EUCIS-LLL Annual Conference - Krakow - 9 May 2011

Role, Place and Value

Given to Volunteering

in Education and Training

European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning

EUCIS-LLL

General Report
The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) brings together 24 European networks working in education and training. Together, they cover all sectors of education and training including networks for higher education, vocational education and training, adult education and popular education. Together they represent millions of students, school heads, parents, human resources professionals, teachers and trainers, reaching out to hundreds of millions learners all over Europe and beyond.

EUCIS-LLL was created with the purpose of involving the different actors as much as possible in the dynamics of discussing and implementing the policies and actions of the European Union. It acts as a resource centre and a space for knowledge exchange, facilitating cooperation between institutions and civil society organisations. It wishes to offer the possibility for the European citizen’s voice to be heard on educational issues and, drawing on the expertise of the networks that make up the platform, to bring concrete solutions for potential ways in which the decisions made by the European Institutions can be implemented. It is in a unique position to support European networks in education and training to work collectively at all levels and to contribute to a structured policy dialogue within the open method of coordination in education and training (Education and Training 2020). Such dialogue is essential for the future development of an EU that is closer to its citizens.

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94 million citizens, representing around 23% of Europeans aged over 15 years, are engaged in voluntary work, with important differences in the level of volunteering between EU Member States. Each country has a different definition of volunteering, and of how to measure it, so that international comparisons are very difficult to carry out. However there has been a general increase in the number of active volunteers and voluntary organisations in the EU over the past 10 years.

The EUCIS-LLL conference “The role, place and value given to volunteering in education and training” was held at the International Culture Centre of Krakow (Poland) on “Europe Day”, 9 May 2011. Volunteers play an essential role in lifelong learning. Being active as a volunteer contributes towards developing knowledge, skills and competences that one could not have gained in traditional systems. Today these competences are seldom recognised within education and training systems whereas research shows that volunteering contributes to Europe’s democratic life and social model but also to volunteers’ civic, social and economic participation. It is thus important to look at ways of encouraging, supporting and recognising volunteering and volunteers within education and training. For instance how can the implementation of European frameworks (EQF, Europass, validation guidelines, etc.) be used to encourage and support volunteers of all ages? What can we learn from existing practices around Europe?

Arnie Wickens, Director of CSV Consulting (UK) and Filip Pazderski, from the Foundation Institute of Public Affairs (Poland), presented respectively the West and East perspective on volunteering and its specific role in education and training. During the conference, participants worked more specifically on four topics:

- The role of volunteers within educational organisations and society;
- The recognition and validation of volunteers’ skills and competences;
- The transnational dimension of volunteering and the potential of communication technologies to enhance mobility;
- Volunteering as a way of developing active citizenship and democracy in Europe.

The active involvement of participants led to setting up two extra workshops:

- The sustainability of volunteering;
- The impact of volunteering for disadvantaged groups.

In the view of the upcoming Polish EU Presidency and the impulse given by the European Year 2011 on Volunteering, this event offered a great opportunity to push forward some key messages from practitioners and experts in education and training from all around Europe on this crucial topic. These actors represent parents, teachers, educators, researchers, vocational training centres, universities, schools, adult education or local associations as well as representatives of institutions at local, national and European levels. This conference report gives an overview of the rich discussions and exchanges that took place.
Elzbieta Lecznarowicz, Vice-President of the City Hall of Krakow, welcomed participants to Krakow, a city deeply involved in lifelong learning activities. “Lifelong learning is a very broad concept, which includes all kinds of activities, related to education and training. The Jordan Youth Centre is a good example that shows how the concept of education is broadened”. Mrs Lecznarowicz reminded the participants of the “crucial role played by civil society organisations when developing volunteering activities”.

In Poland, NGOs are mainly connected to the Catholic Church or to the municipality. In Krakow, there is a specific centre to support the coordination of volunteering activities. On 11th June, “Non-Governmental Organisations Day”, the municipality will organise an event where NGOs can present their volunteering activities.

Elzbieta Lecznarowicz wished all the participants an enjoyable stay in Krakow and hoped that the long experience of the Jordan Youth Centre would meet their expectations.

Gina Ebner, EUCIS-LLL President and Secretary General of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), thanked the Jordan Youth Centre and the Municipality of Krakow for hosting this conference. She reminded the participants that cooperation at all levels of education and training is one of the main purposes of the platform. EUCIS-LLL gathers more than 20 organisations from various sectors of education and training including networks of students, seniors, teachers, social and youth workers or human resource professionals, most of them acting as volunteers.

“Looking back at the last few years, I see that being able to work together represents a real change. By exchanging views we can find similarities but we can also bring new ideas and solutions to the challenges we are facing today.”

Many of EUCIS-LLL members work with volunteers or provide volunteers’ training. This conference offers a great opportunity to look at these issues together and come up with new ideas and initiatives. Finally, Mrs Ebner wished everyone a very lively and inspiring conference and thanked again the Jordan Youth Centre for making this event possible.

Monika Stachnik-Czapla, Vice-President of the European Association of Institutions of Non-Formal Education for Children and Young People (EAICY) and Head of the International Department of the Jordan Youth Centre in Krakow, welcomed participants reminding them that this year EAICY celebrated its 20th anniversary.

EAICY is an international association that brings together organisations working with children and young people in their leisure time, in Europe.
(more than 25,000 members) but also in countries such as South Africa and Kazakhstan. It organises every year a wide spectrum of activities such as conferences, trainings, competitions for children, young people and professionals, publications, study tours, work placements, etc.

Mrs Stachnik-Czapla thanked the municipality of Krakow and Mrs Ebner for choosing Krakow to hold the annual conference of the association within the framework of the upcoming Polish EU Presidency.

**Bartlomiej Kocurek**, Director of the Jordan Youth Centre, then presented the work carried out by the centre, which organises out-of-school activities such as holiday camps and works on civic education in close relations with schools. 80% of its staff is teachers.

