



European report

National experiences from pilot learning projects, good practices, and recommendations

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VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

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Foreword

Volunteering is one of the most visible expressions of active citizenship and an important way for people to develop a wide range of skills, including life skills, which can improve their employability, as well as build new relationships, and ensure they play an active role in their communities. Volunteering also serves as the platform for expressing solidarity with people who are finding themselves in vulnerable situations.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has shown that many of those who were most at risk of social exclusion, have been some of the hardest hit. This unprecedented health, social and economic crisis, magnified the problems in our societies. However, there has also been a unifier, in the period of the difficulties. What has unified people has been the outpouring of empathy and active citizenship, manifesting itself in the hundreds of thousands of volunteers who have expressed their willingness to help others.

There has been a sheer increase of readily available people, willing to give the gift of their time to support others, looking out for the most vulnerable in their communities. Many people volunteered informally, supporting their neighbours, but many also needed to be managed through organised and more formal volunteering, and so the sector had to be very agile, flexible and adjust its operations, to fit within the health and physical restrictions imposed due to the pandemic, while at the same time to co-ordinate the new resources of volunteers and direct them to meaningful, but safe, volunteering opportunities.

Overall, the responses of the voluntary sector, NGOs, and volunteers, to COVID-19 crisis, has reinforced the truth that volunteers are Europe's greatest source of renewable energy, but volunteer management and coordination is not free. Volunteering is not a substitute for services that need to be supplied by the state; it is however a great compliment. It has also reinforced the message which lies at the heart of the Job Bridge project, that volunteering leads to the development of a great wealth and range of skills, which can help people to gain dignified and fulfilling employment, as well as acquire other paths of lifelong and lifewide learning.

COVID-19 has naturally had a big impact on the Job Bridge project. The last face-to-face event, a major European training amongst the partners on developing pilot learning projects, was held in the middle of February 2020 in Göttingen in Germany. Shortly after, the pandemic started spreading exponentially, the borders were mostly closed, and we all had to revert to teleworking. Volunteering, if possible, to take place physically, had to happen in very secure and safe settings, to protect everyone around from what was back then a very unknown virus. This also meant that the implementation of the pilot learning projects by the partners was severely challenged.

Nevertheless, the organisations involved in the Job Bridge project stood up to the challenge and delivered, creatively, a wide range of learning initiatives for volunteers, which they then translated into national reports on the experiences and recommendations. What you find here is the compilation of these experiences which we hope will be helpful and act as supportive guidelines for similar future initiatives.

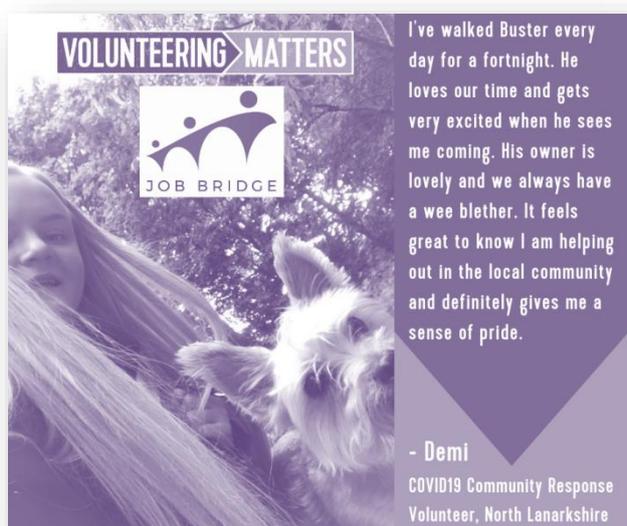
Piotr Sadowski, on behalf of the Job Bridge project partners

Introduction

This report was created as part of the “**Job Bridge for Volunteers**” (“Job Bridge” in short) project. The initiative was coordinated by **BUPNET** (Germany), in partnership with **La Ligue de l’enseignement** (France), **CATRO** (Bulgaria), the **Lifelong Learning Platform** (Belgium), the **Conference of Merit University Colleges CCUM** (Italy), the **Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Caceres** (Spain), **Volunteering Matters** (UK), and **Blinic** (Germany). The project ran from 1 December 2018 until 28 February 2021 (including a three-month extension requested due to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic) and was funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ Programme, under the contract number 2018-1-DE02-KA204-005214.

The report is addressed to organisations (public, private, not-for-profit) hosting volunteers and staff working in these organisations, such as volunteer managers, trainers, mentors, support workers, project managers. By hosting organisations, we mean youth organisations, volunteer-based organisations, NGOs, European networks, companies, public administrations, and public bodies, or any other setting which provides meaningful, well-managed experiences and opportunities for the development of skills of their volunteers.

As part of the Job Bridge project, **facilitators of learning initiatives for young people participated in an extensive training course in Göttingen in February 2020**, with the view to then carry out the so-called **pilot learning projects involving at least 15 volunteers per partner country**. The aim was to implement the methodologies developed in the earlier stages of the Job Bridge project and at the end of the pilot phase, the objective was to validate the competences acquired by both the facilitators and volunteers during the training and pilot projects, including **utilising the innovative LEVEL5 methodology**.



The **onset of the COVID-19 pandemic** and the mobility and social distancing restrictions which were introduced across the partner countries shortly after the training course in Göttingen meant that **both the implementation of the pilot learning projects, and the entire concept of the project’s management and finalisation had to be adapted to the pandemic-induced new reality**. However, as this report will show, the **partners took the challenges head on** and, creatively and innovatively, managed to complete the piloting phase and implement a wide range of learning projects.

As a result, **a total of 190 volunteers** were introduced and became enrolled in the learning projects across the Job Bridge partnerships and although the partners encountered dropouts, these were, despite the pandemic, effectively very low numbers: the partners reported **only 13 volunteers dropping out**, due to reasons such as, inability to travel due to COVID-19 restrictions, not meeting deadlines, losing interest, no longer having time.

At the end of the learning projects, every partner completed a national report to record the volunteer and facilitator data, scope of the projects and their settings, the learning outcomes, developments, success factors, difficulties, and challenges. This report is a compilation of the findings of the national partner reports, which are set out in the chapters on the following pages.

Description and rationale of Job Bridge learning projects

Belgium

The Head Office of the **Lifelong Learning Platform (LLLP)** in Brussels does not host volunteers directly and for that reason wanted to involve its member organisations to benefit from the Job Bridge training. LLLP invited three facilitators of volunteers to attend the Job Bridge training in Göttingen in February 2020. Two volunteers who took part were from the World Organisation for Scout Movement, **WOSM** (one facilitator based in **Belgium** and one in **Spain**), and one facilitator came from the Erasmus Student Network (**ESN**) European office in Brussels.

The ESN volunteer learning project focused on involving the members of the ESN Validation Task Force as the Job Bridge pilot project volunteers. Their main activity in the frame of the learning project was to study and analyse the ESN Skill Annuary and Dictionary. There were also other key activities implemented by the facilitator. The WOSM Spain volunteer learning project focused on assisting the competences of external institutional representatives at the Spanish national Scouts platform, before and after a training given by the facilitator. And finally, the WOSM Flanders (Belgium) volunteer learning project was aimed at involving young volunteers (under the age of 25) in the Flemish scouting organisation.

For each of the three pilot projects coordinated by LLLP, a learning project plan was created, shared, and updated. It was based on the [learning project plan template](#) shared by another partner in the Job Bridge initiative.

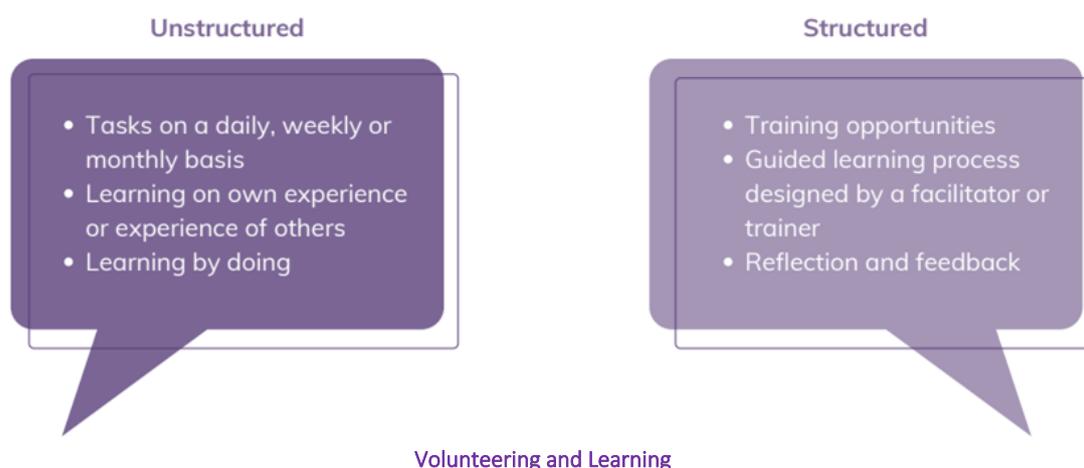
The aim of the ESN pilot project was to improve existing validation process in ESN, particularly regarding two VNFIL phases (identification and assessment) in the recruitment process, follow-up, monitoring during the volunteering, and at the end of the volunteering. The objectives set in the learning plan were:

- Add a competence-oriented learning dimension to staff and volunteers' recruitment (for example, new questions regarding learning expectations, competences development);
- Job Bridge competence transfer from the facilitator to the volunteers (for example, training) and badge certification;
- More structured competences assessment in ESN (such as choice of assessment methods, more regular assessment, initial and final assessment inspired by Job Bridge training recommendations);
- Introduce, in a sustainable manner, elements of Job Bridge methodology in ESN tools, processes, templates (for example, the LEVEL5 methodology);

- Look at how the new validation-related improvements (developed during the pilots) can also be applied at national and local level in the different sections of ESN;
- Explore other synergies between ESN activities (for example, projects, events) and Job Bridge.

The aim of the WOSM Spain pilot learning project was to assess and train external representatives on communication competences (for advocacy purpose), as well as to introduce them to the issue of validation in non-formal education. The objectives were for them to be more aware of their communication skills, strengths, and weaknesses, what they can improve, amongst others. To do that, the facilitator would organise a training for volunteers inspired by the competence-oriented learning approach, using the LEVEL5 methodology and its list of assessment methods.

The training was supposed to take place in a face-to-face setting and last for several days, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was changed into a shorter online training. This online training took place in July 2020 and lasted four hours. An extra 45-minute introductory session was given by the facilitator prior to the training to inform the volunteers about Job Bridge and validation in volunteering. The aim of the training was to train the volunteers in four key aspects of communication and advocacy: presenting one's organisation, media coverage, being a spokesperson and negotiation. Four roleplay activities, each one of them assessed separately by the facilitator, were organised during the training based on the four thematic areas.



And in the case of the WOSM Flanders pilot project, the aims of this Job Bridge learning activity included:

- Revising the design of applications for youth exchanges to improve the quality of the organisation, or implementation of youth exchanges by adding more competence-oriented learning elements, hence contributing to an increased overall added-value of those activities for sending organisation and beneficiaries (young people);
- Improving and increasing validation practices in the context of youth exchanges;
- Building capacity of volunteers in a national scout association in the areas of project application, validation, transversal skills, Job Bridge materials, and group facilitation in an intercultural context.

Unfortunately, because all youth exchanges were cancelled due to the restrictions and lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the facilitator was unable to change and adjust the learning plan, and sadly, this learning project was finally not implemented.

Bulgaria

Because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdown, most volunteering organisations were forced to put their activities on hold. A new type of volunteering emerged – delivery of food and drugs to groups of people in vulnerable situations, but the sensitive nature and the urgency required in these tasks made these initiatives ill-suited for the Job Bridge approach. Luckily, a solution was found.

A cooperation was established between **CATRO** and the **Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (FEBA) at Sofia University**. The University had recently switched to distance learning, which left a group of students who were volunteering at the Faculty Career Centre facing considerable challenges. These students were seeking to support the future career perspectives of their peers by fulfilling various tasks, the most important of which was the organisation of a Career Fair, involving dozens of companies and most of the students in the Faculty.

