



(Classification of) validation tools for volunteering organizations.

Since many years, validation of non-formal and informal learning is on the agenda of the European Union. Volunteering is a rich learning environment, and an environment where non-formal and informal learning is offered to young people as well as adults.

Many volunteering organizations have developed tools and methods to support validation and recognition of skills and competences acquired through volunteering. The European Year of Volunteering (2011) and the Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe have given an extra impulse to developments in this field.

Examples of these tools can a.o. be found in the “European inventory of validation of non-formal and informal learning” [www.cedefop.eu] and in the database of EU-funded projects “European shared treasure” [www.europeansharedtreasure.eu].

Many of these tools can be very useful in the process that leads to the achievement of the “Europass certificate for volunteers”.

To choose the tools/methods that are the most useful for your organization / your volunteers, the validation process can be broken down in three steps:

- 1) Making competences visible for yourself
- 2) Making competences visible for others
- 3) Recognition of competences

For a volunteering organization that wants to implement “recognition of competences” in its policy, it is first of all important to discuss and decide whether it wants to offer all three steps to the volunteers.

Every step can be broken down in smaller parts. For every step, we give some examples of existing tools that are available online:

1) Making competences visible for yourself:

- Awareness

Example:

"The story of Liz" - Denmark

- self reflection

"Empower yourself" - UK

- self assessment

Examples:

"The CH-Q method" (Switzerland, Netherlands, Czech Republic)

"Individual acquis chart" - Italy

2) Making competences visible for others:

- Record

Examples:

"European portfolio for volunteers" – Hungary

"Empower yourself" - UK

- documentation

- assessment

examples:

"Kompetence Balance" – Germany

"Confirmation of volunteer work" - Austria

- certification

3) Recognition of competences:

- comparison with standard

examples:

Volunteer passport – France

"Ten steps for the volunteer" – The Netherlands

- formal validation.

Another way of classifying validation tools

In the European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning (available at www.cedefop.eu), this classification is used:

Identification

This initial phase can be seen as a formative assessment phase, where the individual becomes aware of the knowledge, skills and competences s/he has acquired. Learning outcomes acquired through informal means are normally difficult to articulate and individuals might not be fully aware of all the knowledge, skills and competences acquired.

Documentation

Documentation consists of the provision of documental proof of the learning outcomes acquired. It refers to the source of evidence, rather than to the evidence itself. This is normally carried out through the collection of a portfolio that tends to include a CV and a career history of the individual, with documents (in some cases, where this is relevant, also work samples) that attest to their learning achievements.

Assessment

Assessment is normally referred to as the stage in which an individual's learning outcomes are tested or compared against specific standards. This might actually mean the evaluation of the documentary evidence produced, but it might also involve evaluation of other evidence.

Certification

The final stage of validation is the certification (or recognition) of the results of the assessment. This can take different forms, but will normally be linked to the award of a formal qualification. In the context of enterprises or economic sectors, certification may also involve the issuance of a license allowing the individual to carry out specific tasks etc.



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