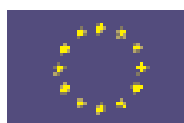


# Assessing Voluntary Experiences: A portfolio of skills learned through volunteering

Leonardo da Vinci program -  
European Commission  
With the support of the  
Regional Council in  
Champagne Ardenne



Institute for  
Volunteering  
Research





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# 1. Introduction

Volunteering has long been recognised as a way to develop skills and gain experience useful in the workplace. Through informal assessment of voluntary experiences volunteers can identify skills developed through volunteering and translate these into skills and achievements recognised by employers. Recent trends in the UK have been towards formalising this implicit system of recognition for volunteering by introducing accreditation for voluntary activities.

The Assessing Voluntary Experience (AVE) project has been completed under the Leonardo da Vinci programme (see appendix 1 for more information about the project). The project aims to help volunteers who are looking to gain paid employment to think about how they might identify and assess skills and qualifications acquired through volunteering and to show prospective employers that these skills are transferable to the workplace.

The following pages outline a tool to do just that – to uncover the skills acquired through day to day volunteering tasks and to present them in such a way that prospective employers can see how they can be used. The tool is based on research with European partners, but has been piloted in the UK. It is designed so that volunteers can work through it by themselves, but piloting the tool showed that it worked best when it was used by a volunteer with the help of a volunteer manager or co-ordinator (Volunteer Managers might like to refer to Appendix 2 for further information).

The toolkit has been developed in such a way that:

- > It can be used by volunteers who are looking for or thinking about looking for paid work. This may include long term unemployed, people with no or few formal qualifications, parents returning to the workplace after a gap, people changing career, students or young people without any work experience;
- > It allows a volunteer to reflect upon the experiences and skills gained through volunteering;

- > It allows a volunteer to set targets and create an action plan for the future;
- > It provides information about possible awards and qualifications volunteers can work towards, in addition to those offered at the organisation;
- > It provides the organisation with some way of assessing a volunteer's development – of seeing progression and development;
- > It is clear and accessible to a wide range of volunteers. It will not be relevant or useful for all volunteers, and some volunteers may have additional support needs in order to complete the portfolio.

## 2. Introducing the tool

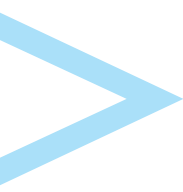
### 2.1 A few words about volunteering

What do we mean when we use the term volunteering? It can be defined in a variety of ways, but generally it is characterised by three things. First, volunteering is an activity people choose to do of their own free will; second there is not a financial payment to the volunteer (other than out of pocket expenses); and, third, volunteering is for the benefit of people (or the environment) other than (or in addition to) the volunteer's own family and friends.

Volunteering should be accessible to be performed by anybody, irrespective of their age, gender, race, education or financial status. Volunteering happens in not-for-profit organisations: these may be charities in UK, or referred to as not-for-profit organisations, or community organisations. Volunteering can also be found in public institutions such as schools and hospitals.

### 2.2 How can you benefit from your volunteer activities?

People volunteer for all sorts of reasons. You may want to help other people or put something back into your local community.



There may be a particular cause or organisation that you want to help. You may be looking to fill spare time, meet people and make friends. You may be volunteering to help you into paid work - volunteering can be a way to gain valuable experience, skills and references. Whatever your initial motivations, the experiences you get as a volunteer should be of benefit to you.

If you think about the ways that volunteering can help you prepare for employment, you might come up with a list like this:

- > It can provide you with general work experience (e.g. an office environment);
- > It can provide you with work experience in a specific field (e.g. working in a hospital, working in horticulture);
- > You can gain references;
- > It demonstrates your ability to hold down position of trust and responsibility;
- > You can access training on specific topics (e.g. first aid, computer courses);
- > You can gain awards and certificates for the time you spend volunteering or for different activities you do as part of your volunteering (for example this happens with Millennium Volunteers);
- > You can work towards qualifications in volunteering (e.g. ASDAN certificate, Lampeter distance learning course).

Volunteering is one form of learning, but, you will need to be able to interpret your experiences and show that the skills you have gained are transferable, this is where this tool can help.

## 2.3 How can the volunteer's portfolio help you prepare for employment?

The idea of this tool is to assist you to reflect upon your voluntary experiences, to help you identify the skills you have learnt or developed and to help you to interpret these skills and experiences for potential employers. It also provides information and suggestions about other ways you can use volunteering to improve your job prospects, for example through accreditation.

