use the template for a volunteer support booklet in the **Handout 6**.

You can tell the volunteers the topics of the interview in advance so that they can also prepare themselves.

- **Prepare minutes of the support interviews and make them available to the volunteer**

At the end of each interview, it is important to prepare a written documentation/summary of the interview and to communicate it to the volunteer concerned. If you do not have specific digital tools for monitoring the recognition and validation of your volunteers' competences, you can create an online storage space for each volunteer in which all the reports will be kept. It is important for volunteers to be able to have an overview of their volunteering and development path and therefore to have a space where they can find all the accounts of the time spent on the recognition and validation of their competences.

3. Organise time for self-evaluation or peer review of volunteers

- **Supporting the use of tools and methodologies for self-evaluation or peer review**

Different tools and methodologies exist to carry out a self-assessment of one's competences or a peer review.

Examples of tools or methodologies: Catalogue of assessment tools provided in our Job Bridge training course in Module 4.3 Assessing Learning Outcomes.

X What not to do

1. Losing time by replicating this support for a cohort of volunteers

A volunteering facilitator may be required to manage a group of volunteers, which may be more or less numerous. When this is the case, care must be taken to ensure that the right resources are available so as not to waste time and to guarantee that everyone receives the same quality of support.

2. Not taking care of one's well-being in one's function as a facilitator and not preventing the possibility of burn-out.

Accompanying and monitoring volunteers is an exciting task. The facilitators have to be aware of their own needs, and not neglect them in their ambition to help the volunteers. The facilitator must be careful not to over-invest in a project, which is often time-consuming, in order to protect their well-being and avoid any possibility of burn-out. To help in this process, [some interesting tips can be found in this online PDF](#).

Step 3: Reviewing the mission

The end-of-assignment assessment is particularly important to ensure that the competences acquired by the volunteer are recognised. There are several objectives surrounding this assessment:

- **To evaluate the competence-based learning path:**
 - To document the competences acquired through concrete tasks carried out;
 - Certify the competences acquired by placing volunteers at the heart of the local competence recognition ecosystem (employers, training stakeholders, etc.).

- **Valuing acquired competences:**
 - Make the volunteers' motivation and acquired competences visible; thanks to dedicated tools (LEVEL5 learner's certificate, LEVEL5 Learning Badge "Savvy Volunteer", Youthpass, etc.).
 - Communicating on the competences acquired (via professional networks, knowing how to express yourself orally in interviews, etc.).

What to do

1. Know and master the tools for certifying and valuing the competences acquired by volunteers

Several tools exist for the certification and valorisation of competences acquired during an engagement experience. In Job Bridge we used: the LEVEL5 validation approach which leads to a learner's certificate incl. the LEVEL5 cube that visualises competence developments at cognitive, affective and activity level, and the Job Bridge open badge "Savvy Volunteer". Moreover, there are other tools like Animafac portfolio, the volunteer and skills passport, Open badges, etc. Whatever tool you choose it is essential that you know how these tool work in order to qualitatively manage them.

The training modules offered by the Job Bridge project allow you to familiarise yourself with some of them, which have been tested in several European countries. The main tool that is described in detail is LEVEL5 - you can find a whole module dedicated to LEVEL5, its processes, steps and tools. [You can find the modules on the Job Bridge learning platform.](#)

2. Organise and prepare the final interview

The final interview is structured in advance in order to have an impact on the support provided to the volunteers. It may therefore be useful to have an assessment grid (see handout 5 in appendix).

The final interview will enable the volunteers to document the newly acquired competences, i.e. to explain the tasks successfully carried out in relation to them. You can use the LEVEL5 reference matrix for this purpose: its implementation is explained in the training modules offered by the Job Bridge project.

The record of this assessment should be accessible to the volunteers, with all their competence-based learning paths, either via a specific tool (LEVEL5 certificates, portfolio, open badges, digital platform, etc) or via documentation of each support stage in an online storage space.

3. Explain to volunteers how to communicate their newly acquired competences

The advantage of a path that focuses on developing the competences of volunteers is that they are better able to integrate into the professional world, which makes it essential to work on enhancing the competences acquired through their experience in volunteering. Volunteers must be taught how to advertise this learning and how to make the most of it: the newly acquired competences have a meaning for a future employer or training programme because they are transposable. The final assessment will therefore also be an opportunity to discuss with the volunteers how to highlight these competences, whether in a covering letter, a CV, during an interview or on social networks.