He remarked that the “high value of youth centres is reaching out to audiences that have difficulties in formal education institutions”.

East/West Perspectives on the role and place of volunteers in education and training systems

Arnie Wickens, Director of CSV Consulting, the UK’s leading volunteering and training charity, began his presentation by giving the following definition: “Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship and is fundamental to democracy. It is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain”.

According to this definition, four key principles can be applied to volunteering:

- **Choice**: it is undertaken freely. Money can be an incentive but there is a specific motivation to do volunteering that is not linked to wages.
- **Inclusion**: everybody can be a volunteer, at all ages and in all areas of life.
- **Reciprocity**: it is about giving and receiving. Volunteers give their time and efforts for the benefits of society, but they also gain a lot on a personal and professional level and have the satisfaction of doing something that is worthwhile.
- **Recognition**: it has a high value for society and has to be recognised as such.

In the UK there is a long tradition of volunteering but the number of volunteers has increased in the last few years. 25% of adults volunteer once a month and 2 out of 5 people volunteer once a year. It represents a **huge economic value** considered to be £21.5 billion. Volunteers are acting in key areas of society such as health and social care where they complement the work of professionals. They are **pioneering new approaches** to delivering services and contribute towards creating new jobs by creating new demand. Furthermore, there has been significant growth in volunteers’ participation in sports stimulated by the Olympic Games of 2012. There are also a lot of volunteers in arts, culture and heritage, in environment, health and social care, education and training. Schools are rather reluctant to welcome volunteers but more and more volunteers are helping with the learning of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy.

We can distinguish other trends, for instance individuals commit themselves more and more to **one-off or short-term volunteering periods**. Consequently, local organisations have developed one-day activities – “Make a Difference Day” – during which individuals can try volunteering without any pressure. In terms of social groups, there is growth in employed as well as unemployed/retired volunteers for whom volunteering can represent a new challenge. Youth volunteering has also grown thanks notably to an awareness-raising campaign led by the former UK Government to encourage 16-25 years old to volunteer.

The development of volunteer activities requires **systemic support from public institutions and other organisations** in terms of time, supervision and training. Even if there is a growing interest in volunteering, in times of crisis, governments and private donors are reducing their funds/investments to volunteering/voluntary-based organisations, producing a damaging impact on its development. This is regrettable as volunteering **enables individuals to gain or develop skills**. Research shows that volunteers generally develop more soft skills than hard skills. Teamwork, personal confidence, motivating oneself and others,
communication, time management, leadership, sense of citizenship or understanding of differences and tolerance, are some of the skills gained or developed through volunteering. It could be said that volunteers learn imperceptibly, they learn by doing.

Volunteering is also a powerful tool for connecting people from different backgrounds and, therefore, contributes to social cohesion. It can help unemployed people to overcome barriers to the job market by being active and acquiring new transversal skills. It can also help older people to stay active and socially engaged, while feeling useful at the same time. What is more, volunteering does not only benefit the individual taking part in its activities but also society and local communities.

The role played by volunteering is seldom acknowledged. Recognition is not necessarily financial; it is about recognising the high social value of volunteering and showing appreciation to volunteers. For some volunteers getting a certificate or accreditation is also important especially for those who did not have one before. The possibility of validating learning gained through volunteering can stimulate further volunteering by giving students, for example, a sense of achievement and a feeling of doing something worthwhile.

Filip Pazderski, from the Foundation Institute of Public Affairs (Poland), began his presentation by pointing out two main factors when it comes to the roots of Poles’ involvement in civil society: anti-communist opposition after World War II and the “Solidarity” movement in the 1980s and Christian values and the role of the Catholic Church. The Law on Public Benefit and on Volunteer Work (2003, 2010) provides the legal basis on how volunteer work should be organised in Poland. Volunteering is possible within different kinds of entities such as NGOs, public administration or churches but only outside of their for-profit activities.

When looking at the level of involvement in volunteering in Poland, we can observe some interesting trends. In 2010, around 20% of adult Poles declared some kind of voluntary and unpaid work of which young people under 25 represented the largest group (around 30%). However it is difficult to evaluate the exact number of volunteers in Poland because surveys use different definitions and the population is not really aware of what volunteering covers. Furthermore, some people will never admit that they are volunteers, although they fulfil the criteria, due to its “bad publicity” in Poland. Older citizens remember communist times when volunteer work was obligatory while some young people consider volunteering as unwise because you cannot make money out of it. However more young people tend to see volunteering as a “good point in their CV” – and some employers tend to take advantage of it.

Looking into the role of volunteering within education and training, Mr Pazderski highlighted the following features:

- Volunteering leads to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences.
- Volunteering is one of the means of the Europe 2020 strategy to develop more inclusive societies based on knowledge and creativity.
- Volunteering plays a great role in social inclusion, builds up social capital, and integrates different generations of Europeans through developing intergenerational cooperation.
- Volunteering is a means of developing civic education.
- Volunteering enables the integration of culturally diverse European societies thus creating a common European identity.

In the Polish formal education system volunteering is present but not to a large extent. Since 2010 grammar school pupils can obtain extra points on their final certificate for social benefit activities (including volunteering) that counts towards their secondary schools application process. School heads can allow NGOs to work within their school and the promotion of incentives
to develop volunteer activities. The implementation of these new provisions is uneven throughout Poland and depends on the good will of school authorities.

There is also an important problem of trust towards non-governmental organisations and public institutions. Research shows that people seem to turn to their family and friends when they face a difficult situation rather than to public institutions or civil society organisations. This has a direct impact on the levels of volunteering in the non-formal sector. There is also an important lack of information about existing possibilities to volunteer. Furthermore, people do not have a strong notion about the common good and are not used to working in groups to solve common problems.

There is no social recognition of the skills and competences gained during a volunteering period and validation systems are lacking. However, the situation in Poland is not all negative and the government has taken some positive initiatives and will soon publish a strategy to enhance volunteering. In this context, it is even more important to develop partnerships between schools, NGOs, libraries and local authorities to tackle these issues.

