

Certification of competences: what meaning and what path in volunteering?



Original language: Italian	Source: Alessia Zanotti, Doctoral Schools in Human Capital Formation and Labour Relations ADAPT, University of Bergamo	Link: http://www.bollettinoadapt.it/certificazione- delle-competenze-quale-significato-e-quale- percorso-nel-volontariato
Target group X Teacher / trainer X Counsellor Social worker X Youth worker X future employer other:	Type of best practice initiative campaign project website only programme model training X learning material other:	Experiences

Volunteering, that is among the most difficult forms of activities considered as an effective formative moment, certainly falls into the category of informal learning. Yet, skimming the founding principles contained in the Chart of Values of Volunteering we can read that "volunteering proposes everyone to be responsible, each for its own part, both for the local problems as for the global ones, and, through participation, to bring a contribution to social change. Thus volunteering produces ties, relational goods, trust and cooperation relations between individuals and organizations contributing to increase and enhance the social capital of the context in which it operates". If an expert in the field of Human Resources reads this sentence, he/she probably would associate these words with specific *skills* acquired through these activities. Therefore you can immediately guess that volunteering can be an opportunity not only for personal and emotional growth, but also for a professional one, thanks to the activities that allow the development and the increase of competences required also from the labour market.

Description

A research commissioned by the Youth Forum and conducted by the University of Bath and GHT Consulting (<u>Study on the Impact of Non formal Education in youth Organisations on Young People's Employability</u>, 2013) which involved more than 1,000 youth and about 245 youth organizations, states that many competences acquired during volunteering experiences appear to be required by the labour market, particularly communication, organizational, decision-making competences, the ability to work in a team, and linguistic competences.

It is therefore necessary that the systems for validation and certification of competences - contributing to the transparency and portability of learning outcomes in other areas such as, for example, work field - they are able to make recognizable the results of learning completed under volunteering. The systematic use of competences developed in volunteer experiences certification systems would also help improve the professionalism of the sector operators, offering the possibility to those who participate in the activities to gain recognition and expendable what done.

The spread of validation practices and certification of competences within the voluntary sector, on the other hand, does find obstacles not only in the prejudice of the superiority of formal training. European studies reveal, in fact, a certain reticence by part of voluntary organizations to present their activities as a growth possibility not only human but also professional, fearing they can negate the thrust and the perfect reason of volunteering (as a free activity), at the expense of a desire for professional growth.

Then there are other two obstacles that make the certification of competences a difficult process in this context. The first consists in the excessive bureaucratization of this procedure, often managed in a centralized way by national or regional authorities, and that scares the social workers and volunteers. The Italian system is certainly an

example of a public law procedure that makes the development and implementation of the certification system difficult.

The second obstacle to the development of a functional and effective validation and certification system, not only in our country, is the lack of common standards for certification of the various types of learning, as in non-formal and informal learning there is a lack of a bond with national and European qualifications frameworks.

The European Economic and Social Committee in its opinion given on the Commission communication "Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes" of 2013, calls on the Member States to "recognize and value, in a creative and innovative way, non-formal learning, making more visible the competences acquired outside the formal system, promoting complementarities between formal and non-formal learning."

The words "creative" and "innovative" are significant, as they point out the need to respect and value the peculiarities of each area, without flattening the abundance of experience gained in non-formal and informal fields. However, it is equally important to promote simultaneously complementarities and integration of learning contexts.

Screenshot



VALCOVOL	Recognition and validation of competences acquired through volunteering: good practices in Italy	Erasmus+
Original language: Italian	Source: CSVnet; National Coordination of Service Centres for Volunteering – A research made within the frame of the EU Erasmus+ project "I'VE – I Have Experienced. Recognition and Validation of volunteering through peer support and open source tools"	Link http://www.csvnet.it/notizie/le- notizie/notiziecsvnet/1678-ll- volontariato-migliora-il-curriculum- on-line-la-pubblicazione-di-csvnet
Target group Teacher / trainer Counsellor X Social worker X Youth worker X future employer other:	Type of best practice initiative campaign project website only programme model training learning material X other: research	Experiences

As part of the document "Recognition and validation of competences acquired through volunteering: good practice in Italy", chapter 15 5.1 provides descriptions of some best practices for recognition and validation of competencies in the Italian volunteering field and in the informal and non-formal learning.

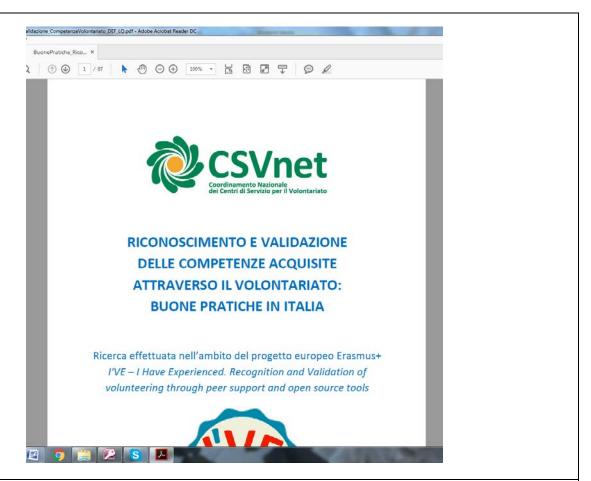
Description

In Italy, the institutional initiatives by the regional administrations in recent years have been several and articulated, in line with the objective of validating non-formal and informal learning. Some regions have moved on the level of consultation or of framework legislation, others preferred a more experimental approach identifying specific projects or needs to test the feasibility of validation processes.