The group of 16 highly motivated students was divided into four teams, with different focus of activities. Each team followed a yearly plan and regularly updated their supervisor on their progress, while working mostly independently. Most students in the group were around 20 years old, pursuing a bachelor's degree in business administration or economics at Sofia University. The majority came from language schools and had a strong interest in entrepreneurial disciplines. Because the cooperation turned out to be very successful, it was decided to repeat the process in autumn 2020 with a new, larger group of volunteers.

In addition to the activities with FEBA, CATRO organised a training for volunteering facilitators from four Bulgarian organisation working with volunteers. The topic of the training was competence-oriented learning and competence assessment. In addition, the question of volunteer motivation was discussed, and how to support them in setting up action plans.

As a result of the training, CATRO was invited to support the new Young Caritas project, where young people support different disadvantaged groups. Two volunteers were supported in discovering their motivations, strengths, and potentials, and creating detailed action plans for their activities. Because of the difficult situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, no more volunteers made use of CATRO's offer. The two volunteers from Young Caritas were introduced to competence-oriented learning and some LEVEL5 competence tables but decided not to perform a pre-assessment.

The volunteers were divided into four teams, each with a specific focus of activities, with an overarching objective of organising a faculty-wide career fair. To indicate the success of the initiative, it is worth mentioning that the career fair at FEBA was organised for the first time in 2016 with nine companies; in 2019, 35 companies participated with even more applicants in the waiting list; and the target for 2020 was 50 companies.

The first team focused on the career fair and was responsible for the overall organisation of the event, logistics, placement of company stands, pricing, and other related tasks. The specific activities in which the volunteers were engaged included:

- Preparation of sketches for the distribution and prices of the stands of the companies in the Faculty of Economics on the day of the career fair;
- Preparation of a poster containing basic information about the fair – date, venue, organised list in alphabetical order of companies, organisers, a short description to explain to students, giving clarity about the nature of the forum, what will be the benefits and how could they find an internship or job through it;
- Preparation of flyers with the distribution of companies to facilitate students and achieve greater publicity of the fair;
- Orientation and meeting of the representatives of the companies on the day of the forum.



Teamwork – Organising the fair

The second team was responsible for the communication between the career centre and the students and mobilising the student community. The specific activities focused on:

- Creating content that provokes interest;
- Creating content that validates the usefulness of the event;
- Communication with the Event Masters team about creating a questionnaire and interview script for graduates of Sofia University to tell their stories.

The third team focused on the content for the career fair, which included planning for the location, photos, statistics, invitations, countdowns (Facebook posts). The specific activities which the volunteers engaged in were:

- Creating a visual content style for content that we will be published;
- Exploring what types of visual content are appropriate for Instagram;
- Planning what and when to publish, together with the other teams;

- Creating a promotional video.

And finally, the fourth team, the “Event Masters”, took care of the fan page of the career centre on Instagram. Instagram was selected as most students consider Facebook to be an outdated social media channel. Here, the specific activities included:

- Instagram posts for upcoming events and companies with which the faculty works;
- Instagram posts to motivate students to actively look for work or internships;
- Facebook posts, connecting the two pages of the career centre on Instagram and Facebook;
- Presentation of FEBA and its students;
- Sharing various articles, materials, and sites, to prepare for an interview, write a CV and a cover letter;
- Sharing more information about the participating companies;
- Organising quizzes on Instagram;
- Online sessions with employers.

France

The volunteers who participated to in the French partner’s Job Bridge project experiment were volunteers engaged in their **French Civic Service**, within the affiliated associations of **Ligue de l’enseignement de Normandie** (which is a regional federation of **Ligue de l’enseignement**). At the time of their engagement in the pilot project, they were aged between 16 and 25 and were committed to volunteering in areas of general interest for a period between six and 12 months (with the average time spent volunteering in the Civic Service being eight months). Within the framework of the Civic Service, volunteers’ placements cover a wide range of themes: culture, music, environment, medical, social issues, just to highlight some examples. The volunteering opportunities offered to young people are part of a national catalogue and are in line with the 2010 French Law describing the principles of Civic Service in France.

To clarify the framework of the French Job Bridge pilot project, the following is a description of the four Civic Service volunteers who took part in the experimentation. As requested, and to respect their privacy, the French partner agreed with the volunteers to only use the first letter of their name:

- **M1**, 19 years old, was on a volunteering placement within an environmental protection association specialising in species safeguarding when fishing. M’s main tasks were to raise awareness among fishermen to safeguard species by adopting responsible fishing practices.
- **M2**, 23 years old, and **I**, 19 years old, were on a volunteering placement in two Etablissements et Services d’Aide par le Travail (ESAT, roughly translatable to “Establishments and Support Services through Work (ESAT)”). Their tasks were primarily to promote social links between workers and participate in the life and everyday work of the establishments.
- **C**, 24 years old, was on a volunteering placement in a cultural music association. C was volunteering as an ambassador for a music label promoting local artists.

In addition, the French partner, Ligue de l’enseignement, was also implementing the Job Bridge approach in its national programmes called **Grands Programmes d’engagement (Major Commitment**

Programmes). This is done through an ongoing process of developing a national dynamic around several major volunteering commitment programmes. The objective of those programmes is to mobilise volunteers in civic service on themes linked to national social issues. The Ligue is currently developing five major engagement programmes within its movement:

- Fighting digital inequalities: D'codeurs
- Fostering international solidarity: Jeunes solidaires sans frontières (young solidary people without borders)
- Fostering inclusion in sport: Volontaires tout terrain (All terrain volunteers)
- To encourage the learning and enjoyment of words and reading: En toutes lettres (In all words)
- Enabling ecological and social transition: Transi'Terre (Transit'Earth)

The raison d'être of the Major Commitment Programmes (which represent the engagement of around 1,000 to 1,500 young people involved in volunteer placements covering those themes throughout metropolitan France and French overseas territories) is the need to act collectively on a theme where the stakes are high. The objective is to pool, harmonise and support a group of stakeholders acting in a concerted way on a single issue with a single goal: improving the living together to create a better society. Therefore, the activities of all the volunteers can be very diverse and varied according to the themes of the major programmes. What brings them together is that they all act in the general interest of helping to improve the ills of society in relation to the theme of their commitment. Within the Job Bridge project, these major programmes served as a testing ground for the methods of skills recognition developed within the framework of the project.

Within the context of the Job Bridge piloting activity at Ligue Normandie, there was the application of one of the fundamental principles of Civic Service: to support volunteers in their plans for their own future. This support can be provided through various means, such as meetings with professionals, time for research, and so on. However, one of the means used is the joint drafting of a personal assessment with the volunteer and their tutor. The aim of this assessment is to summarise the actions carried out during the Civic Service volunteering placement, as well as to determine together the competences (knowledge, know-how, interpersonal skills) that the volunteer has developed. Volunteers often express reluctance to determine which skills they are developing, and for this reason this discussion about skills only takes place at the end of the mission. Secondly, volunteers generally express a lack of recognition of their commitment and are sceptical that their Civic Service will have a positive impact on their career path. The Job Bridge project therefore played an important role in highlighting the commitment of volunteers in Civic Service and the skills linked to their volunteering engagement.

Germany

The Job Bridge project approach and methodologies were piloted by the German partners, **BUPNET** and **blinc**, in two different settings.

The first learning project was carried out with young volunteers who are involved in a **voluntary social year** (“**Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr**” in German). This is a national volunteering programme for young people, which is offered in Germany for youth and young adults who have already completed compulsory full-time schooling and have not yet reached the age of 27. Participating in the FSJ is officially defined as a learning activity. Volunteers in the FSJ offer their time volunteering in institutions “for the common good”, which include hospitals, old people’s homes, kindergartens, schools, sports clubs, and museums. Volunteers do not receive a salary or wage for this social commitment, but they do receive pocket money to help them with their expenses.

One of the aims of FSJ placements is to give volunteers an opportunity to try out their skills, get an insight into working life and gain practical experience. The volunteers get to know the day-to-day work of different professions, see which tasks and activities suit them well, and can plan and carry out their own projects. They also meet other volunteers at training days and can exchange ideas with their peers.



The young people participating in FSJ activities who were best placed to test the Job Bridge approach were all involved in a one-year volunteering setting, **volunteering in hospitals** around the city of Göttingen. They volunteer with 40 hours-per-week shifts, similarly to the time commitments of regular employees. Once per month they are obliged to participate in 3-5 training days, organised by their volunteering organisation, with topics that relate to the demands of working in a hospital, for example, how to bed and wash people, basics of pharmaceuticals, legal dimensions of working in the medical sector. Other topics covered in this training are transversal competences, such as working in teams, communication, and conflict management. Even though these training courses include reflections of the volunteers, these are not documented or in any way processed further to contribute to any form of recognition. At the end of the volunteering period the volunteers receive certificates of participation and, optionally, can ask for a reference letter from the hospital.

For the second pilot project, the German Job Bridge team cooperated with a project for young unemployed and socially disadvantaged young people, called “**Challenge Abroad**”. This project is not a classical volunteering initiative, but it supports labour market integration of young people by providing internships abroad embedded in preparatory and follow up training courses.

The core of the project is an approximately nine-week stay abroad with a work placement in one of the partner countries participating in the “**Challenge Abroad**” Programme. It also includes eight weeks

of preparation and follow-up in Göttingen. The aim is to give young people the opportunity to gain professional experience abroad, to learn and practise a foreign language, to become acquainted with a foreign environment independently and actively, to help guide their orientation for the future and their further professional pathways. Typical training topics include intercultural and linguistic preparation, job orientation, profiling, reflection on own interests, talents, skills and competences, team training. The internship position depends on the young people's interests and skills, and on the opportunities in the host country. During their stay abroad, the volunteers are accompanied by a staff member and the cooperation partners abroad. Back home, the competences and skills that the young people have acquired are assessed and are incorporated into their further career planning during the approximately three-week group phase of follow-up. Afterwards, they are supported on individual basis, in areas such as, for example, applying for a job or an apprenticeship.

The start of the project was originally planned for March 2020 but had to be postponed twice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The German project partners were eventually able to meet the group at the end of July 2020, when they started the eight-week training to prepare them for their internship in Malta.

Overall, the rationale in Germany was to test and apply the Job Bridge methodology with two primary objectives: to broaden the learning dimension by implementing competence-based learning in volunteer activities; and, to apply the assessment and validation process to recognise the learning outcomes achieved by volunteers. Both learning projects were also an ideal framework for the piloting, since they already include training, self-reflection, and job orientation, in their design.

Italy

The colleagues at the **Conference of Merit University Colleges CCUM**, in Italy, engaged four associations for their Job Bridge pilot projects: **ESN Italy, AIESEC Italy, ICO** and **DARE**.

ESN (Erasmus Student Network) Italy, part of ESN International, is a network of university volunteer associations, which is not related to politics or religion, and offers its services to foreign students hosted by Italian universities, as well as to Italian agencies interested in exchange programmes. ESN Italy aims to promote university students' mobility in Europe. It does so by welcoming and helping foreign students who are spending a study period in an Italian university; providing an updated information service on European inter-university exchange programmes; developing a systematic evaluation of these programmes, through the experience of students who have already taken part in.

AIESEC is an international organisation founded in 1948, entirely managed by students and present in over 120 countries worldwide. AIESEC promotes a network of international exchanges and aims to achieve peace and the development of human potential, unlocking leadership characteristics among young people through experiences abroad in stimulating contexts. Together with other partner organisations, AIESEC facilitates volunteering experiences, internships, and paid internships abroad.

ICO (Imparare Creando Opportunità) is an Italian association established in 2017 which carries out educational activities related to language learning and aimed at creating opportunities for socio-economic integration of people from EU or non-EU countries. The association promotes international solidarity, respect for human rights in the context of honesty, fairness, solidarity, freedom, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. The association, in collaboration and in close synergy with institu-

tions at all levels, as well as with other associations that pursue similar purposes, can join, and promote, local (Milan area), national and international projects, particularly aimed at youth target. Examples of activities planned and implemented by ICO include education for European integration; civic education at local, national, European and international levels; awareness raising at all levels of a culture inspired by the principles of legality and transparency and respect for the rule of law; education on migration issues; promotion of social cohesion, mutual understanding between young people from different countries; development of foreign language learning; promotion of educational, cultural and information activities, with a view to permanent education.