Participants had the opportunity to react to these presentations. They outlined some important elements such as the necessity:

• to link volunteering and social inclusion;
• to identify common challenges in Europe;
• to strengthen transectoral partnerships;
• to guarantee the independence of the not-for-profit sector;
• to involve volunteers in not-for-profit activities and
• to promote transnational volunteering.
In education and training, volunteers are parents, learners or educators of all ages willing to improve education and training systems. There is no doubt that a school or an adult education centre benefits greatly from the participation of young people or adults in their activities on a voluntary basis. This is particularly true in times of economic constraints. Of course, volunteers have a specific role to play and bring a particular added value to these organisations. They should not replace paid workers. Indeed, to play their role, volunteers need to be supported by the hosting organisations and to be considered for what they are – volunteers – and certainly not a free labour force.

Today volunteers benefit from different statutes in the different Member States. Their specific role and the relationship between them and professional workers are generally stated in a volunteering programme agreement. However volunteers’ working conditions vary a lot from one country to another and depending on the hosting organisation. For instance, do students/parents play a role in the governance of their schools? Do volunteers benefit from proper training and tutoring/guidance before/during/after a voluntary period? Do volunteers have a legal statute? Do they receive an allowance for their work? Are volunteering periods recognised in their educational pathway? Is volunteer work recognised in public funding as contributions in kind?

Key Messages

1. Volunteers play different roles within formal and non-formal/informal education

When analysing the role of volunteers within education and training, we have to take care to cover the diversity of educational institutions and consider formal, non-formal and informal learning.

- Volunteers in formal education are found among parents and pupils/students. Volunteering in schools provides spare time for leisure activities (i.e. organisation of school feasts) as well as for participation in school governance. Most remarkable are the volunteers taking responsibility for the rights of “school partners” and who represent the rights and interests of learners. Legal regulations set the framework for their participation in schools but public funding is crucial to sustain their representative organisations.

- Volunteering is essential for the development of soft skills such as social competences and offers a valuable learning for life and work. It should be learnt in formal educational institutions as a fundamental learning for life and as a basis of active citizenship.

- Non-formal education is not regulated by law and still lacks recognition. This means that acquired competences are not assessed and certified in a comparable way to formal education. Furthermore, the non-formal education sector is highly relying on volunteers who act as
learners, facilitators/teachers/educators and/or providers. With more than 35 million volunteers in Europe, the sports sector gathers most volunteers in non-formal education*. It is crucial to recognise the role of volunteering in the non-formal sector.

2. Importance of “mentoring” as a volunteer activity

- Mentoring was identified as a very relevant motive that is found among peers in formal education as well as in non-formal education. It is a remarkable process of mutual learning. Mentoring “happens” among peers but can/should be supported/initiated by programmes (i.e. supporting “human resource management” at the local level). Mentoring typically involves volunteers at least as mentors.

3. Government institutions should provide the legal framework for participation of educational partners – providing the framework for volunteering in all forms of learning

- Legislation needs to define the rights and duties of volunteers and their hosting organisations. It should aim to reduce individual and collective risks by setting up an appropriate legal framework for volunteers’ involvement.
- There is a need for recognition of volunteers’ role and improve its quality across all forms of education and training. Establishing measures to facilitate volunteering development will improve the overall quality of volunteering (i.e. teachers’ and parents’ leave authorisation).
- The recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning (skills & competences) will empower volunteering within lifelong learning.
- Activities of non-profit organisations contributing to civil society should be accepted and sustainable funding should be ensured by state regulations.
- Governmental programmes should offer more opportunities for the European mobility of volunteers.

4. Volunteering improves the attitude towards active European citizenship!

- Volunteering is a pillar of democratic societies and sustains civil society actions.

* It represents 2% of GDP and engages 200 million Europeans in regular sport and physical activity.

Case studies


EuroVolNet is a transnational project with 17 partners from 12 European countries that fosters the exchange of best practices regarding legal, organisational and funding related aspects of voluntary activity in sport. The project partners form a network of actors involved in the management and running of sport associations. EuroVolNet provides all European sport organisations (both project partners and extended activity beneficiaries) with learning opportunities and a valuable tool: the online voluntary services tutorial. The collection and documentation of innovative volunteer engagement, management and retention examples via project activities provides content for and form the knowledge basis of the online tutorial. Projects such as the EuroVolNet provide best practices of motivation factors and identify the barriers, but “we need visionary political decisions to remove the formal and legislative barriers for the volunteers”.

ISCA EUROPE consists of 45 national “sport for all” organisations. It focuses on the grassroots sport sector and on related topics such as participation, health, education, youth leadership, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue.

The WOW-Day is a campaign in which students from Steiner Waldorf schools all over Europe work during one day to raise money in order to support disadvantaged children worldwide. Through many activities such as volunteering, taking on one-day jobs, organising sponsored walks, making and selling crafts, putting on circus performances in the pedestrian zone or other activities, pupils raise money for better learning and living conditions for children all over the world. The WOW-Day is not an extra-curriculum activity but it is part of the curriculum so one day of school each year is devoted to it. Teachers and parents work together with the children to organise it. Since 1994 Waldorf students from all over Europe have raised about 1.5 million EUR for Waldorf projects and other projects in the realm of education all over the world. “The WOW-Day is a powerful way to put ideals in practice and enable children and students to have a commitment to social development in a pedagogical meaningful way”. On the one hand, pupils are given an experience of autonomy and responsibility and take an active commitment to the social development of the world, which is essential in preparing for their adult life as active and participative citizens. Furthermore, they experience the importance and satisfaction that voluntary effort to help others can bring. On the other, their contribution is a concrete help for a great number of children, enabling them to have access to a dignified and child friendly education.

ECSWE comprises 26 national Waldorf associations, representing over 680 Waldorf and Steiner Schools in Europe with over 147,000 pupils.