By working through the exercises in this pack you will:

- 1 be able to identify how the activities you did while volunteering can be shown to contain valuable skills and learning;
- 2 be able to show how these skills are transferable into paid employment;
- 3 use this knowledge to create a document that can be added to your Curriculum Vitae or support you in writing one;
- 4 see how to demonstrate skills gained to potential employers;
- 5 use this to get ready for interviews.

A benefit of doing this and identifying transferable skills is that you will gain a clearer picture of how you have changed as a result of your volunteering.

## 2.4 Who is the portfolio of competences for?

The tool is primarily aimed at people who have been volunteering for some time and are thinking about looking for paid employment, either for the first time or returning to work. For instance, returning to work after child-care, young people starting their careers with no previous professional experience, those away from the job market due to sickness, and so on.

However, the tool could equally be applicable to volunteers who would like to find out what competences and skills they have gained through volunteering.

The tool would be most useful for volunteers;

- 1 who have volunteered on a regular basis for a minimum of one year,
- 2 who volunteer in an organisation as informal volunteering (such as helping out in the neighbourhood) would be quite difficult to assess (proof of evidence of the voluntary experience should be required).

## 2.5 How to use the portfolio?

This tool is designed as a self-assessment exercise for volunteers, but it can equally well be used with a volunteer manager or co-ordinator, or someone who knows you as a volunteer within your organisation? It can be very helpful to work on some parts of the portfolio by discussing the tasks you have performed and what skills you have demonstrated or learned through performing those tasks.





## 3.2 Learning from Training

1. Make a list of training courses you have attended as part of this volunteer role (you may want to include informal as well as formal training):

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2. What have you learned through these courses?

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3. Which parts of the training courses have been particularly relevant for roles you may apply for in the future?

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Be sure to mention this course and what you learned on your CV / on a job application form or in an interview.

## 3.3. Identifying Skills

Volunteering can help you acquire new skills or use and improve existing skills. The aim of the following exercises is to identify what skills you have developed.

You will also need to be able to prove that you have developed or increased this skill while volunteering by providing specific examples. You could mention the number of times you have done a certain activity or describe a task which you have completed. It would help if you can provide evidence for prospective employers. For example, if you have improved your writing skills is there a report, article, letter you have written that you can mention as evidence. Working through this tool, and collecting this information will provide you with a portfolio of evidence from your volunteering. This might include:

- > Reference or endorsement from your supervisor
- > Examples of your work
- > Training certificates
- > Volunteer awards
- > Volunteer Qualifications
- > Press cuttings / newsletters in which your name appears or you were involved
- > Photographs
- > Annual reports
- > Other documents relating to your volunteering
- > Letters of thanks and appreciation
- > Records of attendance, services performed

The table overleaf provides a list of general skills you may have gained through volunteering. Not all skills will be relevant to your volunteer role. There is also space to include additional skills specific to your role.

## 3.4 Skills

Use this table to identify skills you have acquired or developed in your voluntary experience. The table includes a 'Level' column, this is a way of estimating your own level. So far example level 1 is where you feel you have only a little experience of that skill, level 2 you have some experience and level three you have more experience. These levels are relative and the portfolio should help you identify where the skills are that you want to develop.

Skills	Volunteer role / activities	Level	Have you an example to show how you have demonstrated this skill in your volunteering?
<b>1. Interpersonal Communication</b> (Being able to communicate ideas and information to others and work with a variety of people in multi-cultural environments, for example volunteers, clients, staff members)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>2. External Communication</b> (Managing public relations; lobbying and advocacy; promotion of your work / organisation through presentations, media contact etc.)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>3. Written Communication</b> (Being able to present information in written form, e.g. reports, articles, minutes of meetings)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>4. Administration</b> (General office work e.g. filing, typing, organising meetings, purchasing supplies)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>5. Accounting</b> (Preparing accounts and managing budgets; listing income / expenditure, preparing balance sheets etc.)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>6. Fundraising / Marketing</b> (Raising money; writing funding applications; increasing membership; developing sponsorship; publicising / advertising)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	