DARE is a young non-profit association that recognises interculturality as a fundamental value for the construction of modern society. DARE creates opportunities for meetings and exchanges that can promote values such as diversity, interculturality, dialogue, tolerance, respect for human rights and inter-religious dialogue aimed at creating a more equitable and supportive society. The idea is that through the knowledge of what is "other" than us, phenomena of radicalisation and social marginalisation can be prevented, and the culture of non-violence and dialogue as a cornerstone of human relations can be promoted. DARE supports the protection of human, civil, social, and political rights, equal opportunities and mutual aid initiatives, the culture of legality, peace between people, non-violence, and unarmed defence. To make these values concrete, global citizenship and active participation are promoted through: implementation of exchanges with international mobility; educational activities aimed at promoting global citizenship; awareness campaigns on issues related to the aims of the association; implementation of cultural and artistic activities and events to bring people closer to the association or to its values; implementation of cooperation projects in support of similar and synergistic realities with other Italian and international realities.

Thus, during the first phase of the pilot projects in Italy, three training meetings were organised, with the third one run for times for each of the participating associations. All of them took place virtually using Zoom.

The first training was aimed at introducing participants to the Job Bridge project and to the evaluation and certification process of their soft skills. To achieve these objectives, the online contents of the



course dedicated to "facilitators" on the Moodle platform were used with two objectives: on the one hand, to provide participants with the framework of the Job Bridge project and the knowledge and skills needed to obtain the badge as a "Savvy Volunteer"; and, on the other hand, to introduce part of the course contents for facilitators given that almost all the involved participants have the role of manager and/or supervisor in their volunteering contexts. Therefore, they would also have been interested in obtaining the badge as "Savvy Facilitator" to implement the tested evaluation and certification methodology in their associations.

The main issues addressed during the meeting were:

- Setting the context;
- Competence oriented learning;
- Validation and the link to the labour market;
- Validation of competence developments with LEVEL5.

After the meeting, the main materials used were sent to the participants with a request to read them in preparation for the next meeting. Finally, participants were asked to register on the Moodle platform and the "Badges" App.

The second training meeting focused on sharing with the participants their thoughts and questions about the material read; presenting the main characteristics of the learning project; sharing participants' reflections on the learning project in general and "their" personal learning project (for example, the skills and activities they would like to focus on). This meeting was interesting because there was an occasion to get to know better the specific volunteering context and the participants' reflections about their skills as volunteers, their learning, and the importance to reflect and work on these.

After the meeting, the facilitators sent the main materials used (for example, the slides about learning projects and LEVEL5 methodology, Job Bridge skills repository) to the participants, with a request to read them, and asked them in preparation for the next meeting to start thinking of the competences on which each of them would like to work on in the learning project and which ones they would like to certify. The facilitator suggested to identify a maximum of three skills and, to select these, to consider, for example, volunteering activities carried out so far, any future ones, as well as the possibility of exercising these skills in project development period and the usefulness of certification of skills including for the world of work. And, finally, the third training meeting was carried out with the participating volunteers from each of the involved associations, and therefore it was repeated four times. The facilitators proposed this setting and methodology to:

- Further promote the involvement of each volunteer and the dialogue between volunteers coming from the same volunteering context and with the facilitators;
- Deepen the reflection about the learning project in each volunteering contest;
- Facilitate the transferability of the project in each context.

This meeting aimed at:

- Sharing with each participant the skills chosen and the activity on which they will focus with the assessment to certify the skills;
- Sharing more information on organising and managing the single learning projects and supporting the participants in defining the next work steps.

Following the training meetings, the pilot volunteering phase was delivering throughout October and November 2020. During this stage, the volunteers developed their learning projects and assessed their soft skills, considering the initial and final moment of the chosen project. Each volunteer focused on their specific volunteering activity and defined a learning project in line with it. Different leaning projects were therefore developed, focusing, for example, on the management of specific association projects (e.g., international exchanges, project the promote the interculturality), on organisational activities and networking (e.g., research of new contact and locations to realise the activities promoted by each association), on the management of volunteers within a project.

During the piloting volunteering activity phase, the facilitators were available and supported the involved participants in case of need. At the end of this phase, each volunteer sent a report on their learning project and the evaluation of the soft skills chosen for the pilot project. The facilitators analysed the documents and gave individual feedbacks to each volunteer who participated in the pilot project. The volunteers also completed the steps provided by the "Badges" App to obtain the "Savvy volunteer" badge.



Spain

All the volunteers who were involved in the Spanish pilot project, coordinated by the **Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Cáceres**, were engaged with the **Euexia Multisport Association**. The young people came from different European countries, with eagerness to cooperate and offer their help to the organisation. So, when the Euexia's team told them about the opportunity to apply the LEVEL5 methodology to their volunteering experience and have the possibility to get a certification for their newly acquired and strengthened, they became very enthusiastic about the opportunity. Their cooperativeness, motivation, and engagement, right from the very beginning from becoming involved in the pilot project, helped to make the entire process very smooth.

The following five volunteers were engaged in the pilot project led by the **Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Caceres**, the Spanish partner in the Job Bridge project: **Sebastiano B.**, from Italy and 28 years old; **Madalena C.**, from Portugal and 25 years old; **Amelie S.**, from France and 24 years old; **Martina C.**, from Italy and 30 years old; and, **Viktor R.**, from France and 23 years old.

Madalena and **Sebastiano** carried out a volunteering project in the **Plascencia Mental Health Centre**, where they developed and organised several leisure activities with patients with mental health issues. The activities included board games, handicrafts, dancing, and outdoor activities, especially ball games and walking in the garden.

Martina developed her volunteering in **Placeat**, an association for people with learning difficulties, located in Plasencia. During the period that she cooperated with this association, many different activities were developed. So, as part of her volunteering project, she organised sports, excursions, cooking sessions, workshops about wellness, movies, dancing and talks with the users of the centre.

Amelie performed her volunteering in **Caritas Plasencia**, helping with welcoming new users, supporting others in the soup kitchen, the wardrobe and in other Caritas services. She took part in conferences, excursions, and other leisure activities with the users as well, especially board games and talks.

Viktor was volunteering in **Asociación Multideportiva Euexia** in Plasencia, helping in extracurricular activities with children, including children with learning difficulties and physical disabili-

ties, who were part of a special programme of support for their families. These activities involved different actions such as theatre, handicrafts, excursions, sports, non-formal education games and playing football. Viktor was also involved in a collaborative implementation of European exchanges, especially those for youth, within the Erasmus+ programme.

United Kingdom

The UK partner in the Job Bridge project, **Volunteering Matters**, included three experienced volunteer-managers, mentors, and facilitators of youth volunteering opportunities in the Job Bridge pilot project training in Göttingen in February 2020. In their day-to-day work, they would engage numerous young people, many facing multiple barriers and challenges in their lives, in diverse social action projects, leading to the young people's development of skills, competences and preparing them continue in further training or indeed secure employment. Following the training and debriefing sessions back in the UK, the facilitators, with the input of the Job Bridge project advisory staff at Volunteering Matters, set out to work on implementing several innovative pilot learning projects where the Job Bridge methodologies would be applied to support young people in their skills, competence development and validation of their learning.

However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the first UK lockdown which started in March 2020 meant that all the plans for the original pilot projects – because of their face-to-face nature – had to be cancelled and adjusted. Volunteering, in the UK, as in other countries, immediately became a national imperative during COVID-19. When the pandemic struck in March 2020, it was clear that there needed to be a community wide response right across the UK. Throughout the UK, volunteering and social action enabled a wave of people-powered support for those most in need; people selflessly giving their time to assist the most vulnerable in our communities, helping them to navigate these unprecedented challenges safely.

So as to be able to deliver volunteering and social action projects, which would also be possible to be involved in the framework of the Job Bridge pilot learning projects, and to help facilitate creative volunteering and social action, Volunteering Matters invested in new technologies to enable online mentoring and befriending, redeployed staff to speed up recruitment and vetting of volunteers, and to offer new solutions to funders looking to move volunteering in poorly served communities. To make sure people connected safely, Volunteering Matters delivered training and resources online, and made them available across the organisation and voluntary sector in the UK.

In **Ipswich**, 189 volunteers supported 683 people. This included the **production of over 1,000 packs for local young people**, reaching families from 13 different nationalities, an initiative which was tailored into a Job Bridge learning project for young volunteers. In **Wales**, 526 volunteers supported 7,717 people, and specifically in the context of Job Bridge complementarity, **youth social action (involving youth volunteers, who were the target of the learning initiatives) helped young people stay safe online**. And in **Scotland**, 205 volunteers supported 392 people, and especially for the Job Bridge framework, **volunteers provided befriending to young people**.

In **Ipswich** (east of England), Volunteering Matters has been running a busy community hub in Ipswich's Old Crown Court, which plays a key role in the community life of Ipswich, principally with young

people leading change through award-winning youth social action programmes such as WASSUP and We Are Patrick. Young people are listened to and enabled to solve the issues that matter to their local communities. In turn, this helps develop a new generation of future leaders in the town.

With the onset of the pandemic and the need to shut down face-to-face activities, many of Volunteering Matters youth social action volunteers became very concerned about the well-being and connectivity of their peers and their families. Their response was to lead on the development of packs to support potentially isolated families throughout the first six months of COVID-19. With thanks to the Suffolk Community Foundation, the packs included activities for primary school children, based around the characters created by the young people themselves – Astra and Patrick, modern day superheroes, with the power of resilience and emotional strength. Fully endorsed by the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership, the packs linked families to local support networks, with family resources, regarding health and wellbeing support. Between March and September 2020, over 1,000 packs were published for local young people

This aspect of the packs, written in five different languages, provided a route to families to get the information they need. Four European volunteers supported the young people to translate the packs and produce activities, and these were distributed also to families participating in Volunteering Matters' European projects, including refugees, and recently arrived migrants. Reaching families from 13 different nationalities, packs were distributed by primary schools, social care teams, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation, community groups working with young mums and the BME foodbank.

The packs connected with other aspects of support already provided by the Volunteering Matters team in Ipswich, including entry level safeguarding training for 40 members of the local community new to volunteering in the town. A simple guide to Safeguarding was developed for use by local groups and it was adopted by the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership. The guide links to a hotline with local Safeguarding Champions who are ready to talk to volunteers in the community about safeguarding concerns. Two young volunteers also provided training to Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership regarding young people and the impact of COVID-19 on their health and wellbeing.

In **Wales**, the youth social action work carried out by young volunteers that was creatively adjusted to take place online and thus was deemed as best suited to extend and connect with the Job Bridge methodologies was the Gwent Youth Social Action project. Young people in Gwent repurposed their activities across the existing SAFE (Sexual Awareness for Everyone) programme and Mind Matters projects, which aim to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people.

In both projects, young volunteers developed accessible resources to help fellow young people to stay safe online, promote positive wellbeing, and stay socially connected during lockdown. The volunteers, "Online Wellbeing Champions", developed accessible resources that promote positive messaging around mental health and developing healthy relationships while educating young people around safety awareness – from considering their own personal wellbeing to using the internet in the safest way possible to stay in touch with friends and family. Throughout the lockdown period, Mind Matters and SAFE recruited 21 volunteers, whose content was viewed over 7,000 times.

And in **Scotland**, in North Lanarkshire, the Befriending Project has been working in partnership with North Lanarkshire Council since 1999, providing a befriending service to vulnerable young people aged 8-18 in the local area. Volunteer befrienders work on one-to-one basis with children in North Lanarkshire, meeting them once a week or fortnightly. These activities are seen as a “timeout” for young people who often live in difficult circumstances. These young people often benefit from an adult befriender who they can talk to and trust, as well as providing them with a reason to get out of the house. The project helps young people with their social skills self-esteem, school attendance and performance, resilience, personal safety, health, and relationships.

Despite COVID-19, stopping this support was not an option, therefore, all befriending was reconfigured to happen remotely, either online or over the phone. A Spanish Erasmus+ volunteer, Alfredo, who was on a volunteering placement in the North Lanarkshire Befriending Project (and mentored by one of the facilitators who took part in the Göttingen training in February 2020), was one of the volunteers who continued to provide the befriending support. He did this even after himself needing to return to his home in Canary Islands, because of the border lockdowns and travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. He continued to volunteer online with Volunteering Matters, but from Spain, and ensured that his young people were not left without this important befriending support.