Ivica Alpeza, The Organising Bureau of European School Student Union (OBESSU), “Making students voice heard in schools”

OBESSU is a platform of cooperation between national school student unions active in general and vocational secondary education in Europe. Most of OBESSU member organisations have their own paid staff to run the office but they have volunteers working on the daily basis too. The former make their knowledge, skills and competences available whilst not asking for any kind of contribution or payment. At the European level, the board and committee members of OBESSU are all working on a voluntary basis, except for the secretariat. The contribution of volunteers is crucial for organisations like OBESSU and especially for those dealing in educational matters. Thanks to the strong involvement of volunteers at all levels, school student unions have a stronger voice and engagement in the fields they are interested most and working in. School union volunteers can be considered as pillars not only of their home organisations but also for society in general by improving participation of young people in their schools and communities. There is a “key question” that arises from time to time when it comes to school students and volunteering on the “formal recognition of volunteering and of the knowledge and skills gained through it”. This remains a challenge in most European countries and beyond.

OBESSU is a platform for cooperation between the national school student unions active in general and vocational secondary education from 25 European countries.
In education and training, volunteers are parents, learners or educators of all ages willing to improve education and training systems. Volunteers are active within formal education in schools, colleges or universities. They are also active in the non-formal sector (out-of-school activities) with people of all ages within local associations, libraries, youth centres, etc. These volunteers learn a lot while performing their mission; they develop transversal as well as technical skills that they should be able to use throughout their lives. Volunteering is also a learning opportunity and helps individuals to develop their potential and improve their self-esteem, while reducing the risk of social isolation.

The first recognition of volunteering is personal but it is also social and professional. It is important to enable these active citizens to have the skills and competences acquired during a voluntary period recognised or taken into account in education and training systems and by employers. Organisations have been working on new ways to assess and validate these competences for instance via the validation of prior learning or by including voluntary programmes as part of the curriculum in the formal system (i.e. credit systems). Others have developed transparency tools that enable volunteers and their tutors to assess what has been learnt, this is the case with portfolios for example.

At European level, some frameworks have been adopted such as the European Qualifications Frameworks or the guidelines for the validation of non-formal and informal learning that could support these developments at a European and national level. Validation is a priority in the European agenda and a key issue is the place given to non-formal and informal learning. Are we going towards the validation of agreed competences or towards an individual recognition (portfolios or other documents) of personal skills, knowledge and competence?

Today we can identify three levels in the recognition of skills, knowledge and competences in Europe that require the development of specific systems/tools:

- 1st level: identification of what people have learnt.
- 2nd level: helping individuals to negotiate with schools, universities and companies.
- 3rd level: develop dedicated portfolios/credit systems for formal recognition in education or in companies.

It is crucial to discuss these options and see which direction to take in order to further develop recognition. But identifying volunteers’ needs should always be the first step when proposing concrete solutions.
In any case, recognition should be based on the following principles:

- It is important to "enable volunteers to identify and assess" their own competences and document what they have done/learnt. Once they are aware of what they have learnt, they can link/use them for other purposes.

- The exercise of recognition should connect different levels of acquired competences: personal, educational, social and professional.

- Recognition tools do not necessarily have to be provided by the formal education sector. There are very interesting initiatives coming from non-formal education that should be mainstreamed.

- There is a multiplication of European tools such as portfolios. It is important to focus on their usage and their implementation from a competency-based perspective (i.e. European Skills Passport and Europass).

- It is crucial to develop recognition tools that are transferable across sectors (EQF, ECTS, ECVET, etc.) and that take into account knowledge, skills and competences.

- These tools should include pedagogical and learning methodologies based on volunteers’ needs. For instance, portfolios enable volunteers and their tutors to assess the acquired learning using pedagogical methodologies (i.e. training and tutoring).

- At systemic level, it is fundamental to support innovation and experimental projects on recognition and validation with sustainable financial resources and a proper legal framework.

- European institutions and other related bodies should raise awareness and promote a holistic vision of volunteering looking at volunteers as citizens, workers or students.

- EUCIS-LLL will organise a seminar on recognition and validation of skills and competences to further discuss these issues before the end of 2011.

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**Case studies**

**Bastien Engelbach, ANIMAFAC, “Volunteering and skills – Valuing a volunteering experience to ease volunteers’ professional integration”**

“Volunteering and skills” is an initiative launched by the students network Animafac in order to help students to identify and assess the skills gained during a volunteering period to prepare for their professional insertion. This project was developed because students expressed the need to have their experience recognised as a learning experience in an employment perspective rather than by their universities.

Volunteering offers a non-formal or informal learning experience that needs to be recognised at four interconnected levels: personal, social, educational and professional. During their volunteering period “volunteers can have responsibilities that they would not have had elsewhere, for example managing teams and projects”. It is a way of developing their own potential and skills that are relevant for their employability.
But one has to be aware of what learning he/she acquired before it can be recognised. “As soon as you can identify your skills, you are able to value them in a social, educational or professional perspective”. In that sense, the portfolio developed by Animafac works as a self-assessment tool that enables volunteers to describe their experiences and the skills they have acquired. Four main transversal skills were identified: communication, administration, team management and interpersonal skills and project management.

The initiative is based on a progressive methodology and provides key advice on how to present a volunteering experience on a resume or during a job interview. Animafac also proposes tutoring sessions for volunteers consisting of group work sessions followed by an exchange with human resources professionals who give them further advice for their resume and for preparing a job interview. As a result, these sessions helped volunteers to value their voluntary engagement and improve their self-esteem. This is particularly important for students who often feel unsafe about their future professional life.

**ANIMAFAC** is a French network and resource centre for students’ organisations, offering tools and spaces for dialogue to over 12,000 organisations.


Created in 2009, the European platform on volunteering in leisure time aims at developing a portfolio to assess youth leaders’ competences in non-formal education. Youth leaders, professionals or volunteers, are active around Europe in holiday camps and in other leisure time activities with children and youngsters. The platform aims at recognising their professional value and dignity. “Today youth workers and youth leaders work under a different status as educational and social actors, project initiators, technicians, and educationalists in activity or subject fields. Their skills, knowledge and competences should be better recognised.” Moreover, the creation of a common framework should also encourage and facilitate their European mobility.