4. Give the volunteer access to the ecosystem of local stakeholders necessary for the realisation of their project for the future.

The facilitator, through the structure to which he/she is committed, has a local network to activate, which can serve the socio-professional integration of the volunteers following their mission. This network must be worked on regularly, i.e. made aware of the competence-oriented learning approach used by the structure and therefore of the benefits of a life-long volunteering experience.

What not to do

1. Use LEVEL5 reference systems as assessment tool

In no situation should the LEVEL5 reference systems be used as assessment tools. They serve as a basis for an assessment but not as an assessment tool. This means that questions for an interview, for example, should be derived from the reference systems. In general, it is important to choose an appropriate method for assessing volunteers' competence development. For volunteers with low language skills, interactive methods can be used that do not require intensive conversation but encourage them to express their learning outcomes in a playful way.

Case Study: ESN (Erasmus Students Network) International office (Brussels, Belgium).

A facilitator of volunteers from ESN joined the Job Bridge training (February 2020), and implemented the pilot in her organisation. It was a relevant training offer as they were in the process of revising their internal validation system. ESN was supported by the Lifelong Learning Platform (LLLP) for the pilot. Together, they co-designed and set up a plan for the learning project implementation following the Job Bridge training in February ([Learning plan template](#)).

The competences that were evaluated using the LEVEL5 methodology were:

Competence-oriented learning (initial assessment, final assessment) and data analysis for the ESN facilitator, and data analysis (see here the [Level 5 reference system for Data Analysis](#)) for the volunteers.

Testimony from the facilitator on adapting LEVEL5 indicators to ESN context:

“For data analysis, we have taken the performance indicators from Job Bridge and have adjusted them to the reality of the organisation, so it reflects better the usual tasks and workload of the volunteers who develop this competence during their volunteering. The competence was added in the ESN competence inventory, as well as the self-assessment survey.”

STEP 1: DESIGNING THE EXPERIENCE

The learning project was co-produced between LLLP and ESN. LLLP listened first to the needs of the volunteering organisations and then helped to design a plan that would answer these needs. The aim of the learning project plan was to define the scope and objectives of the learning project: how are the Job Bridge learning and training materials be transferred from the facilitator to the volunteers; how to use and adapt the LEVEL5 approach to the ESN context; ... For ESN, the aim was to improve the existing validation process in their organisation. Particularly regarding two phases of the VNFIL (Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning) process, the identification and assessment phases. Changes in the process have concerned the recruitment process, follow-up/monitoring during the volunteering and at the end of the volunteering.

The objectives set in the learning plan were:

1. Add a competence-oriented learning dimension to the staff and volunteers' recruitment (e.g. new questions regarding learning expectations, competences development etc.)
2. Knowledge transfer from the facilitator trained in JB training to the volunteers (e.g. through training delivery to volunteers and other staff)
3. More structured competences assessment in ESN (e.g. widen the choice of assessment methods, more regular assessment, initial/ final assessment inspired by Job Bridge training recommendations)
4. Introduce in a sustainable fashion elements of the Job Bridge Methodology in ESN tools, processes, templates (e.g. LEVEL5 methodology)
5. Look at how the new validation-related improvements (developed during the pilots) can also be applied at national/local level in the ESN sections.

The staff/volunteers involved in the pilot were the Event and Project Managers, European Solidarity Corp volunteers, ESN Vice-President and volunteers from ESN “Validation Task Force”.

Monthly meetings between ESN facilitator and LLLP were held during the pilot implementation aiming for an initial, continuous and post assessment of the facilitator’s pilot, following a formative purpose.

STEP 2: MONITOR THE EXPERIENCE

Four meetings between LLLP and ESN facilitators took place between March and July 2020, it was less than expected but it was mostly a consequence of the Covid pandemic. The aim of the meetings was to check on the progress, challenges, and also to keep in touch and that the facilitators feel supported. Due to Covid many activities were cancelled, postponed or transformed and such changes were reflected in the learning project plan, which was revised after each meeting.