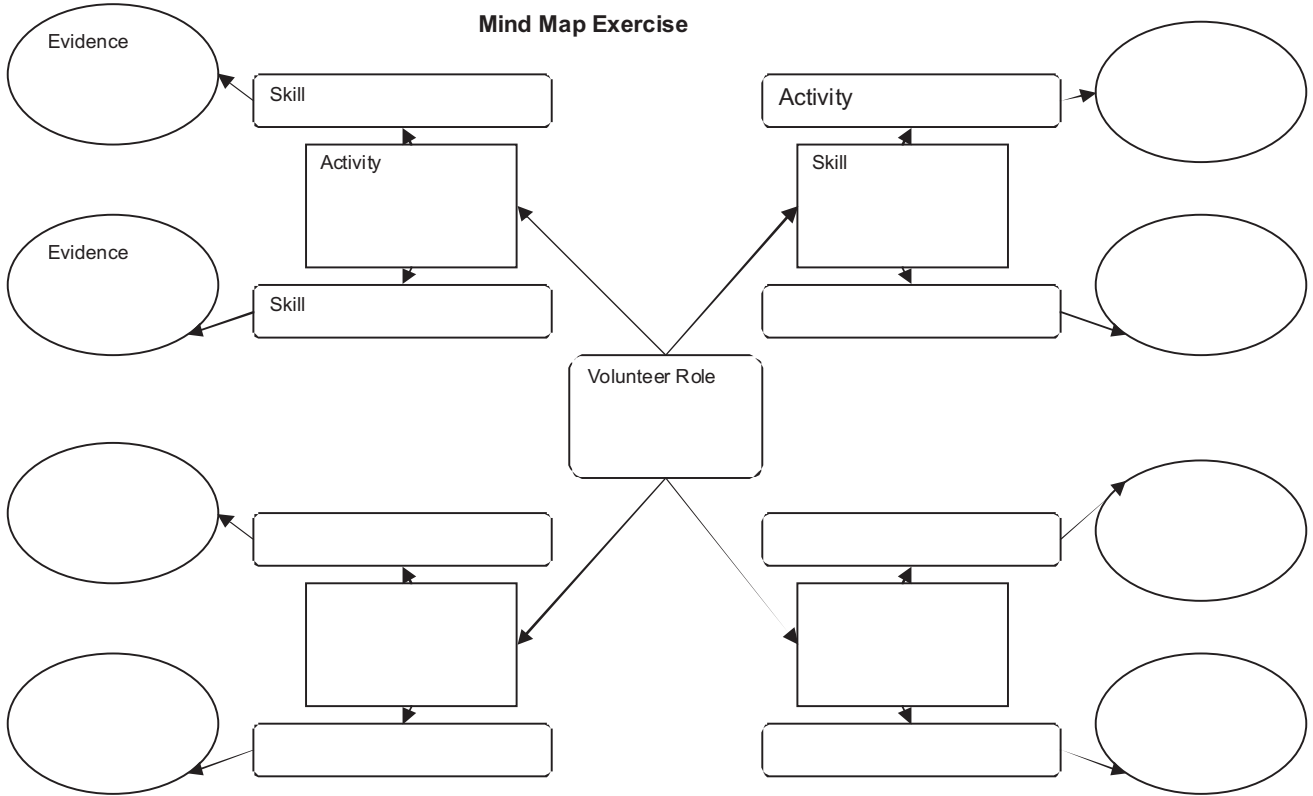
Skills	Volunteer role / activities	Level	Have you an example to show how you have demonstrated this skill in your volunteering?
<b>7. Event Organising</b> (Organising events such as seminars, conferences, general assemblies, exhibitions, competitions, shows etc.)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>8. Managing information (documentation)</b> (Selecting and organising useful and appropriate information and data to better understand situations and identify needs and/or resources)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>9. Research (analytic approach)</b> (Looking for appropriate information / data; desk research or field research; using qualitative or quantitative approaches; presenting findings to different audiences)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>10. IT</b> (Using computer programmes, e.g. Word, Excel, Access; using internet and e-mail; using databases; designing websites; programming)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>11. Foreign languages</b> (Understanding spoken and written language/s; translating and interpreting; using language for business purposes)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>12. Human Resources Management</b> (Recruiting, training, supervising staff or volunteers, organising responsibilities and roles between staff and volunteers)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>13. Project management</b> (Planning and developing programmes, defining scope, objectives, activities, resources and evaluation steps)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	