The portfolio is based on common pedagogical and educational principles and can work as a quality assurance tool for the non-formal and informal sector. It can also be used as a training tool to accompany volunteers, who are not professionals in this field. As non-formal education has values and educational specificities of its own, youth leaders must develop civic and social skills such as active citizenship, intercultural learning or gender equality. The platform can propose several pedagogical methodologies when dealing with individuals or groups (i.e. interpersonal relations, team working).

The portfolio will not just be a self-assessment tool that leads youth leaders to assess their own work and identify where they can improve in a continuing process of formation; it will also constitute a guidance reference tool when developing their educational commitments.

**FICEMEA** aims to federate the action of its member organisations in order to promote active training methods as widely as possible and to contribute to the evolution of educative and social practices all over the world.

Peter Warner, ABF – SOLIDAR, “Concept of Validation of General Competencies in Liberal Adult Education and Informal Learning in Sweden”

Liberal Adult Education has a long history in Sweden. It is provided by folk high schools (folkhögskolor) and adult education associations (studieförbund) and constitutes a non-formal and voluntary educational system in Sweden. It aims to strengthen and develop democracy and civic, social and cultural participation of all in society. In 2004 and 2007, the Validation Authority produced a report aiming at creating a perspective on validation that unites different sectors in the field of Liberal Adult Education (LAE). “Today the learning achieved in non-for-profit organisations, the so-called general competencies, is seldom estimated/valued and remains invisible”. The model is based on the pedagogy and values that Liberal Adult Education stands for.
while taking into account competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings.

The model combines different levels of achievement from the taxonomy of Bloom (knowledge, attitudes, skills) and a description of factors that emanate from the different areas of competencies and qualifications that were developed in LAE and in not-for-profit organisations. The general core competencies (democratic civil competence; social competence; intercultural competence; cultural competence; learning competence; communicational competence; organisational and management competence) identified were grouped within four levels (knowledge and skills; ability to apply and act; ability to analyse, relate and estimate; initiative and achieved results). Each area of competence is then divided into four factors, one for each level, which means that in total 28 factors are described. In this model validation is based on the process of learning and not on curriculums. This system relies on the LAE teachers’ experience in developing and giving focus to specific competences that are “value based”.

The aim of the validation process is for volunteers to develop awareness about their own competences. Once an individual is aware of his/her skills it can increase his/her self-esteem and self-confidence that in turn allow him/her to describe and present them in a clearer way. It is also to allow them to document their competencies in other contexts, for instance when looking for a new job or going back to university.

**SOLIDAR** is a European network of NGOs working in development and humanitarian aid, social policy and provision and lifelong learning. With 52 members in 90 countries, it works both in Europe and internationally in alliance with trade unions, the labour movement and civil society.
Transnational dimension of volunteering and the potential of communication technologies to enhance mobility

Facilitator: Anne Liekenbrock, European Forum for Freedom in Education (EFFE)
Rapporteur: Marta Lottes, the European Association for Adult Education (EAEA)

The most frequently cited reasons for volunteering abroad are to do with education – the wish to get to know a new country and culture, to learn a language, gain skills or test a career in a particular field. However, opportunities for organised volunteers’ mobility are too few and too little known by the majority of the people. Teachers, trainers, youth workers or managers, who could act as promoters of volunteers’ mobility, often lack the knowledge and the incentives to do so. Complex administrative procedures deter administrators and institutions. The lack of knowledge about the language and culture of other countries remains a significant barrier in all areas. The financial costs of volunteers’ mobility are important and are directly linked to the socio-economic background of candidates. The lack of portability of insurance, pensions, access to health services and other social benefits are significant barriers too. Furthermore, the issue of recognition and certification is also vital – a significant number of volunteers still do not receive appropriate recognition of what they have learnt abroad.

European civil society networks give their local and national members the opportunity to participate in training sessions or conferences at European or international level. Some have developed very interesting tools to enable their members to exchange information and best practice (virtual mobility), to access online training modules for their volunteers (i.e. before/during/after a volunteering period) and collaborative thematic platforms. These new communication tools represent one answer to complement face-to-face encounters or training sessions.

Key Messages

- The purpose of volunteering mobility should be social inclusion and active citizenship. The reciprocity of volunteering in another country builds European citizenship.
- Transnational mobility of volunteering should be the role and responsibility of civil society rather than commercial entities. There is a need for structural support for European civil society organisations’ involvement.
- European institutions and other bodies should further disseminate transnational volunteering information. They should promote awareness raising campaigns and outreaching activities especially for disadvantaged groups.
- Create more awareness for the possibilities of virtual mobility for new forms of volunteering as well as volunteers with disabilities (“overcoming barriers as a form of mobility”).
- It is important to explore and share new forms of volunteering for instance using new communication tools (i.e. volunteering online from home).
- Organisations should provide organisational and didactic support to their volunteers throughout their missions using face-to-face and virtual means.
• Funding programmes should be more flexible and allow more interaction between the various actors/sectors (transectoral partnerships).
• On a systemic level, it is crucial to develop foreign language and intercultural learning.

Case studies

Raymond Dekker, Humanitas (Netherlands), “E-Learning Module for volunteers on Online Chat Help – The Listening Eye”

The Listening Eye is a free, anonymous online chat aiming at everyone who is or feels isolated and who wants to have a conversation about something he/she cannot talk about in his/her own social environment. Volunteers’ support consists in listening carefully, questioning, thinking and deploying empathy. The group of volunteers consists of men and women between 18 and 85 years old. They come from different backgrounds (student, housewife, manager, shopkeeper, employees, etc.) and live all around the Netherlands and abroad. Volunteers are all trained and supported by professional project coordinators. “An online training environment is used to train volunteers partly or totally from home. This type of training is very well suited for volunteers with physical limitations. 25% of our volunteers are in this case in Humanitas”.