LLLP was paying close attention to whether the Job Bridge approach was used by the facilitator and transferred to the volunteers. Of course, distancing had an impact (longer face-to-face training had to be done online and in shorter versions instead). One of the learning plan adaptation was the organisation by ESN of an online training towards more than 80 volunteers in the HR field was held, delivering four workshops (all inspired by Job Bridge training) on issues such as “Competence-Oriented Learning”, “Validation of Volunteer Work” and “Learning to Learn”. This was an opportunity for ESN to introduce these topics to the volunteers on all the levels of the network, as well as start introducing them to the validation process that will take place in the next academic year. The ESN trainers have touched upon the aspects such as performance management, volunteering and labour market, validation tools and methods, etc.

STEP 3: REVIEW THE EXPERIENCE

The review starts from the beginning of a learning project plan! In monitoring ESN’s implementation of the learning plan, continuous observations (thanks to regular meetings with LLLP i.e. interview, online communications) were performed. The learning project plan was updated after each meeting, the objectives and foreseen activities refined etc. Towards the end of the pilot, ESN introduced its own monitoring system to volunteers, with the first test in August when it sent the first skill survey after the revision initiated earlier this year. It is a survey that ESN volunteers fill when they join (recruitment), after a few months (mid-term evaluation), and at the end of their volunteering (post). The survey aims to help volunteers reflect on their skills progress. Altogether, 77 volunteers from 22 countries started their self-assessment in August!

Monitoring in this pilot was complemented by a [learning diary](#), interviews, group talks, and peer-to-peer feedback.

“The Job Bridge methodology inspired us to create a first competence inventory for the entire organisation (over 15.000 volunteers) and consciously implement competence-oriented learning. This will also be an added value to the training plan and creating new learning opportunities and environments, as well as assessing and validating the competences volunteers acquire and develop.” ESN facilitator.

Main results and recommendations:

- **Integration of LEVEL5 methodology into ESN’s HR documents:** The ESN facilitator conducted a HR mapping of the skills related to the position at the International office. This “ESN Skills Dictionary” has been used to communicate the Job Bridge project to the entire network, as material for workshops on the topic

competence-oriented learning delivered to the volunteers in the HR field and to complete the competence inventory, inspired by the LEVEL5 inventory.

- **Monitoring starts from the recruitment of the volunteer to the end of the volunteering.** It is recommended to add questions about competences and learning expectations already in the application form (or during the interview). It is ideal to also include a midterm evaluation as a stepping block for a formative assessment of volunteers' learning progress.
- **Provide internal guidance to facilitators, staff and volunteers on how to implement or be part of the competence-oriented learning approach** by drafting and adapting documents (eg in ESN, they created their own guidance for the volunteers).
- **The learning outcomes of the Job Bridge training and the materials provided played a key role and can support facilitators in raising awareness and building capacity of volunteers and other facilitators** in the validation and competence-oriented learning approach.
- **Learning diaries** can be a good self-reflective tool to record the tasks and activities continuously, a light version can be recommended for volunteers, also facilitators can find it interesting too, if they also want to monitor their own competence development.
- **HR mapping of the roles and tasks internal to the organisation** can be useful, for instance, for volunteering positions in HR, Finances, Communication, IT and Events and/or projects.
- **Peer to peer feedback** between volunteers themselves has often proved to be very valuable when conducting an evaluation (formative and summative alike).
- When managing a large number of volunteers, or for quantitative purposes (eg showing social impact of volunteering), **large-scale survey on skills can be a cost-effective solution** to assess large cohorts of volunteers' competence development.

Conclusion

In Job Bridge the partners have applied in about 28 learning projects led by 18 facilitators the LEVEL5 approach in different settings with around 190 volunteers. The experience of these pilot projects are reflected in the Guidelines at hand. The full European piloting report can be downloaded from the [Job Bridge website](#). The partners conclude that validation in the voluntary sector is very relevant for people with little work experience. For them it is particularly useful because it significantly increases their "employability" (chances in the labour market) as they can prove their competences. Going through a validation process can better help them to assess the skills they have developed, especially transversal skills, in a way that cannot be achieved in formal education.

We hope that this has made you curious and that you would like to try out our approach to competence-oriented learning and validation in voluntary service. We recommend that you log in to our [Job Bridge learning platform](#) to get an overview of our approach and all the tools. In combination with our Guidelines, there is nothing then to stop you from implementing the approach!