What also helped was the infrastructural support from the Scottish Government Wellbeing Fund, through which tablets were provided to 30 young people who otherwise had no other means of digital inclusion. This has since meant that geography and access are no longer an issue, and Volunteering Matters and its volunteers will continue to be able to reach an even wider range of young people.



Competences acquired in the Befriending Project in Scotland

Assessment of competences



The different partners applied different approaches to the assessment of competences of the volunteers engaged in the pilot projects and the outcomes of the initiatives. As the previous chapter of this report shows, the diversity of the learning projects was large and therefore the following findings based on the national reports from the partners offer a very interesting insight into examples and approaches to assessment of skills and competences, as well as engaging case studies from the different volunteers.

Many of the partners aimed to apply, integrate, or adapt LEVEL5 methodology to their learning projects, and used assessment methods and tools, which they identified as relevant during the pilot initiatives, including learning diaries, interviews, self-assessment surveys, and peer-to-peer feedback. For example, in the ESN learning project, as was the case for some of the other partners who involved their facilitators in the LEVEL5 training in Göttingen, who subsequently delivered the various learning projects (for example, two of the three Volunteering Matters facilitators), the engagement in the LEVEL5 methodology took place directly at the Job Bridge training in February 2020. In the ESN project, the facilitator took the performance indicators from Job Bridge and adjusted them to the reality of the organisation, so it reflected better the usual tasks and workloads of the volunteers who develop their competence during their volunteering. The competence was added in the ESN competence inventory, as well as the self-assessment survey.

The ESN facilitator also developed her own assessment methods, which was based on a [learning diary template](#). This was aimed to be filled regularly, during the pilot implementation and beyond. The facilitator's template version may perhaps be considered as too time-consuming for being used by other volunteers, therefore for the volunteers, a specific tailored version was produced. The template was modified, with the addition of more portfolio templates that can be offered to volunteers. A portfolio manual with more information on how to use it and why, and its benefits, was also added.

For [self-assessment surveys](#), which allowed to see the progression of the volunteers and competence development from the start of the volunteering, mid-term, and at the end, the ESN pilot project used three surveys. This was in line with the Job Bridge methodology. The competence indicators were divided into four levels, according to the usual workload, tasks, and volunteer development in the organisation. The survey itself was in an internal form, and the system was accessible only to the members of the organisation. The competences were divided into frameworks, according to the fields of work and the Job Bridge competence mapping: education competence framework, HR, finances, communication, IT, and events and projects.

Within the context of the ESN learning project, peer-to-peer feedback was also involved. The ESN Validation Task Force had regular monthly online meetings to discuss the progress of the volunteers' work and plan the future steps. The coordinator kept volunteers' knowledge, skills and interests in mind when assigning new tasks. Regular check-ins helped to be aware of the volunteers' attitudes as well.

For the WOSM Spain learning project, it was decided to assess two competences in the pilot:

- For the facilitator, group facilitation was employed, whereby the facilitator was evaluated **using LEVEL5 methodology**, a written reflective assessment (at the end of the pilot) and continuous assessment by LLLP during the pilot implementation, using and updating the learning plan (via calls);
- For the volunteers, the key competence for assessment was **communication**: the volunteers were evaluated using innovative assessment methods inspired from Job Bridge training and training materials.

The assessment methods were considered innovative in this context, and especially for the volunteers (although not new in themselves), because they were delivered as participatory assessment method in real-life context (role plays). During the training, there were four role play activities, all invented for the purpose of the training: an elevator pitch; an interview by the media; drafting key communication messages in times of crisis; and, “making friends”, that is, negotiating with other stakeholders.

The **Belgian** partners also reported the outcomes for the volunteers engaged, as the initial assessment at the beginning of the training using the LEVEL5 table led to identify three progression paths amongst the volunteers: low, medium, and high. The post assessment at the end of the training could observe an improvement by one level for all four volunteers attending the training:

- **Volunteer 1** (low competence in communication); the outcomes, using LEVEL5 referential, are: knowledge 4; skills 3; attitudes 4;
- **Volunteer 2** (low competence in communication); the outcomes, using LEVEL5 referential, are: knowledge 4; skills 4; attitudes 4;
- **Volunteer 3** (medium competence in communication); the outcomes, using LEVEL5 referential, are: knowledge 5; skills 4; attitudes 5;
- **Volunteer 4** (high competence in communication); the outcomes, using LEVEL5 referential, are: knowledge 5; skills 5; attitudes 5.

Across the other partners, competencies such as **teamwork** and **project management** were also assessed. In the case of the **Bulgarian** partner, they reflected that both topics were quite new for most of the participants in their pilot learning project. This was because the Bulgarian school system does not foster active student participation and most volunteers had very limited experience managing their own project, rather than fulfilling a pre-defined task. Most of them were used to working individually, and so being part of a team presented a new experience for them. There were many challenges to be overcome, but all participants reported that at the end of the project, their competences had grown compared to the start. In general, **on a LEVEL5 scale, most participants progressed from level 1-2 to 3-4**. These results were confirmed by the successful fulfilment of the aims of the project, which were also different for each of the four teams.

For the **French** partner, and especially in the context of the major programme commitments presented in the previous chapter, a whole range of skills can be acquired within the framework of the programme. It is worth noting that, in relation to the volunteers’ awareness of the issues of national importance, one of the most important competences developed through these volunteering opportunities is one of **stronger political and active citizenship engagement**. After their civic service in the major

programme commitments, many volunteers continue their engagement through other opportunities, for example, as union volunteer activists.

In the French piloting activities, certain skills were assessed by one of the volunteers, one at the end of his placement, and the other three as part of an initial assessment after a month of volunteering. The improvement for the other three volunteers was partly assessed, as their placement was still progressing at the time of writing this report.

Case study: volunteer competences assessed in a French learning project

M1, 19 years old, was engaged in a volunteering placement within an environmental protection association, raising awareness on sustainable practices amongst fishermen. He was able to reach the following levels at the end of his civic service:

Autonomy:

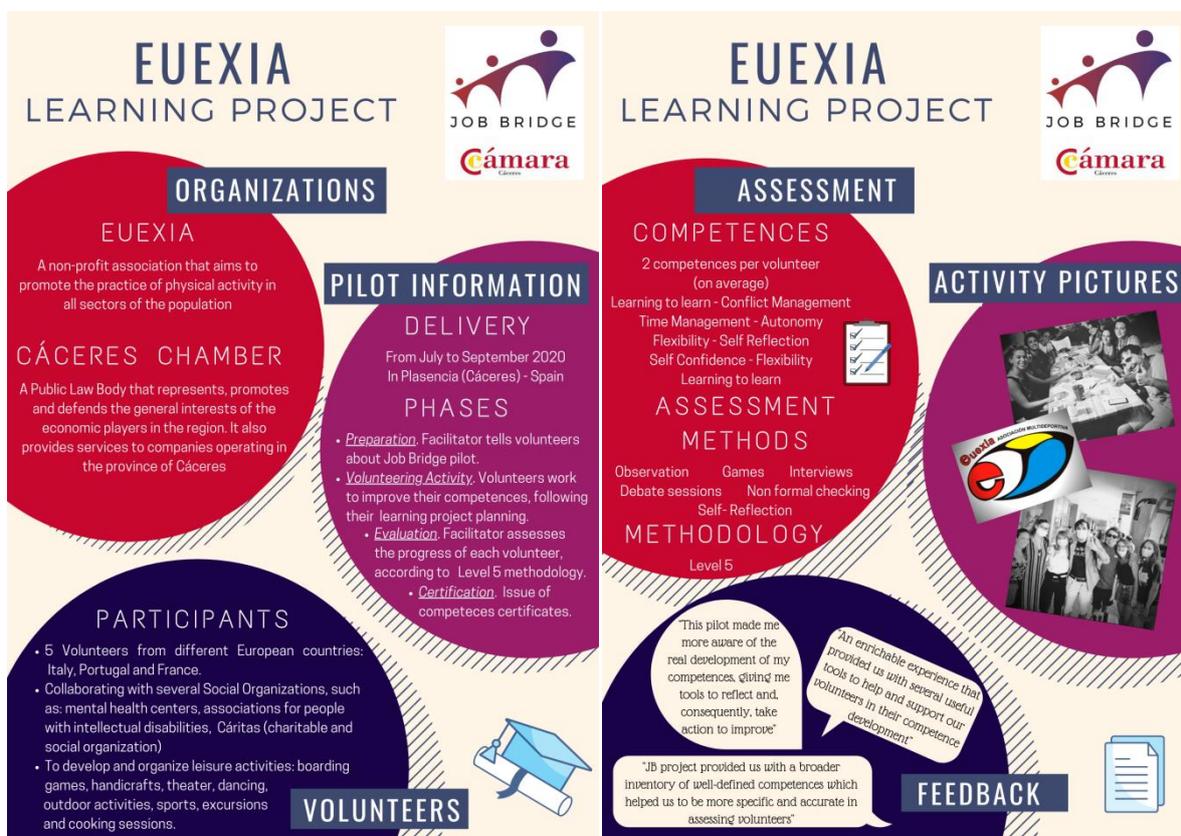
- Knowledge: level 2. **M1** now understands the advantages of being independent in his professional and personal life and knows why it is important to rely on his abilities.
- Know-how: level 2. As **M1** progressed in his mission, he improved in decision-making to enhance his autonomy. He tried to make his own decisions at certain moments during the volunteering placement by imitating his tutor's strategies. His self-confidence improved throughout the project to enable him to try to act autonomously.
- Know-how-to-be: level 3. **M1** is now motivated to continue improving this skill. During his placement, he was able to realise that he appreciates the rewards of being autonomous.

Flexibility:

- Knowledge: level 3. **M1** was recognised by his tutors as an individual who adapts easily. **M1** now knows how to adapt his behaviour in situations where changes are taking place.
- Know-how: level 2. **M1** repeatedly demonstrated his ability to adapt in situations that required him to do so and when it was asked of him.
- Know-how-to-be: level 2. **M1** is now curious to learn how to develop his flexibility. He had not been aware of this skill until his last civic service review. This recent awareness has made **M1** interested in how others behave in different situations.

In addition to self-reflection and learning to learn, the two competences of autonomy and flexibility, as in the French case study above, were also those that were individually chosen by the young people from the **German "Challenge Abroad"** project. They wanted to monitor and evaluate those competences, because they felt that they needed to further develop them. And the three volunteers engaged in the **hospital-based projects** opted for the competences of teamwork, communication and taking responsibility, because these were the dimensions that they perceived as most challenging in their work. In all cases, significant developments were observed, although the learning outcomes varied greatly. The reflections of the volunteers in the hospital were very concrete and with a considerable development visible, while the young people from **"Challenge Abroad"** had more difficulties reflecting themselves, nevertheless, improvements were also recorded in their case.

In the case of the **Spanish** partner, who engaged volunteers from the **Euexia Multisport Association**, on average, two competences per volunteer were assessed. For **Sebastiano B.**, “learning to learn” and “conflict management” competences were selected. In the case of “learning to learn”, Sebastiano had problems to interact with other people, that is why the Spanish partner recommend him listening to others carefully without interrupting, giving them time to speak. He also encountered difficulties to manage his time, so it was suggested to him work on the difference between urgent, important, and non-important tasks. In the context of “conflict management”, it was suggested to him to identify the root of conflicts and the way people behave in conflict situations, to avoid future similar situations. The results of applying the recommendations were noticed at the end of his volunteering when he was able to listen carefully and distinguish between important and non-important things, which in turn enabled him to prioritise his tasks and avoid conflicts.



Learning project poster prepared for the virtual exhibition in the final conference

For **Madalena C.**, the Spanish partner prioritised “time management” and “autonomy” as competences to improve. Regarding “time management”, before engaging in the Job Bridge pilot learning project, Madalena was able to establish priorities and plan her tasks theoretically, but she had problems to put them into practice. She also wanted to learn new techniques for project planning, organisation, and time management, to integrate them in her professional life to become more efficient. In relation to “autonomy”, she had some weaknesses: she needed to trust her own skills and capabilities to be able to behave in a more autonomous way. She also had to take the responsibility for completing her tasks, because she usually took over different tasks, but did not finish them because of jumping from

one task to another, without completing any of them. After the Job Bridge project, she managed to focus on one task at a time, which in turn allowed her to finish all her tasks timely and efficiently.