Skills	Volunteer role / activities	Level	Have you an example to show how you have demonstrated this skill in your volunteering?
<b>14. Stress management</b> (Management of conflicts, facing any human or practical problem)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>15. Active Listening</b> (Being receptive to what others say, showing empathy, not assuming a major role in the conversation, responding to requests for help)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>16. Being Proactive</b> (Showing initiative and creativity, responding to changing situations; being flexible)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>17. Advice Giving</b> (Specialist or general consultancy; counselling)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>18. Negotiation / Mediation</b> (Facilitating constructive debate; finding compromises; finding satisfactory solutions to conflicts)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>19. Problem Solving</b> (Finding appropriate solutions to specific situations; management of stress)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>20. Decision Making</b> (Identifying possible options and assuming responsibility for choosing best outcome)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	

Skills	Volunteer role / activities	Level	Have you an example to show how you have demonstrated this skill in your volunteering?
<b>21. Leadership</b> (Being able to take a lead, make strategic decisions to move forward; representing your organisation externally)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>22. Team working</b> (Contributing to a collaborative climate; cooperating to reach common goals, accepting others points of view)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>23. Networking</b> (Creating and developing partnerships with individuals or organisations)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>24. Motivating Others</b> (Encouraging others to get involved)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>25. Training / Teaching</b> (Teaching / training on an individual basis or in a group; in an informal or formal environment)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>26. Personal Responsibility</b> (Showing commitment and reliability; being able to organise your time and manage your work; motivating yourself)		1 2 3 4 Not relevant	
<b>Specific skills developed as a result of your volunteering (please write in):</b>			
<b>Specific skills developed as a result of your volunteering (please write in):</b>			
<b>Specific skills developed as a result of your volunteering (please write in):</b>			

# Mind Map

Another way in which you might find helpful to identify the skills you have obtained is through drawing a mind map. You can either fill in the boxes below or draw your own mind map with a different number of boxes.



## 4. Action Plan

Now that you have identified the skills you have acquired through volunteering, you can use this knowledge to show prospective employers how you have the skills they are looking for. But maybe by through the course of working through these exercises you also identified areas where you would like to improve skills further. These maybe, for example, areas in which you identified your skills as a level 1, that is you haven't gained that much experience of this skill through you volunteering, but you would like to have the opportunity to improve this skill. The next section involves thinking about which skills you want to improve and developing an action plan.

Skills development is an ongoing process, and you may want to set some personal targets to help you develop additional skills or skills which you think will be directly relevant for the sort of jobs you are applying for or to increase your confidence in particular activities. Try to set realistic, achievable goals that you can put a time limit on. Identify the key goals you want to achieve through volunteering and then list them on the action plan below. Chose a time by which you want to have achieved the goal. You can fill in the progress column at this later date and decide if you need to take further action.

### 4.1 Preparing the Action Plan

By working through the previous exercises you have reflected upon what you have learnt as a volunteer and identified the skills you have developed. You may find this section is one you want to talk over with your manager or co-ordinator. They will be able to help and advise on the sorts of skills you may wish to develop and help form an action plan in which these skills can be linked to your volunteering. As a starting point look back over the skills table and choose those you would like to improve. List those here:

1. first skill to be improved :

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2. second skill :

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3. third skill :

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4. other skill :

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Now think about how you would like to improve these skills (maybe through attending training courses, working on another task within your role, or working with another volunteer from whom you can learn more)?

1. first one :

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2. second one :

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3. third one :

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4. other skill :

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It is important to set realistic, achievable goals that you can put a time limit on in order to measure progress. Identify the key goals you want to achieve through volunteering and then list them on the action plan below. Chose a time by which you want to have achieved the goal. You can fill in the progress column at this later date and decide if you need to take further action.

To help you do this you may want to:

- 1 Find out what skills and experiences employers are looking for in the jobs you want to apply for;
- 2 Talk to your supervisor or volunteer manager about possible changes to your role / duties;
- 3 Investigate possible training opportunities.