Most of the participants are women (75%) 35 years old or less (72%). They talk about loneliness, sad feelings, family relationships, psychological problems, mourning, violence, identity or health. 91% of the participants indicate that they had a good conversation and 84% indicate that the conversation was very useful. Humanitas Chat can be reached 365 days a year. “When the website was published in 2006, we had twelve volunteers. Today, around 4,200 conversations are made per year by more than 80 volunteers”.

In 2010 Humanitas launched an eBuddy project to offer participants the opportunity to get involved in long-term contact with a volunteer. After the success of this initiative, Humanitas is now working on other related projects, like a chat aimed at young people (14-18 years).

Humanitas is an association funded in 1945. It is a loyal partner for people that are temporarily not able to take care of themselves. Over 10,000 motivated expert volunteers support over 35,000 people from within 600 projects in well being, residing and healthcare yearly.

Clementine Lafôret, Itinéraire International (France), “Access Volunteering in Europe! The impact of international mobility for disadvantaged young persons in Europe”

Itinéraire International, a French youth and popular education association, considers international mobility as a social and professional inclusion tool for young adults. It organises awareness-raising campaigns on different opportunities offered by building a project abroad (getting a job, internship or volunteer service), supports individuals to prepare their projects and offers training for youth workers. Together with la Ligue de l’enseignement, another French popular education movement, it set up a project “Access volunteering in Europe” in the framework of the EU programme AMICUS.

The project “Access volunteering in Europe!” supported activities linked to transnational civic service and volunteering activities especially for disadvantaged youth. It aimed at developing guidance and support for volunteering dynamics within hosting and sending organisations to enable the participation of socio-economic disadvantaged young people. Volunteering taking place abroad has specific benefits notably in terms of personal development and identity (i.e. going beyond national stigmatisation) but also for social networking (i.e. breaking isolation). Such intercultural learning process stimulates and enhances European active citizenship.

The project allowed 39 youth volunteers, 34 of which were from a socio-economic disadvantaged background, to spend an international
volunteering period of 3 to 6 months abroad. In total 139 months were spent (all volunteers together) in one of the 11 partner organisations coming from 7 European countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal, UK, Romania, Netherlands and France). The project activities focused on non-formal education activities (sport, cultural and civic activities, environmental actions, etc.) developed with youngsters from the hosting communities both in an organised environment (schools) as well as in the community at large. Volunteers developed on a personal and social level by acquiring and improving new skills and competences as well as by boosting their self-confidence.

Itinéraire International is a non-profit-making organisation, founded in 1995 with the aim of promoting international mobility within young adults of 18 to 30 years old as a tool for professional and social inclusion. La Ligue de l’Enseignement is a confederation of 102 provincial federations that gathers together more than 30,000 local NGOs in France that deal with education, training, culture and sport.

Anna Makówka-Kwapisiewicz, Fundacja Internationaler Bund Polska, Krakow, «the European Voluntary Service»

The European Voluntary Service (EVS) is a European Union action, included under the Youth in Action programme, which helps young people to develop their sense of solidarity by participating, either individually or in group, in non-profit and non-formal voluntary activities abroad. The programme is aimed primarily at young people aged 18 to 30 years, regardless of gender, ethnicity, social status or economic background. “It allows international contacts and exchange experiences, encouraging activities for the development of local communities and for the personal development of the volunteer”. Therefore, it reinforces social cohesion in Europe and promotes young people’s active citizenship.

Internationaler Bund Poland (IBP) is both sending volunteers abroad and coordinating their activities in Poland in cooperation with hosting organisations. It helps in building trust among the partners and coordinates the work of mentors from hosting organisations, who are responsible for supporting the volunteer in his/her learning process. “Internationaler Bund Poland aims at helping volunteers to overcome barriers, prejudices and stereotypes to support their mobility and promote their civic participation. Thanks to this experience, volunteers acquire competences and skills through non-formal learning means that has a positive impact on their personal and professional development”.

Recently, Internationaler Bund Poland developed activities focused on helping and fostering self-development processes within disadvantaged groups. However, foreign language skills limitations and bureaucratic requirements remain a key challenge when managing European Voluntary Service projects.

Fundacja Internationaler Bund Polska has been managing and implementing Youth in Action and European Voluntary Service projects since 2007.
Volunteering as a way to develop active citizenship and democracy in Europe

Facilitator: Piotr Sadowski, Volunteurope, member of SOLIDAR
Rapporteur: Manos Valasis, European Students’ Forum (AEGEE)

The value of volunteering goes far beyond the provision of services and economic growth. It represents a strong expression of civic participation in European societies. Volunteering enables citizens of all nationalities, religions, socio-economic backgrounds, abilities and ages to participate and actively contribute to the life of their local communities. These active and committed citizens carry out voluntary actions without motivation for financial gain. This is vital for the preservation of our democratic principles. Volunteering contributes also to develop solidarity and social cohesion, a value which is not only in great need in the current economic and social climate, but also one upon which the European Union has been built. As such, volunteering should be acknowledged as a key social capital factor.

Volunteering taking place in another European country contributes to the development of a European identity. It plays a major role in the efforts to encourage citizens to become actively involved in the process of European integration by developing a sense of common identity and enhancing mutual understanding. Its value encompasses the desire to contribute to the common good and to help shape European society. Volunteering plays a specific role within our education and training systems. It enables volunteers to develop skills and competencies for personal, social and civic development. Volunteers acquire transversal skills during a voluntary programme that they may not be able to develop in a classroom such as mutual understanding, flexibility or communication in foreign languages that are very valuable at a personal, social or economic level.

Key Messages

1. To develop a legal framework for volunteering on a European level to further promote and facilitate volunteering across Europe. Furthermore, adopting a European Statute for European Associations will give institutional recognition to the engagement and to the activism of millions of citizens, freely and voluntarily joining together in associations across Europe.