Appendices

Handout 1

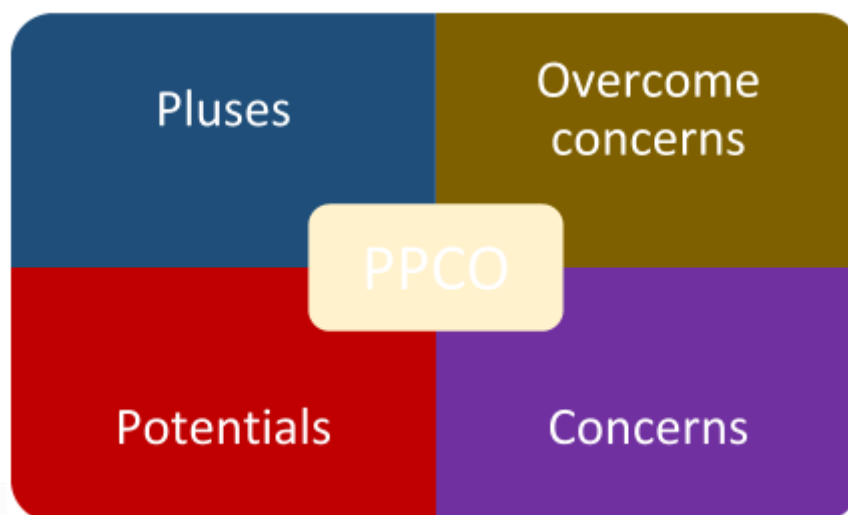
Moving Motivators

In front of you, you see 10 cards which represent various motivational factors. Please choose three of the most important motivational factors for you and elaborate on why you chose them.

- Choose three motivational factors, which are the most important for you. Why did you choose these specific ones?
- May you share with me what your own understanding of each of the three motivational factors is? What aspects do your chosen motivational factors include within themselves?
- What role do the motivational factors you have chosen play in your day-to-day activities as a volunteer? In what ways do you recognise them in the tasks that you perform?
- How are the three factors you have chosen connected with your own individual goals for personal growth?

Handout 2

Personal PPCO Analysis – Pluses, Potentials, Concerns, Overcome Concerns



Pluses

What do you do exceptionally well?

What strong traits do others identify in you?

Which trait are you most proud of and why?

Potentials

Which opportunities are opening up to you?

In what areas are you more advantaged in than others?

How can you transform your strengths into opportunities?

Concerns

Which areas may harm your development?

What could potentially get in your way of the realisation of your assets?

Which of your fears have the potential to expose your weaknesses?

Overcome concerns

What have you done in the past in order to deal with similar problems?

Where could you gain experience in order to overcome certain fears?

Can you turn your fears into a resource for positive change?

Handout 3

SMART goal-setting

Please use the SMART method and order to set a goal and analyse it. Use the following guiding questions:

Specific – What goal is it exactly that you want to reach? Why? How will you do this? With whom/with what?

Measurable – How will you measure your progress? How will you determine that you have gained progress towards completing your goal? Which steps must be taken in order to reach your set goal?

Attainable – How and under what circumstances does the achievement of your goal depend on yourself? What other resources and which other people will be necessary in order to help you achieve your goal?

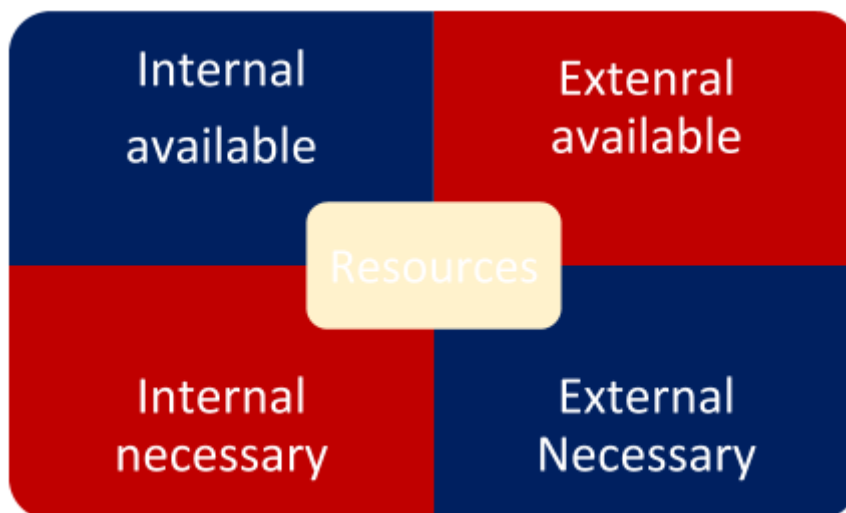
Relevant – Why is this goal the right one for you? Why is this goal worth achieving, and why now?