For **Amelie S.**, it was agreed to work on “flexibility” and “self-reflection” competences. Amelie used to have problems with facing unexpected changes and the stress caused by them. It was agreed that she should adapt her ways of thinking and being more flexible in those circumstances. She also used to have difficulties separating her work life from her personal life, and never got to relax. But after the project and her volunteering, she managed to find a balance, become open to changes, and find time to relax. The “self-reflection” competence was chosen because Amelie needed to reflect on what she thought about herself. She used to have a negative vision of herself and usually magnified failures and disregarded achievements. So, during the project, she had to look for different self-reflection techniques and apply them to herself. Thanks to that, she learned to analyse and understand her behaviour, and became more conscious of her strengths and weaknesses, giving them the appropriate importance.

Martina C. needed to improve her “self-confidence” and “flexibility”. At the beginning of the project, she could not stand any restrictions in her activities because she thought her volunteering actions were good for others. Working on this competence helped her to become more patient and understanding, which allowed her to see the big picture of her volunteering and her cooperation. Her “self-confidence” competence was already quite well developed, but she wanted to work on it to improve the vision of herself more. So, together with the Spanish partner, she planned reflection activities to identify her successes and failures, and then to analyse her contributions. With that, she managed to strengthen her self-esteem and recognise her achievements.

And in the case of **Viktor R.**, he decided to work on “learning to learn” competences. Jointly with the Spanish partners, a plan was defined, in which Viktor had to look for different learning strategies to identify which ones worked best for him. In addition, activities to work on time management were established, as he used to get distracted with several things, including his mobile phone, which meant he did not have enough time to finish his tasks.

In addition to those individual reflections above, in general, all the volunteers engaged by the Spanish partner developed and increased their competences alongside their European Solidarity Corps volunteering (lasting 10 months). Being in contact with a reality completely different from their own helped them to reflect and to develop new soft skills and competences, especially flexibility, autonomy, and self-confidence, since they had the opportunity to switch from one context to another, to be surrounded by different target groups, and to be independent in the implementation of their volunteering activities. They were always motivated and supported by Euexia’s team and by the mentors of their hosting organisations.

Case study: Ipswich volunteer in a COVID-19 change story



Here in Suffolk, Volunteering Matters has played an essential role in reducing the negative impact this global pandemic has and is still having on our communities.

During lockdown we continued capoeira classes virtually, I met with our mini youth social action team for some Saturday fun in which we did virtual quizzes, dancing and learnt about important topics from internet safety to positive black history and trying to help them cope without school and real-life interactions. During these sessions we realised we could support those potentially isolated, resulting in the children's packs that have been so important in helping safeguard and support many families in Ipswich. The WASSUP (Women

Against Sexual Exploitation and Violence Speak Up) team have also met on Zoom to record podcasts on topics such as victim blaming and consent, which you can find under "WOW women of WASSUP!" on Spotify.

I have been able to be in a safe space with other women I can relate to, and with staff that are invested in hearing us, to gain confidence, experience, belief that I can break barriers to my ambitions. I have had the support to get through other struggles that many of our women did not have the privilege to forget during the pandemic.

I am so proud to be a volunteer for Volunteering Matters and to be part of the incredible support that is given to communities right across the UK.

Lanai Collis-Phillips
WASSUP and Full Time Volunteer, Volunteering Matters Ipswich

Evaluation methodologies

Impact and evaluation are more important than ever. With changes to funding and the civil society landscape, NGOs are having to adapt and show how their projects are successful in communities. Impact is more than counting how many people have engaged in a project. It is about the quality of those interactions and what sustainable changes have been achieved by a group. As a result of this, we are having to navigate impact and evaluation more in our day-to-day work, so that we can collect the data we need and tell the stories of our projects.



Assessment – self-reflection exercise

All organisations need to be measuring impact and implementing evaluation in some capacity. It does not matter if it is a small organisation engaging a handful of people per year, or a massive NGO interacting with thousands of volunteers and beneficiaries. It is important, now more than ever, that we showcase the work we do and shout about the amazing work we do in our communities. However, the experiences of evaluation and impact measurement differ and so this chapter reveals this diversity, as well as various approaches to contacting and working with the volunteers in the pilot projects, informing them about the process, and using different assessment methods.

In **Bulgaria**, before the start of the project, the participants had to submit a form where they wrote down their expectations, their aims, needs and resources. This framework enabled them to reflect on their competence growth during the delivery of project activities. At the end of the project, a **LEVEL5 assessment was carried out**, where the participants had to **retroactively think of their competence level** at the beginning of the project and where they ended up. We decided consciously not to present them with the LEVEL5 methodology before the start of activities, as it takes some time to process. Instead, when the participants already have an understanding about what a competence such as teamwork or project management entails, it was much easier for them to review the whole process and focus on their growth.

The **Belgian** partner, **LLL**, with its facilitators, evaluated the pilot projects using the LEVEL5 group and individual evaluation, both during the training and at the end of the pilot learning initiatives (in the

case of the facilitators). Observations and regular meetings during the pilots took place, and written questions for the end to the facilitator and evaluation based on achievements of the learning project plan, were put in place. There were also [final written evaluations and assessments](#). Furthermore, in the case of the facilitator of the ESN pilot project, evaluation took place at the start during the training, during the implementation (face-to-face meeting and online calls), and at the end (LEVEL5 qualitative evaluation), and LLLP sent ESN an assessment plan. In the case of the volunteers in the ESN Task Force, they did not take part in the competence assessment process due to the workload and shift of their personal priorities outside the organisation (work, studies, being in the quarantine in a foreign country). For WOSM Spain, the facilitator was engaged in the same structure of evaluation as in the case of the ESN pilot, whilst the volunteers were evaluated at two stages, at the beginning and at the end of the training.

In the case of the **French** partner, in the Major Commitment Programmes, the **evaluation period is carried out in three stages for all volunteers**, with a **mid-term** and **end-of-course assessment** and a **review three months after their commitment**; 85% of the young people involved in a major programme theme have continued their commitment in other ways related to that theme. The ongoing sanitary crisis prevented the Ligue from further testing the Job Bridge approach among its different host structures, but its tests will be implemented from now on. A similar ongoing evaluation approach is also undertaken by the **UK** partner, and the use of **self-reflection, progression, elements of the LEVEL5 methodology** are also effectively incorporated.

As a good practice going forward, the French partner will install a system of three assessments being organised with the facilitator of the Ligue de l'enseignement, the facilitator of the host organisation and the volunteer, because these assessments are the key stages in the recognition and development process. The LEVEL5 reference system is going to be used at each stage. During the first month's assessment, Ligue will suggest that the volunteers choose one or two skills on which they would like to improve according to their wishes and/or their professional project for the future, if it has already been defined. During this assessment, using the evaluation methodology in question, the initial level of each skill will be established.

During the interim assessment, the stakeholders mentioned above will summarise and analyse the actions carried out during the assignment with the volunteer, focusing on the learning situation determined in the first month's assessment. In this way, using an evaluation method and the LEVEL5 reference system, it will be possible to attest to the volunteer's improvements and determine together the new levels for each skill. In the same way as in the first month's assessment, the facilitators and the volunteer will agree to build a learning situation so that the volunteer can improve once again.

Finally, at the final assessment, the exercise is repeated a third time. The stakeholders summarise and analyse the actions carried out by the volunteers and, using the LEVEL5 reference framework, it will be possible to determine the final outcome of the civic service mission in terms of changes in Job Bridge skills.

In the case of **Germany**, with the **volunteers placed in the hospital**, it was not possible to do an initial and a final assessment. The young volunteers who were committed for a year had already started their work a few months before, when the first "reflection party" took place.

Therefore, the **first assessment had to be retrospective**, asking them to think back to when they started. The second "reflection party" (see more details below) took place in November 2020. One of the three volunteers had already finished his voluntary service; the other two were in their last month.



Group exercise

With the **group of young people from "Challenge Abroad"** the first assessment was carried out in the **second week of their 8-week preparatory training**. They had reflected in the group and supported by a coach about what they are good at, what they would want to do in their lives, and finally the competences they would want to enhance during their stay abroad. **During their stay abroad, they received small learning tasks with the help of an app**: in previous stays, the trainers had experienced that the young people came back to Göttingen and sometimes only vaguely remembered their experiences and learning moments. In the follow-up weeks, they reflected together on the experience, and the question "what did you do, see, experience or learn" was rarely answered concretely. The app was introduced two years ago and gives participants small learning tasks and asks them to write small progress reports every week. In this way, the experience and learning become more reflective and conscious.

And finally, during the three-week follow-up course, specific sessions were held where the group reflected together on their experiences and their learning outcomes in terms of what the project had brought them to get a better perspective for their respective professional future. In this context, they also reflected on the competences they had chosen in the first phase.

For the **UK** partner, similar **progression and reflection, and follow-up meetings, took place regularly** – online – just as they would outside of the COVID-19 situation, this being a built-in good practice for evaluation operating at **Volunteering Matters** across all its volunteering and social action projects.

In **Italy**, as anticipated, the facilitators dealt with the evaluation topic at **different moments of the pilot projects**. In the preparation phase it was dealt with on a theoretical level and using the concepts related to the Job Bridge project to stimulate the educational and training activity, and reflection of the participants. In the activity phase, on the other hand, the evaluation was dealt with at the level of methodology and reflection on how to conduct the evaluation process in the individual learning projects. This was essential to stimulate the engagement of the involved volunteers and to share with them the tools necessary to carry out the evaluation of the chosen soft skills. The feedback given by the facilitators to each participant at the end of the volunteering was also important and appreciated by the volunteers.

And in **Spain**, the evaluation was implemented almost **at the end of the volunteers' pilot projects**, except for **Viktor R.**, who was in the middle of his learning project and so his evaluation could take place in two stages. To build a remedy around this, the Spanish partners also held **regular meetings with the volunteers**, both individually and in groups, which allowed to observe the development of the volun-

teers' competences and the interaction they have with one other. Furthermore, **non-formal dynamics** and **competences related games** were organised, inviting the volunteers to think about the inner meaning of each game and dynamic, supporting their initiatives and correcting ways of doing.

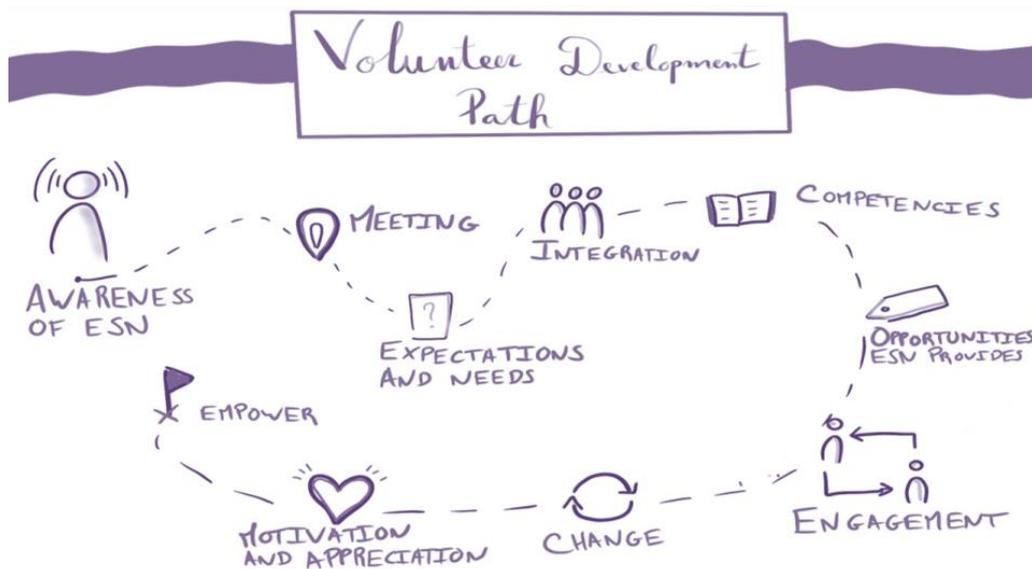
The partners all have different means of reaching out to volunteers, not just in the context of the Job Bridge project, but in all of their operations, whether they **engage volunteers directly** (as in the case of the **French, German and UK partners**), or via **other organisations who are either members or partners** (as in the case of the other partners, **Belgian, Bulgarian, Italian and Spanish**). Picking one example of reaching out to possible volunteers, in **Bulgaria**, the Career Centre of FEBA organised a call for volunteers, and it was up to the students from the faculty to decide whether to participate. In practice, all participants came from a course on business projects in an international environment, which motivated them to carry out their own limited projects. Once the four sets of tasks were presented to them, the participants self-organised into teams, based on their interests. They also elected their own team leaders.