2. To improve the accessibility of European projects’ funding. Easy access to volunteering programmes is needed, both from an information point of view and when it comes to projects’ management. It is crucial to remove unnecessary administrative barriers and burdens that usually act preventively when people want to volunteer. For example, applying for a European Voluntary Service should be easier.

3. Recognising the role of volunteering within education and training and society by taking into account volunteers’ work and time as contributions in kind in projects’ budgets. The biggest contribution a volunteer can give to his/her hosting organisation is his/her time. If it cannot be counted as a financial contribution to the projects, then it is extremely difficult for voluntary-based organisations to finance actions.
4. Supporting the **role of civil society organisations**. Considering the general lack of trust towards local and regional authorities, further funding should be provided to non-governmental organisations as the main coordinators of voluntary activities.

5. **Volunteers’ mobility** should be promoted as a tool to shape European active citizenship.

6. Get the European institutions closer to the citizens by awareness raising campaigns and promoting **European active citizenship education** in all Member States. For instance, common teaching on European history, culture and heritage would help to overcome the re-emergence of extreme nationalisms.

7. A broader, more holistic and multicultural perspective on education has to be adopted, involving **non-formal education** schemes and methods.

8. The EU should capitalise on the **European Year on Volunteering 2011** and launch joint initiatives in relation to the **European Year 2013 on Citizenship**.

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**Case studies**

**Joke van der Leeuw-Roord**, European Association of History Educators (EUROCLIO), “The first national inter-ethnic and inter-religious volunteer association in Bosnia Herzegovina. An initiative of history professionals”

Back in 2003 the history textbooks were written from a nationalistic/ethnocentric point of view in Bosnia Herzegovina. The Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were pushing for a change without big success due to political resistance. Research on the perception of young people was carried out showing their problematic attitudes towards the other. “**After international interventions for many years, young and talented professionals from Bosnia as well as from Croatia and Serbia made a conscious volunteer choice to work on improving history education developing a common approach to the learning and teaching of history for the three countries**”.

The aim of this initiative was to stop a history education that resulted in creating generations hating each other. A common textbook for the history of Yugoslavia from 1945 till 1990 was produced. Moreover, a national inter-ethnic and inter-religious volunteer organisation for history education was established in Bosnia. Unfortunately the political will to make a change is still lacking. Furthermore, it is very hard for volunteer civil society organisations to mainstream their work without political support. However, this experience shows us how **“lifelong learning can offer a great opportunity to overcome such political nationalistic obstacles”**, reaching and involving further audiences.

**EUROCLIO** is a European organisation for history teachers and their associations. It supports the learning and teaching of history by sharing and exchanging knowledge and experience. The overall aim is to promote and support the development of history education so that it strengthens peace, stability, democracy and critical thinking.


Alicja Spot carried out an interview of Veronia Poisson, a French volunteer who took part on a European Voluntary Service (EVS) programme in Krakow, Poland. During 9 months she worked in a non-governmental organisation on a project that was promoting EVS in Poland. She was the contact person among volunteers, taking care of them and helping them to interact and work together. Together with another volunteer, they developed and edited a comic book, gathering all their personal experiences as volunteers, in order to promote EVS. In this sense, she poin-
During her volunteer experience, she learnt by doing and further developed key competences that she may not have been able to develop in traditional learning settings, like her sense of initiative and creativity. Besides that, she also learnt Polish.

European Voluntary Service completely changed Veronia’s life. Once she had finished her volunteer experience she decided to stay in Poland to teach French and English. “EVS meant to her a very deep personal experience which helped her to get to know better who she really was”. Indeed, it boosted her social and civic competences, by understanding better people from other countries and respecting their cultures. “EVS strengthened her sense of European identity, but at the same time, it also made her appreciate more her own nationality and culture”.

In her view, there is a big difference between the ideals of European citizenship and what she feels as a European.

The Jordan Youth Centre is belonging to the Kraków Municipality, which has been operating for more than 50 years for the comprehensive development of children and young people. It conducts artistic, educational and sport classes for about 3,500 permanent and temporary participants at the age of 5-21.

Manos Valasis, European Students’ Forum (AEGEE), “YOUrope needs YOU project”

YOUrope needs YOU! is a AEGEE project currently running its third cycle. It started in 2009 and won the European Charlemagne Youth Prize the same year. The project aims to empower high school students all over Europe to become active members of society. The project team produced a booklet to give a synthesis of key data on Europe and the EU, European identity and values, multiculturalism as well as guidelines on how to organise a workshop. Project leaders also train volunteers who are willing to organise workshops in their universities. Currently, the project team can refer to 7 different nationalities working together on a voluntary basis, including EU and non-EU members, eager to share their vision of a tolerant and active society with high school students.

The advanced training course targets future workshop leaders in high schools. During five days participants from different countries learn all they need in order to design and hold interactive workshops. They deepen their understanding of European affairs, learning about European opportunities and how to make the best use of them by using non-formal education methods. Generally they hear for the first time about active citizenship, voluntary work, etc. Besides knowledge about European topics, trainers ensure that they develop soft skills and tools for working with youngsters, for conducting interactive workshops and facilitating discussions.

It thus allows students to actively participate and contribute to European active citizenship. “Being an active citizen is empowering and can bring positive change to you and the people around you. It is the ingredient that makes our societies stable and progressing. Europe cannot be successful without active Europeans”. It also contributes to overcoming Euro-scepticism that remains a great challenge today in Europe.

AEGEE Europe is one of the biggest interdisciplinary student associations in Europe. It is represented by 15,000 students, active in 241 academic cities, in 43 countries all around Europe. AEGEE is a secular, non-profit making and independent organisation.
Sustainability of Volunteering

Facilitator: Johannes Theiner, European Parents’ Association (EPA)

Key Messages

Sustainability needs to be discussed both at the individual and organisation level. Organisations need to promote volunteering opportunities in a sustainable way:

- To boost the motivation of volunteers, organisations need to give them responsibilities as well as meaning, by showing them how their work contributes towards a common goal, to society’s well being or cohesion. This has a strong impact on their self-esteem. At the same time it can create an important workload / over-challenge for volunteers and make them stop their activity (i.e. burn out syndrome). It is important to find a good balance. Organisations have to make efforts and listen to volunteers’ needs to keep them active and committed.