**Example:**

Goal	Action to take	Time by which you want to have achieved goal	Progress
Improve my writing style	Offer to take minutes in volunteer meetings Write an article for the Newsletter Help Volunteer Manager draft reports	6 months time	Goal achieved? Yes   No   Partly  Actions taken until now:

**Your Action Plan**

Goal (skills to develop, awards, qualifications you want to gain)	Action to take (activities / tasks to do, courses to take, training to attend etc.)	Time by which you want to have achieved goal	Progress
			Goal achieved? Yes   No   Partly  Actions taken until now:
			Goal achieved? Yes   No   Partly  Actions taken until now:
			Goal achieved? Yes   No   Partly  Actions taken until now:

# 5. Summary Sheet

Having worked through the above exercises you will find that you have a list of skills you have acquired, and you may have documentation that you can show to employers as evidence of your skill gains. If you have volunteered with more than one organisation you may want to summarise what you did at each. The following pro-forma is simply a suggested way to do that. Fill in one for each organisation you volunteer for. This summary then presents the results of the portfolio in such a way that you can easily transfer the information that employers want to see – what skills do you have and how have you learnt and used them – onto your CV or job application forms.

## Volunteer Summary Sheet

Name:

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Organisation

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Volunteer role

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Dates of vol.

---

Hours worked

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Main activities and responsibilities:

Skills developed:

Key achievements:

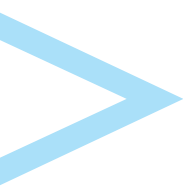
Specific training attended (if applicable):

Signature of coach or supervisor / manager:

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Date:

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## 6. Further information on Accrediting Voluntary Experiences

Would you like to have the skills you have learnt through volunteering accredited? There are a number of nationally recognised awards and qualifications you can gain through volunteering, available at a range of levels.

### 6.1 ASDAN Certificate in Community Volunteering

The qualification recognises the general skills and good practice that volunteers need to show to work effectively in the community. It is run by a number of local voluntary sector organisations, colleges or training providers. It is relevant for if you:

- > Are seeking a level I or II award;
- > Wish to develop skills and confidence in accessing modern vocational awards before progressing on to specialist vocational training;
- > Are seeking formal quality assured recognition irrespective of any plans for further progression;
- > Are seeking recognition for generic skills, and might be exploring a range of options before choosing a pathway;
- > You wish to develop your role within the organisation you volunteer for.

### 6.2 NOCN Volunteer Training Intermediate Award

Available from the Open College Network through local providers, this qualification is designed for volunteers working in a wide range of contexts. The qualification recognises transferable skills which will offer opportunities for progression to a range of employment within the voluntary sector.

Learners may select units appropriate to progression requirements and the context in which they are working or wishing to work as volunteers. Units include:

- > The Role of the Volunteer Youth Worker;
- > Equal Opportunities in Voluntary Organisations;
- > Communication..

### 6.3 University of Wales, Lampeter Certificate in Interpersonal Skills for Volunteers

A distance learning course available to anyone. This course offers the opportunity to gain recognition for the interpersonal skills volunteers use in their work, through a series of written assignments which encourage students to reflect on their role in the voluntary sector. It facilitates students' learning of a range of communication skills to deal with a variety of situations. It is relevant if you are:

- > Are over 18 and;
- > Have a minimum of six months' experience working as a volunteer (or paid worker) in a caring environment and;
- > Have a minimum of five hours to spare each week;
- > Want to gain 40 credits at HE level I.

Assessment is by coursework at the end of each module and is designed to enable students to relate theoretical knowledge to their own voluntary or working experience.

### 6.4 Business in the Community – Volunteering Plus

Business in the Community also has a service to accredit volunteering. This is linked to employee volunteering, but has been used by other volunteer involving organisations to provide an accreditation for their volunteers. Called Volunteering Plus, it aims to provide a structure that captures the learning and development that comes from volunteering, which in turn leads to formal accreditation for volunteers of the work they do.

You may also be interested in other certificates that volunteers can earn:

## 6.5 Millennium Volunteers

An award for young volunteers recognising 200 hours of volunteering. It is relevant to you if you:

- > Are aged between 16-24 years;
- > Want a certificate that recognises your sustained commitment;
- > Can commit to 200 hours volunteering within a twelve month period.

## 6.6 Duke of Edinburgh Award

D of E is a voluntary, non-competitive programme of activities for anyone aged 14-25. It offers an individual challenge and encourages young people to undertake exciting, constructive, challenging and enjoyable activities. It is a four section programme (Skills, Service, Physical Recreation, Expeditions) with three progressive levels (Bronze, Silver, Gold).