For the second round, because of the large number of participants, they had to be pre-assigned to teams, but still divided roles and responsibilities themselves. The team handled the communication with their members and with the mentors very well, being responsive to emails and participating in Zoom meetings. The Bulgarian partner reflected that where communication suffered, was between the teams themselves and the coordination of their activity – an issue which was addressed by organising a dedicated meeting with the team leaders on this topic.

The partners also engaged in various means of communicating with the volunteers, to inform them and engaged their enthusiasm in the application of the Job Bridge methodologies and the pilot projects themselves. Of course, some projects were already ongoing (as in the case of the French, German, UK partners), thus those volunteering placements already in place were aligned to become merged into the Job Bridge work.

In **Bulgaria**, the online form of communication, due to the COVID-19 lockdown, presented some challenges. The participants received several online resources and had to fill in several forms to help them through the process. There were also Zoom workshops focused on creating ideas for achieving their aims, and additional meetings to overcome challenges and ask questions. Similar outreach took place in the **UK**, where the facilitators who took part in the training in Göttingen reached out to their volunteers or indeed, to other staff in the organisation, who were not familiar with the Job Bridge project but had volunteering and social action programmes in place which could be incorporated into the methodology, already in place. This is how the Welsh youth social action projects and the volunteers engaged there were brought into the Job Bridge initiative.

At **ESN**, in June 2020, the ESN International office had an online training for more than 80 volunteers in the HR field and they delivered four workshops, three of which were: Competence-Oriented Learning, Validation of Volunteer Work and Learning to Learn. This was an opportunity to introduce these topics to the volunteers on all the levels of the network, as well as start easing them into the validation process that would take place in the next academic year. The ESN trainers touched upon the aspects such as performance management, volunteering and labour market, validation tools and methods, etc.



Volunteer Development Path in ESN

The example from **France** is also worth mentioning because it deals with a type of “volunteer contract” which the young people agree on with their projects (volunteer agreements have also already been in place for a very long across all of **Volunteering Matters** projects). When a **Civic Service** volunteering contract is signed, volunteers are informed by **Ligue de l’enseignement** of the skills assessment process. To make them aware of the recognition tool they have chosen (the open badge), volunteers receive a first badge certifying their commitment to a civic service mission. The organisation informs the volunteer that this recognition process is part of the support for the professional project of their future, which is compulsory as part of their placement. Volunteers are therefore invited to think about their future project and the skills they would like to develop as part of their volunteering. The tutor or mentor remains available and ready to listen to any questions related to this subject. In addition, to make the experience as effective as possible, the facilitators in the host organisations are made aware of the approach before the volunteers arrive.

In **Germany**, the volunteers who joined the pilot were informed about the ideas and aims of the pilot and the expectations connected, together with the invitation to the first “reflection party” that took place in May 2020. The party was announced and organised as casual get together, to share and reflect experiences of working in the hospital. The Job Bridge philosophy and benefits of competence assessment and recognition were presented to the young people during their preparation phase before going abroad. In this period the participants had group training for a period of eight weeks. In addition, there were regular meetings with the mentor every two weeks. During a group meeting the idea was discussed and the participants were asked to join. Of the 10 people in the group, seven agreed to give it a try. The next steps of the process were carried out both in the group and on an individual basis.

In **Italy**, the volunteers were involved by a professional involved by CCUM in the Job Bridge project and who attended the training course in Göttingen. After the training course and the dialogue with the facilitators by CCUM, he identified and contacted four volunteering associations with which he collaborates basing his evaluation and choice on the openness of these organisations to learning and evalua-

tion and the volunteers’ profiles (for example, the level of engagement in their volunteering activities, desire to have an opportunity for individual and organisational development, reflection).

And in **Spain**, online meetings, due to COVID-19 restrictions, and some face-to-face ones when the easing of lockdown was in effect, were taking place, where the process and engagement was communicated to the volunteers, including how to obtain the YouthPass certification. The process of how to obtain that certificate was outlined, explaining the need of defining a learning project together where to establish the needs and the competences the volunteers wanted to improve. The young people were also informed that they would have to work on it by doing different activities that allowed them to progress in the selected competences and, finally, report this progress to Euexia Multisport Association for evaluation.

The partners in the Job Bridge project **chose different methods and tools for assessment**, and many of them **were similar across all the organisations** engaged in this Erasmus+ project. The following are a selection of some specific examples which have been lifted from the national projects. In **Bulgaria**, at the beginning of the project, participants had to fill in a self-assessment form with open questions on their expectations, personal and team aims, needs and strengths. This was done to start a self-reflection process in a non-challenging, accessible way. Participants discussed what they had written in the first Zoom meeting. At the end of the project, participants filled in another form with open-ended questions on challenges encountered, how they overcame them, what was most difficult and most useful for them, and what they would change next time. This process reflection prepared them for the competence reflection.

Reference system – Teamwork

Indicators	KNOWLEDGE		SKILLS		ATTITUDES	
	Level title	Level description	Level title	Level description	Level title	Level description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Naturally chooses collaborative processes to reach a shared goal. - Develops strategies for new teams and builds those teams from scratch. - Motivates and inspires others to self-empowerment and self-respect so that they can live up to their potential in a team. 	Knowing where else (knowledge for transfer)	Having knowledge to enhance collaborative processes in different living and learning contexts. Knowing how to help other people collaborate successfully and to live up to their potential and resources in a team.	Developing/constructing/transferring	Facilitating others to contribute to the best of their abilities. Being able to develop strategies for efficient and successful teamwork	Internalisation/Incorporation	Having internalised the "culture" of constructive teamwork to accomplish goals through mutual support. Encouraging and inspiring others to collaborate and to improve their teamwork skills.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifies situations that call for teamwork. - Undertakes team-leading/coordinating tasks as building a team or assigning appropriate roles to team member. - Evaluates performance of the team in order to ensure the achievement of the team's objectives. - Tries out different roles in a team, to improve own competence. 	Knowing when (implicit understanding)	Having substantial knowledge on how and when to engage into collaborative processes. Understanding how and when to communicate and coordinate processes.	Discovering/acting independently	Initiate collaborative processes. Being able to assign and coordinate specific tasks and roles in a collaborative process. Monitoring collaborative processes. Trying out new roles for oneself.	Self-regulation/determination	Feeling the importance to refrain from own preferences (e.g. in regard to procedures, own solution strategies, methods etc.) for the sake of the shared goal. Being determined to be a good team worker.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actively seeks opportunities to collaborate with others. - Focuses own efforts on working with the team to achieve the desired results. - Participates in activities that lead to a sense of identity on projects. 	Knowing how	Knowing the basic dynamics and demands for teamwork. Knowing how to engage in a coordinated process where the individual skills, qualities and limits are taken into account in order to act efficiently.	Deciding/selecting	Actively reaching out to collaborate with others or help to initiate collaborative processes. Contributing to the teamwork according to own potential and resources for reaching the shared goal.	Motivation/appreciation	Having a positive attitude towards working together and appreciating diversity. Finding it important to have a "team spirit". Being motivated to develop own competence to successfully work with others.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contributes in teams when being instructed or invited to the team. - Fulfills assigned tasks in a team. - Values the contribution of all team members. 	Knowing why (distant understanding)	Knowing that individuals have different competences and abilities and that these have to be coordinated accordingly.	Using/Imitating	Contributing to collaborative processes when being invited or instructed to. Fulfilling assigned tasks in teamwork with others.	Perspective taking	Being interested in the potentials of teamwork and to learn more about it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knows what the teamwork is. - Does not engage pro-actively or self-initiated in collaborative processes. 	Knowing what	Knowing that collaborating with others is a precondition to reach a shared goal.	Perceiving	Recognising situations that require teamwork for reaching shared goals.	Self-orientation	Seeing teamwork as something positive, but without engaging in any collaborative processes.

The competence reflection was performed with the help of the LEVEL5 system. Participants were presented with a detailed description of the teamwork and project-management competences, and LEVEL5 descriptors for the knowledge, skill, and attitude aspect of both. Then, by using concrete written examples, they had to compare their competence level at the start and at the end of the project. The

examples were checked by mentors and corrections were made where necessary. Because the assessment was done at a stage where students had a good understanding of the competences, most of them had a very accurate self-reflection and cases of overestimates were few and far between.

In **France**, as part of the Civic Service placements, during debriefings with the volunteers and tutors, the volunteers are given the opportunity to talk about their placement. Volunteers are asked to prepare this report by listing the actions they have carried out between the last meeting and the next one. An exception is made in the final report, where the volunteer reflects on the entirety of the volunteering project, right from the beginning of the contract. Based on this account, the volunteers, the tutors and the Civic Service representative reflect together on the skills developed during the volunteering. Particular attention is then paid to the skills chosen by the volunteer at the start of the mission. To determine the levels of competence, the facilitator uses the LEVEL5 reference framework and asks the volunteer about this competence. Using a set of questions, the facilitator compares the volunteer's answers with the table of competences in the LEVEL5 reference framework. Once the facilitator thinks they have determined the levels of competence, they propose them to the volunteers and a discussion takes place to reach an agreement. Then, if it is not the final assessment, all the stakeholders present during the assessment determine the objectives and learning situations so that the volunteer, if they so wish, can improve his or her skills.

Another method is used during the volunteer's placement and, more specifically, during their participation in the civic and citizenship training. These training sessions, open to volunteers from outside the Ligue de l'enseignement, are an opportunity to discuss their rights and duties, citizenship and Civic Service mission. The volunteers are therefore led, through peer evaluation, to discuss the usefulness of their mission (for themselves, for the organisation's public and for society). This training is provided in the following stages:

- The volunteers are divided into groups of three. The facilitators make sure that the young people are divided into groups so that the volunteering placements and hosting organisations of the three are different. In this way, a complete outside view can be provided.
- Volunteers take turns presenting their placements (objectives, a typical day, projects undertaken, future projects). The two volunteers listening try to answer these questions: What does the mission bring to the volunteers? What skills do they think they are developing? What does it bring to the public? To society? The aim is to make young people aware of the skills they are developing and the social usefulness of their mission.
- The course leader supports the volunteers in the exercise by guiding them through the questions to be asked, as well as the verbalisation of certain skills and/or uses for society and the public.

Finally, although the methods for recognising skills are essential in the Job Bridge project experimentation, so is the tool for valuing them too. Indeed, this question had to be answered in the pilot projects: how will volunteers be able to recognise skills acquired beyond their civic service mission? The tool chosen by the Ligue de l'enseignement, which has already been used in other contexts, is the open badge. Thus, at each stage of the mission, volunteers were recognised by means of open badges (for skills or career paths) so that they could use them when looking for a school, a job or any other situation requiring a proof of their acquired competences.

In **Germany** and in the **UK**, the processes for assessments were done in peer-to peer reflection followed by group interviews. Finally, the volunteers, with the help of the Job Bridge partner, documented their outcomes. In this setting much emphasis was put on creating a comfortable atmosphere and on approaching the assessment in several reflection steps, kind of zooming in. These assessments were done in interviews with the mentor, supplemented with observations of the trainers in the project. The interview results were combined with the observations and discussed with the participants individually. The results provided the basis for documenting the outcomes. Here the context was more formal, as the meetings took place at the venue of the project and were embedded into other project activities.



In **Italy**, due to the COVID-19 health emergency and, consequently, because of the short period dedicated to the pilot project (September - November 2020), the learning projects developed by the volunteers involved were based on volunteering activities already started and/or just finished, and the evaluation methods used to evaluate the soft skills were self-assessment; peer assessment; and personal interview. It is important to underline that all the involved volunteers declared their interest in implementing the soft skills assessment and certification methodology learned in the Job Bridge pilot project in their associations. Precisely for this reason, an important part of the third training meeting was dedicated to the evaluation methods topic to identify the most suitable ones for the pilot phase, and those – for example, observation, reflective diary – that could potentially be used in the learning projects that the volunteers involved - once they become facilitators - will develop with the volunteers in their associations.