- When welcoming a volunteer it is essential to define a clear mission statement and to discuss and agree with the volunteer on its content and implementation. It is also crucial to leave space for innovation. This shall be based on a two-way communication with proper feedback.

- Organisations should assess the competences needed to perform the tasks and provide proper training sessions to their volunteers. At the end of the mission it is also important to enable volunteers to assess what they have learnt and translate it into skills that employers or schools can understand. Communication tools such as social networks represent one answer to complement face-to-face encounters or training sessions.

- Training services are important tools to provide quality of volunteering, attract and qualify new members and provide a smooth replacement of “generations”. Supervision and personal contacts are important facets in maintaining volunteers’ involvement within an organisation. Quality tutoring is key.

- Professional employees in the volunteers’ organisation typically provide sustainability in human resources management. Balanced co-operation between volunteers and paid professionals can be a challenge. Integration of trainees/apprentices is another one due to short-term contracts. In this sense, volunteers usually prefer limited and short-term engagements and respond to specific needed skills, whereas long-term committed volunteers are needed. It is important to ensure a better match between needs and demands.

- Learning is an essential element in generating sustainable volunteer networks. Recognising the acquisition of competences and implementing a balanced task design creating a realistic motivation and expectation are important strategic provisions.

At the systemic level it is important to have a sustainable environment for volunteers and voluntary-based organisations:

- Material infrastructure (e.g. office, equipment, supplies, etc,) must be provided to sustain the work of a voluntary-based association. Bigger challenges are experienced in European NGOs compared to national, regional, or local organisations. Financial resources determine the sustainability of the infrastructure.
- **Unnecessary administrative barriers and burdens** in European project management limit the opportunities of NGOs to act in a sustainable way at the European level. In any case, the sustainability of voluntary-based organisations is strongly determined by legal regulations.

- **Stakeholder associations** working on a volunteer basis (e.g. parents, students) face specific challenges and need to be supported by public authorities in order to enrich the policy-making process.

To conclude, volunteers’ work should benefit from larger **public recognition** as well as from strong **public support**. Voluntary-based organisations (NGOs, non-profit associations) require a secure **legal status**, opportunities for **sustainable funding** and specific financial regulations.
Volunteering for disadvantaged young people

Facilitator: Clementine Lafôret, Itinéraire International (France)

Key Messages

- Volunteering for disadvantaged young people is a learning experience that can offer them a wide “window of opportunities”.

- The acquisition of social skills was identified as one of the main gains from such experience. Acquiring such skills can boost their personal self-esteem and help them to access the professional market later on. In this sense, some of the following skills were mentioned:
  - Autonomy
  - Self-confidence
  - Interpersonal relations
  - Acceptance of one’s limitations: the first step to fight an obstacle is to name it!
  - Personal development

- Transnational volunteering is of a great value for disadvantaged young people. Access to European mobility programmes targeting disadvantaged groups should be reinforced.

- Concerning the management of volunteering projects involving disadvantaged people, the following key steps were mentioned as factors of success:
  - Identify the motivations and objectives of participants’ involvement, and adapt as much as possible the project to meet their expectations.
  - Identify the participant’s current obstacles that limit his/her social inclusion and prepare specific actions to help him/her overcoming such obstacles.
  - Involve participants in the planning of the project; it is a way of increasing their autonomy and sense of initiative, and help volunteers to feel integrated in the project.
  - Get the volunteers out of their usual environment; use volunteering actions to help the youngsters move and change their horizon; it is an opportunity to show them other perspectives for their future.
  - Work on a one-to-one basis; disadvantaged youngsters need to have individual coaching and support.
Karolina Wysocka, from the Youth and Non-governmental Organisations Department at the Polish Ministry of National Education, presented the main policy initiatives in education, training and volunteering planned during the upcoming Polish EU Presidency.

Following a communication from the European Commission to be published in June 2011, and the results of the public consultation on the promotion and validation of non-formal and informal learning, the Council will adopt a recommendation on non-formal and informal learning.

“As it was said during this conference, the recognition of prior learning gained outside formal education, for instance by developing European recognition tools through certification and accreditation, can stimulate further volunteering”.

Mobility and the Eastern Partnership will be top priorities for the future Polish Presidency. There will be a public consultation on this topic in the coming months, together with the current one on the Youth on the Move card. On the one hand, the focus will be on supporting and promoting successful competences that influence the participation in mobility (i.e. language skills). On the other, it will aim to strengthen contacts with the East to ensure better integration between the European Union and its neighbours.

Furthermore, the Polish Presidency will focus on two other important topics that are the review the priorities of the strategic framework for European cooperation in Education and Training (ET2020) for the next cycle (2012-2014) and the discussion over the priorities for the next Lifelong Learning Programmes post-2013, following the European Commission’s Communication. Finally, as part of the European Year 2011 implementation, the European Council will adopt its conclusions on volunteering by the end of this year. Mrs Wysocka invited EUCIS-LLL and its members to get involved in the discussions relating to the above-mentioned policies.
Gina Ebner, EUCIS-LLL president, concluded the conference by reminding participants of the importance of disseminating the key messages that were formulated during the fruitful discussions that took place at the European and national level.

EUCIS-LLL will promote the key messages that emerged and take into consideration the concrete proposals that were made such as the idea of organising a seminar on the validation of non-formal and informal learning and to take the discussion on disadvantaged groups into EUCIS-LLL working group on the social dimension of education & training.

EUCIS-LLL members always gain a lot of pleasure exchanging ideas and practices but this conference also allows them to build concrete results and outcomes that EUCIS-LLL can transfer to policy-makers.

Gina Ebner thanked all the participants for their active and lively participation and the Jordan Youth Centre for hosting this event.
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