Time-based – When do you plan on completing the goal?

And the most important thing: the goal must be positive!

Handout 4

Resource Analysis



Internally available resources

- What knowledge and qualifications do you have? Do you have a certificate or diploma in a certain field?
- What do your friends/colleagues think are your strongest assets?

Necessary internal resources

- Are there more specific skills that you must develop in order to successfully handle your desired activities?
- Which activities/informational channels/trainings may you attend in order to gain the required skills/knowledge/qualifications necessary in order for you to reach your goals?

Externally available resources

- Is there anyone that you ask for advice in your life during difficult times?
- Who would you be able to work with on the causes that are important for you?

Necessary external resources

- Where/from who could you seek out additional support in order for you to be able to have support during the process of achieving your goals?
- Are there people or organisations that work in a way that is similar to your goals? What would you be able to achieve together with them?

Handout 5

Grid for maintenance and evaluation of competences - end of mission

VOLUNTEER:

Name:	
First Name:	
Address:	
Date of birth:	
Phone:	
Mail:	

PROFESSIONAL PROJECT:

Description:

EXPERIENCES:

<i>February to September</i>	Civic Service - ___ months volunteer-contract Mission:



TRAINING

PRACTICES / HOBBIES

Handout 6

	First individual interview					Second individual interview					Third individual Interview				
	Date : __/__/__					Date : __/__/__					Date : __/__/__				
	Very Good	Good	Fair – to be worked on	Sufficient	Situation not encountered	Very Good	Good	Fair – to be worked on	Sufficient	Situation not encountered	Very Good	Good	Fair – to be worked on	Sufficient	Situation not encountered
General Involvement															
Motivation															
Availability															
Punctuality															
Sense of public service															
Respect of others, tolerance															
Compliance with instructions															
Team integration															
Sense of responsibility															
Autonomy															

Knowing the missions																			
Knowledge (theoretical knowledge, to be adapted to the mission)																			
Pathologies related to old age and ageing																			
Specific psychological disorders in the elderly																			
Specific needs of the elderly (sleep, diet...)																			
Rights of the elderly																			
New devices, actors and relays concerned																			
Human body and mobility capacities																			
Knowing how to be (behaviour)																			

Relational (perception, listening, communication) with regard to the public, families and partners																			
Confidence																			
Non-verbal communication																			
Needs assessment and perception																			
Working in consultation																			
Having a positive attitude and valuing others																			
Respect for old age																			
Know-how (technical skills)																			
Organisation and animation of adapted activities																			
Discussion on topics of daily life																			

Accompaniment during field trips														
Set up actions adapted to the means														
Transmit and retransmit information														
Discretion														
Basics of computer science														
French proficiency														

Handout 7

Type of competences identifiable on the project	Not completed	Apprenticeship	Mastery	Confirmed
One recapitulates the skills acquired and positions him-/herself				
Adaptation skills				
Adapting to different working environments (places, contexts, nature of the project...)				

<i>Concrete example:</i>				
Adapting to different audiences				
<i>Concrete example:</i>				
Adapting to situations (flexibility, availability, reactivity...)				
<i>Concrete example:</i>				
Being autonomous in the missions entrusted				
<i>Concrete example:</i>				
Organisational and technical skills				
Understanding the partner's objectives and needs				
Setting goals				
Planning project activities (task distribution...)				
Respecting instructions, deadlines and values				
Respecting deadlines				
Respecting values				
Respecting the rules of collective life				

Analysing a situation taking into account the stakes and constraints				
Knowing how to take initiatives				
To be autonomous				
To be a force of proposal				
Define a working method				
Using methodological tools				
Identify the structures or resource persons				
Evaluating your action				
Type of competences identifiable on the project	Not completed	Apprenticeship	Mastery	Confirmed
Relational and human skills				
Speaking in front of a group				
Listening and taking into account the opinions of others				
Controlling yourself in tense situations				

Explain, demonstrate pedagogy				
Show curiosity				
Arguing your ideas				
Convincing and getting buy-in				
Leading a group				
Adapt your communication to different audiences				
Integrating into a work team				
Information skills				
Finding and understanding information				
Passing on information within your team				
Passing on information to partners				
Communicate orally				
Drawing up a balance sheet, a synthesis...				
Using IT tools				

NB: you can add an example to each competence identified as mastered.