And in **Spain**, the assessment methods which were used ranged from observation to games, from non-formal checking-in to interviews and debate sessions. In observations, the partners accompanied the volunteers while they were working on their planned tasks to see how they handled different situations and which ones were the most difficult to deal with. During games, interactive game methodologies were used to assess attitudes and competences in a non-formal way and in a friendly atmosphere. Non-formal and ad-hoc checking-in was very important too because it allowed to ask the volunteers regularly about how they were feeling about their placements and their tasks. Furthermore, face-to-face interviews were conducted, in which open, predefined questions were asked. During the interviews, the partner also worked on motivating the volunteers' self-evaluation and reflection by talking about it and watching some motivational videos. And finally, discussions during debate sessions allowed volunteers to evaluate each other and learn from the advice and insight of others.

Achievements of the methodologies

Throughout the pilot projects and then, in the process of reflecting and putting together a national report on the learning initiatives, we asked all the partners to run a thorough analysis and evaluation on the extent to which the Job Bridge methodology made volunteering more interesting and more attractive to the target group. The following quotes, sent through by the **Belgian** partner, are an ideal way of introducing this chapter of the report:

- *“The Job Bridge methodology inspired us to create a first competence inventory for the entire organisation (over 15,000 volunteers) and consciously implement the 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 pilot project facilitator
- *“Scouts of Spain is an organization with more than one hundred years of experience in non-formal education, education, training and training of volunteers and in the development of educational and training projects. In this sense, although it is true that the repertoire of methodologies and techniques learned during the JB were not new for us, it has been highly enriching to see how these techniques and tools can be applied in an orderly and organized way that we allow us to increase the quality of our training.”* – WOSM Spain pilot project facilitator

On the question of the methodology making the methodology more interesting, both the **Bulgarian** and the **UK** partners said that the participants needed a clear structure to prepare their activities. Answering questions helped them start their self-reflection; action plans helped them prepare their activities; and competence assessment forms helped them realise how much they improved. All this, in turn, increased their motivation and willingness to participate. It is worth pointing out that volunteers still organised by themselves, invented their own ideas, and realised them by themselves. All they needed was assistance in coordinating and planning their activities, and this is where the Job Bridge approach excels.

As the **UK** partner stated, *“co-creation by volunteers and allowing them to have as much input into the delivery of their volunteering and social action projects is crucial not only to make the projects successful, but to give an even stronger boost to the development and strengthening of the young people’s skills and competences. It makes it then easier and more robust to assess those skills at the end of the activities, if the young person was invited to be creative and allowed to co-create.”*

In **France**, the partner reflected that in the past years, volunteer assessments have shown that young people had difficulties in realising the usefulness of their placements, either for themselves or for the people they were working with. Volunteers were not aware of the competences they were developing in their volunteering. In addition, the facilitators lacked the tools to identify these competences, which meant that they were unable to build appropriate learning situations. Thus, in this respect, the Job Bridge methodology was very important as it made volunteering more interesting: volunteers became even more involved in their volunteering and their future professional plans. Moreover, they felt that they are supported in this respect and that they are valued according to the activities they carry out.

Case study: Job Bridge making volunteering more interesting in Germany

Various aspects in terms of making volunteering more interesting were mentioned during the interviews and talks with the involved people. Among these were:

- **(Re)engagement in learning, training and work:** The Job Bridge methodology enabled volunteers to become more aware of the learning dimension of their volunteering experience. In addition, exchanging with others and to projecting their experiences into the future, is very beneficial. However, it was important to introduce the evaluation element in a way that did not make the volunteers feel uncomfortable, as some volunteers – and especially the young participants in the Challenge Abroad project – had bad experiences at school in terms of evaluation.

“Participating in the JOB BRIDGE piloting was very interesting for me. The validation methodology gave me the chance to see my development in a more visualised way. This was very helpful and motivating for me. Sometimes it was challenging for me to formulate my learning outcomes. But, with the support of our mentor, it helped a lot.” – Volunteer, FSJ

- **Orientation and making plans:** The reflection on and assessment of their competences helped the volunteers to sharpen their focus and plan for the longer term. As a result, they got a clearer picture of what competences they have and still want to develop and what they also want to do with them in terms of further (professional) development.

Sandra, for example, witnessed **a change in herself because of taking part** in the FSJ, feeling more engaged with people around her and more open. Thus, she wishes to pursue volunteering activities in the future that will help the wider community around her.

Fleur, another volunteer who was involved in the FSJ stated: *“I’ve established my own ideals and what I want to do in the future and the path I want to pursue. (...) If you take the time to concentrate on trying to develop these competences, it could be beneficial for you when you are out in the world and are trying to progress in terms of your career or even your personal life, or in your family life – it could help you at home as well, and any other situation, especially the flexibility competence. And teamwork. Those two are very important to me.”*

- **Participation in civic life:** Importantly, improving one’s participation in civic life relates to both professional settings as well as people’s everyday lives more generally as can be seen from Fleur’s comment – she is making plans in terms of her professional life, but also notes how she can use the skills she developed (such as flexibility and teamwork) at home as well. In this way, acquired competences have a benefit in different contexts.
- **Sense of achievement:** Gaining new and improving existing competences gave the volunteers a sense of achievement as they witnessed their progress and development. The benefit of Job Bridge methodology is *“the credibility it provides to my experience and the fact that it radically improves the self-awareness of my improvement.”* Participant in “Challenge Abroad”

As one of the participants noted, Job Bridge not only validates competences but also allows people to really appreciate the level of improvement. The benefits of Job Bridge also go beyond the immediate validation process. Participants stated that through their own learning they were able to pass on ideas to the colleagues they worked with and consequently felt that they could contribute to the activities they were involved in.

- **Personal motivation:** The Job Bridge methodology helped to motivate volunteers. The volunteers were often positively surprised about their development which exceeded their expectations. Consequently, this also had a motivating effect on them, and pushed them to set even higher goals for the future: *“One of the most positive experiences during the Job Bridge piloting was to see how surprised some of the volunteers were about their development. They could hardly believe what they had reached during their volunteering experiences – it was great to see how pleased they were about the visualisation of their positive development. Being involved in the process of validation increased their motivation to set further goals for their development and made them more self-confident. Volunteers also felt more self-confident because of witnessing their improvement, and they wanted to see what else they could achieve.”* – Trainer involved in the “Challenge Abroad”

The volunteers were interested in reflecting on their competences from the very beginning as in long term volunteering you can easily forget how you were when you started. It was also important to highlight what they could gain by taking part and the importance of translating the benefits of volunteering into future job or study opportunities.

- **Discovery of hidden talents:** Taking part in the Job Bridge project gave volunteers a chance to discover and develop their hidden talents: *“Having the description of each level of competences and examples of how one competence can be expressed, is useful because we are not aware on the competences we already have.”*

As this volunteer notes, the descriptions of different levels of competences and examples of each competence helped them realise competences they already possessed in addition to new ones: *“I feel like the course, the project, really helped me because the two competencies I picked – they weren’t really something that I thought of before. However, by doing this, it made me aware of them, and so when it came to carrying them out through my volunteering, it gave me the chance to put some thought into them and think about improving myself.”*

Thus, as we can note from all the above testimonials, Job Bridge helped the volunteers identify and validate competences they have not previously thought of. Once they became aware of the competences, they were able to focus on improving them consciously and to seek opportunities to apply them.

In addition to reflecting on whether the Job Bridge methodology makes volunteering more interesting and more attractive to the target group, we also asked the partners to feed back in their national reports about the extent to which the methodology also helps to improve the quality of planning, delivery and follow-up of volunteering activities.

From amongst the different reports, to pick out some key examples, our **Bulgarian** colleagues at **CATRO** said that the Job Bridge methodology gives access to many practical tools which make planning, delivery and follow-up of volunteering activities easier both for the volunteers and their facilitators. Specifically, it is worth pointing out the usefulness of:

- Exploring the volunteer's motivation and strengths before the beginning of the project;
- Setting up an action plan with concrete, measurable goals;
- Introducing the concept of competence-oriented learning and how volunteering can lead to tangible results related to one's career perspectives;
- Assessing competences in a way which makes them easy to understand and helps visualise learning progress.

In **Germany**, in the first learning project it was the Job Bridge staff who oversaw presenting the project idea to the volunteers and supporting them to reflect on their aspired learning outcomes and on their achievements. Thus, although it was only possible to reflect on the conversations with the hospital-based volunteers who were involved in the learning project set up for the Job Bridge piloting phase, from the feedback gathered from the volunteers it was possible to deduct that the planning and reflection processes made the volunteering experience very rewarding. In the second project ("Challenge Abroad"), the **BUPNET** received feedback from the trainers and mentors involved, who indicated that they really appreciated having access to practical tools that would enable them to plan, implement and follow up the activities in a learner-oriented way. They mentioned that it was useful to get concrete ideas and tools related to exploring volunteers' motivation and strengths, before starting the project, developing a plan with concrete, measurable goals, raising volunteers' awareness of how their volunteering can lead to tangible results and a clear (professional) perspective, and reflecting and assessing competences in an easy-to-understand way that helps visualise learning progress.

And with the other partners, including the feedback from **Italy**, **Spain** and the **UK**, the organisations involved in the project reported that the integration of the Job Bridge methodology in their own settings, mechanisms and methodologies already in place, worked complementarily to strengthen the planning, delivery and follow-up processes. In addition, the **Spanish** partner was really (positively) surprised by the effect of assessing "self-confidence" and "time management" competences on the volunteers and themselves. When assessing "self-confidence" and applying different activities to measure the progress in this area, volunteers were able to verify that self-esteem is not only something we are born with, but that it can also be developed throughout life. And, in relation to "time management", by working on identifying priorities, planning and setting of deadlines, this allowed the volunteers to meet deadlines and ensure their tasks were much more organised and better structured.

And lastly, in the context of the achievements of the methodologies of the Job Bridge project, we requested that all the partners reflect, based on their experiences, the strengths of the project methodologies regarding its tools – such as the reference system, coaching guidelines, certification – and whether these tools were useful for assessing the competences of the volunteers engaged in the pilot learning projects. The feedback from the partners has been captured, to begin with, with some of the following quotes:

- *"The Theory of Change allowed a clear planning of the implementation of the learning project. Reference system was the most valuable tool in the implementation."* – ESN facilitator

- *“The techniques and methodologies applied and learned during the JB provide a global systemic vision of the training and education processes for volunteers. The coherence between the elements that make up the JB methodology makes training planning clearer so that competencies can be acquired in a self-conscious way.”* – WOSM Spain facilitator

CATRO reflected that, when presented at the right moment, the reference systems are quite well understood by the target group. Perhaps because of the high educational level of our participants, the **Bulgarian** partner did not use the simplified version, but assessed all dimensions – knowledge, skills and attitudes, with concrete examples. The participants showed willingness to receive a certificate, and the organisation prepared 13 of them for the first series, which meant they were prepared for 87% of participants. Regardless of its other applications, the LEVEL5 system is a useful self-reflection guide. In addition, the coaching guidelines contained several practical tools which turned out to be very useful for the participants.

To build on this feedback, **Volunteering Matters** reflected that when you are operating within a context of an organisation that is really at the forefront of volunteer management already and is really on top of its game when it comes to impact and evaluation, it sometimes needs that extra incentive to become acquainted with the benefits of methodologies such as those that were engaged through LEVEL5 in the Job Bridge project. For this reason, it was very helpful to have a significant number of the **UK** facilitators involved in the week-long training in Göttingen, as it showed that a lot of the work, they were already doing in relation to competence assessment, could be further strengthened by the application of the Job Bridge methodology.

One of the facilitators also remarked that *“the training was useful not only for how I was then able to apply it to my volunteers in the pilot projects, but also to me personally, in the management of my own professional skills, to realise that there are excellent evaluation methodologies which I can use to validate my own skills and competences.”*



Reflection exercise during the training course in Göttingen

Continuing with the partners’ feedback, **La Ligue** stated that the strengths of the tools related to the Job Bridge methodology lie in the development of the LEVEL5 standard. They reflect that this reference system is simple to use and adapted to volunteering activities. Moreover, it is easily transposable to other forms of commitment supported by Ligue de l'enseignement, which will eventually make it possible to monitor the young person's different career paths within the federation. Furthermore, the guidelines listed during the Job Bridge training course in February 2020 made it possible to put words to a process of developing the accompaniment of volunteers already begun by the Ligue de

l'enseignement. It made it possible to strengthen the process and to include these guidelines in a project that is now more fully developed.