Volunteering is recognised through the award as part of the Service section. It is relevant to you if you:

- > Are aged 14-25;
- > Want your volunteering recognised as part of a structured programme of activities;
- > Can commit to a minimum of 6 – 12 months (depending on award level) .

# Appendix 1: About the AVE Project

## 1. A European project

The Assessing Voluntary Experience (AVE) project has been completed under the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The project aims to help volunteers who are looking to gain paid employment to think about how they might identify and assess skills and qualifications acquired through volunteering and to show prospective employers that these skills are transferable to the workplace.

Volunteering offers a chance for informal learning; many of the tasks performed as volunteers go about their tasks will lead to new skills, but how can volunteers identify and evaluate the skills acquired through volunteering? Identifying new skills could be very useful to people, for example, who have no professional experience or for people who have been away from the labour market. The tool involves:

- 1 A portfolio to identify and evaluate the skills and qualifications required and acquired in volunteering ;
- 2 A method to assess these skills and qualifications in a professional perspective
- 3 An appendix for coaches (usually the volunteer manager) on how to help volunteers through the portfolio.

## 2. Steps of the AVE project

The European project “Assessing volunteering in a professional perspective” was a research project lasting for two years. It consisted of the several steps:

- 1 A review of volunteering in each of the seven partner countries including the information on existing formal accreditation for volunteers and the qualifications they require ;
- 2 A consultation questionnaire with volunteer-involving organisations to enquire about present organisational specific methods of assessing volunteering experiences, and to test whether volunteer-involving organisations would be enthusiastic for a tool to help volunteers assess their experiences;
- 3 The development of a tool to assist volunteers to identify the skills and qualifications developed through volunteering;
- 4 A piloting phase to test the tool and the production of the tool incorporating feedback.

The project has involved networking between researchers in volunteering in seven countries. Each stage of the research and development process has been accompanied by progress and discussion papers from each of the partners. These papers, and the finished tools from each country can be found at [www.eEuropeassociations](http://www.eEuropeassociations)

### 3. Contacts for each of the 7 countries partners to the project are listed below:

#### In France

- 1 the IRIV: promoter of the AVE project; research and training body; <http://www.iriv.net> ; [contact@iriv.net](mailto:contact@iriv.net)
- 2 the Cicos: training body for the past 20 years; <http://www.cicos.asso.fr>; [cicos@wa,adoo.fr](mailto:cicos@wa.adoo.fr)
- 3 the AFEV: association specialised in youth volunteering; training sessions for volunteers; <http://www.afev.fr> ; [Bathianyagnes@aol.com](mailto:Bathianyagnes@aol.com)
- 4 the IUP (University of Maine) : education institution proposing training program for volunteer willing to have a certification in management of social economy; <http://www.univ-lemans.fr> ; [France.Huntzinger@univ-lemans.fr](mailto:France.Huntzinger@univ-lemans.fr)
- 5 the regional direction for Youth and Sports in Champagne Ardenne : public body proposing an accompaniment for volunteers willing to certificate their competence in the Youth and Sport field, <http://www.jeunesse-gouv.fr>; [jean-louis.gauthier@jeunesse-sports.gouv.fr](mailto:jean-louis.gauthier@jeunesse-sports.gouv.fr)

#### In Austria

- 1 the European Center : research and training body for volunteers and professionals working with volunteers; <http://www.euro-ce.tre.org>; [struempel@euro.centre.org](mailto:struempel@euro.centre.org)
- 2 the VÖV: training body having already experienced different kinds of portfolios for volunteers in Austria. [www.volksbildungswerke.org](http://www.volksbildungswerke.org); [w.kellner@volksbildungswerke.org](mailto:w.kellner@volksbildungswerke.org)

#### In Germany

- 3 the INBAS-Sozialforschung : research and training body ; <http://www.inbas-sozialforschung.de>; [juergen.schumacher@inbas-sozialforschung.de](mailto:juergen.schumacher@inbas-sozialforschung.de)
- 4 the DPVW : training body accompanying volunteers, especially women. <http://www.paritaet-hessen.org>; [Sybille.Stallmann-Beseler@paritaet-hessen.org](mailto:Sybille.Stallmann-Beseler@paritaet-hessen.org)