The **German** partners reflected specifically on the e-learning course and workshops. They stated that the e-learning modules in combination with the introductory workshops were important elements in the learning process. The general feedback was very positive and encouraging. The e-learning modules were well structured and meaningful. They covered all important aspects in terms of competence-oriented training and validation with respective background information and exemplary easy-to-use exercises. The course also offered a good overview of the benefits of validation and validation processes and showed how to implement these in existing courses. The inventory of competences was mentioned as being particularly comprehensive and of high quality because it covered all relevant competences that can be acquired in volunteering. And, because it is so broad, our German colleagues said that it is useful for many different purposes and contexts:

- **Validation:** The concept of validating integration competences was new to the participants involved in the pilot projects. In the learning project "Challenge Abroad", reflection on and assessment of competences are common elements. However, Job Bridge gave new impulses for assessing more systematically the learning outcomes not necessarily related to a job together with the learners. It was beneficial for both the trainer and the learner. The trainer could see whether the course activities were well chosen in terms of contributing to enhancing the desired competences and achieving the learning objectives. The learner became aware of the learning progression of those competences that might not be on the agenda of the course. And, furthermore, the learners learnt how to formulate what they are good at.
- **The concept of learning projects:** The two learning project descriptions gave evidence that involved trainers and learners gained new competences. All in all, the key outcome was that the reflection on learning outcomes, other than on those that the course is supposed to achieve (for example, the job-related ones), was hardly ever done. It brought an added value as it engaged learners in a reflection process on competences that are not in the primary course focus, but that are all the same very important in terms of employability (such as, for example, communication, teamwork). The involved trainers confirmed that the reflection and documentation of the competences led to a more conscious learning experience. The validation process with assessments to stimulate reflection on the learning added to this.
- **LEVEL5:** The LEVEL5 certificate can give evidence of volunteers' learning in a very specific context but shows, all the same, their learning potential. It can also be a very empowering experience for them to get engaged in a learning project and have their competence development visualised and documented in a certificate.

For the **Italian** partners, the Job Bridge methodology provided useful and usable tools that were very much appreciated by the participants. The reference system was functional and helpful to delineate the field of the learning project and how to organise it. In addition, the coaching guidelines were useful to plan the training activity and the implementation of the learning projects. Furthermore, the certificate and badge validation were appreciated by the participants both at individual and organisational level, but they underlined that it would be better if the badge could report also the soft skills certified, and at which level.

And, for the **Spanish** partner, they integrated the Job Bridge Methodology in their own methodology of planning, delivery and follow-up of volunteering activities, acquiring new perspectives and discovering new competences, which expanded on their pre-existing work with the Youthpass:

“We were used to evaluate competences included in the Youthpass programme, but thanks to our cooperation in the Job Bridge project, we were able to reflect on the value of much more competences and now we have included some Job Bridge competences in our portfolio. In general, the project was interesting for both the facilitator and the volunteers, because thanks to the project methodology we increased the number of follow-up meetings and new aspects about volunteers' competences and development were discussed.”

Obstacles and challenges

It is not surprising that the partners pretty much all reflected that the key obstacles and difficulties in the delivery of the pilot projects were linked to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of course, beyond the challenges induced by the pandemic, such as inability to deliver face-to-face meetings, evaluations, group sessions for assessment of skills, reflection meetings, there were also the usual challenges that one would face outside of the pandemic situations: keeping up the



interest, engagement and commitment of volunteers. However, what we as the Job Bridge consortium think is very important to note is the fact that compared to the overall number of the volunteers who were initially introduced to the Job Bridge project and the concept of the pilot learning initiatives, there was such as small drop-out rate. For us, it is a testimony of the importance of the Job Bridge methodologies, and we believe that the various quotes and testimonials already presented earlier are witnesses to the important journey that both the volunteers, and the facilitators, and indeed, the organisations engaged, underwent as part of their engagement with Job Bridge.

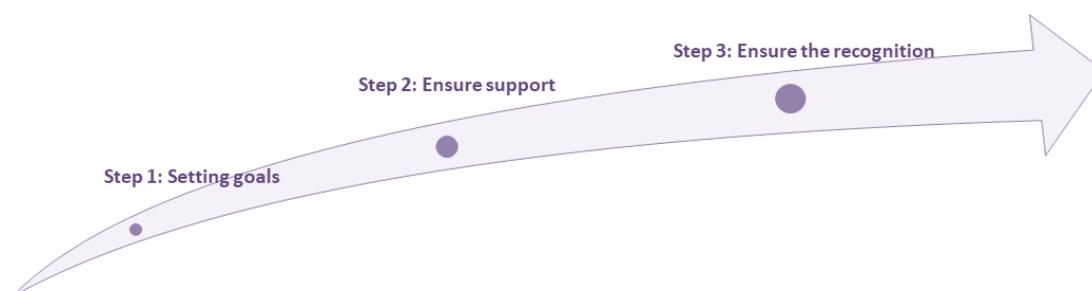
If we were to borrow down into more detail, the **WOSM Spain** project said, that the initial plan of implementing competence-oriented approach in an ongoing learning project, that is, the volunteer’s activities of external representation in diverse platforms, was narrowed down to a training, because it was not possible to see the implementation of the training in the external representation activities of the volunteers, as it was on hold during the pandemic. However, the use of real-life assessment methods allowed to have a good assessment of the levels of various competencies of the volunteers, how they performed, perhaps not fully in the same conditions as in a real life situation, but the exercises were very real, nevertheless. Of course, the pandemic also affected the numbers of the volunteers who were able to participate in the training, because the face-to-face options had to be cancelled, and they would have allowed to go deeper into the topics and take more time. Nonetheless, in the end, the outcomes and achievements of the short duration training, online, were very satisfying.

For **CATRO**, the greatest challenge they encountered in Bulgaria was linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, which cancelled all their initial plans and forced them to find a solution suitable for an online environment. In addition to that, the most challenges that the **Bulgarian** partner encountered were not linked to communication with the volunteers, but rather between the volunteers themselves – an aspect that they will pay special attention to in the future. For **Volunteering Matters**, the COVID-19 pandemic – as previously stated – meant that the initial challenge was looming as a major task, because all the organisation’s work – not just the engagement in the Job Bridge project – had to be adapted. However, due to resilience and creativity, often on behalf of the volunteers, solutions were found.

For **La Ligue** in **France**, one of the obstacles to overcome, as in any innovative project, was the knowledge and understanding of the Job Bridge methodology by all project stakeholders. Indeed, for the project to be as effective as possible, the structures hosting volunteers in civic service had to be willing to adopt the methodology. However, as each tutor in the host organisations carries out their role as an employee, in addition to tutoring, they are sometimes reluctant to innovate in their support due to a lack of time. La Ligue therefore need to succeed in convincing the tutors of the usefulness of a methodology such as that of Job Bridge and offer them a method which enables them to participate without the time spent appearing to hinder them from innovating.

For **Germany**, the biggest challenge in these months was to get access to the volunteers. This was, on the one hand, due to the pandemic and the months of lockdown right after the training course in Göttingen. On the other hand, even though as both organisations (**BUPNET** and **blinc**), they could recruit and were convinced of the importance of giving recognition to the competences young people develop in volunteering or by working abroad, due to tight funding and heavy workloads, none of the organisations was ready to invest own resources. Furthermore, in the “Challenge Abroad” volunteering setting, a recurring challenge was to stimulate serious reflection and to bring across the point that the initiative aims to support the young people, rather than it being a task ordered from the above. It was sometimes difficult for the participants to understand that the effort was for their own benefit, and not just because the mentor wanted to implement it.

For **Italy** and **Spain**, the main obstacle encountered was the COVID-19 health emergency, which had and continues to have a serious impact on different levels, such most of the volunteering activities being totally or partially stopped or delayed by the pandemic emergency; shorter period available for the pilot project; planning and re-planning of the pilot phase. In addition, the main challenge was to involve volunteering organisations and their volunteers to engage them fully and to provide them with a meaningful learning experience within this complex scenario.



Lessons learned and recommendations

As the last chapter in this report, the compendium of lessons learned and recommendations bring together the final reflections of the project partners, once they had the opportunity to take some distance from the actual delivery of the pilot learning projects. We bring the key points as a set of main feedback areas as quotes from the partners, as, we believe, after 40 pages of a major European report, they will help to end the reading experience with something longer-lasting and engaging:

- *“Online self-learning without support: it was proven difficult to incite the facilitator and the volunteers to either go on the Job Bridge e-learning platform or use the app and get a badge.”*
- *“Not all volunteers had a badge – how should we motivate them? In general, it is a question of the need of certification in volunteering, non-formal and informal learning.”*
- *“The LEVEL5 methodology was definitely the most appreciated tool by the facilitators.”*
- *“Besides LEVEL5, other tools were seen as useful: learning diary, assessment methods and process, theory of change.”*
- *“More time is needed for Job Bridge pilot implementation and for the assessment activities so that everyone can participate at least two times in the same activities, to see their margin of improvement.”*
- *“We would like to point out several key points from our experience: preparation is vital – volunteers need time to reflect on their aims and expectations. Structure is important – volunteers can perform several tasks independently but need tools to guide them – so make use of the resources available. Ensure participation – in an online group setting, make sure all participants have a working microphone so they can actively share their opinion. If possible, turn the cameras on – that will bring the situation closer to a real-life setting. Pay attention to communication – when you are supporting several teams, it is important that they not only work on their tasks and report to you but coordinate between themselves as well. Be available for questions – sometimes the volunteers encounter unexpected difficulties and need assistance. Make use of LEVEL5 at the end of the process – it takes time to understand how the LEVEL5 system works and doing so in the start of the project will divert the attention of volunteers from the tasks they need to perform. That does not mean they do not need self-reflection – they do, but at that stage, it needs to be more open, using guiding questions and group reflections. When done right, this approach leads to an effective self-reflection and high and good quality use of the LEVEL5 system.”*
- *“Firstly, although the process is intended to be multiplied tenfold over a larger number of volunteers, it is necessary to bear in mind that each course must be individualised according to the young person and their life history. The methodology must sometimes be adapted or simplified for each individual person.”*

- *“It is true that the LEVEL5 reference framework offers a multitude of skills. However, as a first experimental phase, we recommend choosing between five and seven competences to be offered to volunteers, depending on the skills of the organisation.”*
- *“The Job Bridge methodology has enabled us to learn from the need to reflect on and organise a real process of competence development using tools that are shared and recognised by partners, as well as the need to rely on a range of stakeholders to successfully develop volunteers and support them in their future projects.”*
- *“In working with young people, regardless of their social status, it is recommendable to create a casual atmosphere, which avoids any resemblances of school, parents or authority in general.”*
- *“Most young people feel grown-up and capable, regardless of others' perceptions, and questioning this might repel them. Therefore, it is important to use empowering language and focus on existing strengths and resources rather than emphasising on their learning needs.”*
- *“In group assessments - the smaller the group, the better the spirit in it, the deeper the reflection.”*
- *“It turned out to be practicable that the mentors helped with the assignment of volunteers' competence level in the reference system and also with the formulation of the learning outcomes in a draft version to be finalised together with the young people.”*
- *“Use validation as a holistic way to strategically plan competence developments, for example, define which competences are aspired, how they can be developed, validate the learning.”*
- *“The approach has to fit to the learning setting and should make use of innovative assessment methods that avoid the impression of formal exams.”*
- *“It has to consider in each case the specific purpose, activities, and settings. Moreover, it also has to consider the situation, pre-knowledge and demands of the individual learner.”*
- *“The Job Bridge pilot project provided interesting and significant insight and learning both for the facilitators and for the volunteers involved. The planning of the training course was influenced by the COVID-19 health emergency, but the articulation designed and implemented was effective in achieving the educational objectives and supporting and accompanying the pilot projects.”*
- *“The participants appreciated how the path allowed them to reflect on their organisations and how to transfer the Job Bridge methodology in their context, in order to offer other volunteers, the possibility of learning and development and the recognition of soft skills developed through volunteering activity. Interesting reflections also emerged on how there are some soft skills that specifically characterise the volunteers of an association.”*