#### In Hungary

- 5 ÖKA: National Center for volunteering

proposing training sessions for volunteers; <http://www.onkentes.hu> ; [onkenteskozpont@onkentes.hu](mailto:onkenteskozpont@onkentes.hu)

#### In Italy

- 6 FIVOL: research and training body proposing training sessions for volunteers; <http://www.fivol.it> ; [studi.ricerca@fivol.it](mailto:studi.ricerca@fivol.it)

#### In Poland

- 7 Centrum Wolontariatu: National Center for volunteering proposing training sessions for volunteers; <http://www.wolontariat.org.pl> ; [pietrowski@wolontariat.org.pl](mailto:pietrowski@wolontariat.org.pl)

#### In the United Kingdom

<http://www.volunteeringengland.org>; [Steven.Howlett@volunteeringengland.org](mailto:Steven.Howlett@volunteeringengland.org)

### 4. Useful contacts on the European level

On a European level, you may find more information on volunteering or assessing volunteering and/or informal or non formal learning among the following contacts.

The European Commission and moreover the Leonardo da Vinci programme this programme has focussed on the informal and non –formal learning

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/leonardo/leonardo\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/leonardo/leonardo_en.html)

The CEDEFOP: the European resource for vocational training issues, mobility, funding

<http://www.cedefop.eu.int/>

The National Agencies Socrates-Leonardo in the 7 countries: National contact for more information on the Leonardo da Vinci programme and all the national projects supported in this field

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/leonardo/new/leonardo2/nalist2\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/leonardo/new/leonardo2/nalist2_en.html)

The Europass: Europass is a new way of helping people to: make their skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe (European Union, EFTA/EEA and candidate countries); move anywhere in

Europe. Europass consists of five documents: two documents (Europass curriculum vitae (CV) and Europass Language Passport) you can fill in yourself; and three other documents (Europass Certificate Supplement, Europass Diploma Supplement and Europass Mobility) filled in and issued by competent organisations. Europass is supported by a network of National Europass Centres.

<http://europass.cedefop.eu.int/htm/>

## Appendix 2: Notes for Volunteer Managers

The portfolio has been developed through piloting the tool for assessing experiences by each of the partners in the seven countries. The pilot phase included working with volunteers and the organisations they volunteered with. The development of the tool was also informed by consultations with professionals in the field of human resources and employment.

The portfolio takes the volunteer through a series of steps to help them assess their experiences:

- 1 Introduction: Thinking about volunteering how far a voluntary experience may be used to help gain paid work;
- 2 List of training and seminars attended: collecting together all the training that the volunteer has attended;
- 3 Collecting voluntary activities: listing the different roles and functions performed by the volunteer;
- 4 Identifying skills: reflecting on the roles and identifying the skills involved while performing those tasks;
- 5 Action plan : setting goals to achieve and improve specific skills
- 6 Summary sheet: Taking the summary of the portfolio and presenting the skills to a prospective employer;

Although it is worth working through all these steps, in some places alternative methods have been provided. For example, when thinking about the tasks performed, and the skills required, a table has been provided, but experience shows that some volunteers find the mind map an easier way to identify tasks and skills.

The tool is designed for self-assessment, but sometimes a volunteers may require the help of a trainer or coach (this could be the volunteer's manager or supervisor) to be able to assess his/her voluntary experience. The pilot phase showed that volunteers and managers working together on this was beneficial to both. Indeed, even when the volunteer was not working towards paid employment, they found it motivating to see how their volunteering was providing learning opportunities. Volunteers found the action plan very useful in planning how they could get more from their volunteering and managers found it a useful tool to help that process.

The pilot found that managers were most helpful where they:

- 1 Explained the process of assessing voluntary experience;
- 2 Worked through the portfolio with the volunteer: it would be good for example to set time aside to work through the portfolio over two or three sessions to allow reflection and gathering of evidence;
- 3 Followed up on the portfolio: for example looking at specific training needs identified, helping access other formal accreditation for volunteering;
- 4 Helped the volunteers with the compilation of any document which will help show how skills have been developed.

Providing evidence of skill gains is an area where managers can greatly assist. The tool suggests that evidence can be collected, such as reports or press cuttings of events where volunteers have helped. However, where these are not available it is helpful if volunteer managers can help volunteers with the summary sheet, by printing it on organisational headed paper and signing it.

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