It has already been emphasized that the problem of validating the competences acquired by the individual at every stage of life and in any learning environment represents for the institutions, starting with the European debate, a social commitment of great interest but also of great complexity.

It is, in fact, a complex process that involves several entities in their respective functions and forces them to cooperation, not only because it focuses on the subject with its specific characteristics and for this not so much "standardized", but also because it opens an obvious problem about institutional responsibilities and the relationship existing between them and the areas (professional and not) in which many of those competences are acquired.

The situation is even more critical when the competences to be validated, valorised and recognised are not those achieved during the school and vocational training path, which depend on the institutions, but those acquired at work, in business or service companies or in voluntary activities. In the web pages, the main experiences concerning the valuation, recognition and/or certification of competences acquired as part of the volunteering experiences realized by the network of Service Centres for Voluntary members of CSVnet are described, as well as some tools created to enhance and recognise informal and non-formal learning.



VALCOVOL	"EVVIVA" - Experiences and the Value of Voluntary Work: Valorisation of Learning Outcomes	Erasmus+
Original language: Italian	Source: Ciessevi – Voluntary Services' Centre in Milan	Link: http://www.ciessevi.org/
Target group Teacher / trainer Counsellor Social worker Youth worker future employer other:	Type of best practice X initiative campaign project website only programme model training learning material X other: research/action	Experiences X available for more than 5 years available for less than 5 years pilot phase / testing in development other:

Ciessevi, the Voluntary Services' Centre in Milan, has started a research – initiative called "EVVIVA - Experiences and the Value of Voluntary work: valorisation of Learning outcomes". The aim is to explore within the different associations in Milan and its province (Italy) practices and tools for the valorisation of learning strategies within a voluntary context and promote among associations different tools to detect and document the competences that volunteers have acquired. Following the link dedicated to these issues, you can find further information on this topic, European regulations and more useful links.

Description

The basic condition in the process of VALIDATION OF COMPETENCES that have been acquired, is their actual usability, covered by the institutions. In order to obtain a full recognition of the acquired competences it is however necessary to proceed step by step. Europe has identified mainly three steps, who are contiguous but also independent: verification, validation, certification. The differences between these phases depend from the official and institutional level they guarantee.: a single competence could be recognized only within a single institution or could be considered at regional, national and European level. The differences in the results are reflected also on the methodological difference and on the all actors involved into the process. First phase. The first phase consists in the awareness of each own competences and in the collection of the first material useful to demonstrate them. The European Union describe it with 'assessment', meant as: 'a process of verification of knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences of a person on the basis of preset criteria (expected results, measuring learning results).

Assessment itself is composed by two main phases:

Identification of learning results through interviews on the interested person's specific experiences as well as their documentation, in order to make them as much visible as possible. Usually, this phase involves the interested person and a possible facilitator.

Second phase. The second phase of the process aims at certifying his/her competences, and it includes a reasoned, systematic and guided collection of all necessary facts and usually it has a value within the institution where it takes place. The validation is described as "the confirmation, by a competent institution, that the learning results (knowledge, skills, attitudes) that have been obtained by a person in a formal, non formal or informal context, have been verified on the basis of prearranged criteria and are in compliance with the requirements for validation standards. Validation is usually followed by certification.

Therefore the third phase regards the certification where the certifying institution certifies the results of the process by issuing to the person an official document attesting all competences acquired. Such declarations are recognized at regional, national and European level. This certification is therefore framed as: "issuing a certification, a degree or a title formally attesting that a competent institution has verified and validated a set of learning results (knowledge, skills, attitudes) achieved by a person considering an established standard". Such a process can be managed with different methodologies, techniques and tools to be personalized and made flexible, but not always mutually exclusive. It is possible to proceed with tools that can be self-directed or other-directed, narrative or practical, aimed at a collection, an observation or an argumentation, considering more or less the referring standards. It is important to be followed and count on competent professionals who are able to support the persons throughout the process of validation of their competences.

As main tool of this process, regardless its institutional implications, is the provision of a Portfolio, which has to include an organized and consciously oriented collection of material describing and testifying that he person has the expected and developed knowledge, skills and competences within one or different learning experiences. The validation process of competences does not necessarily require the full conclusion of the path, that is the certification (phase 3) that could be used for the persons' personal and professional future opportunities.



VALCOVOL	Voluntary work for a curricula. Validating skills and abilities is useful for education and career course – A deeper study within the EVVIVA research	Erasmus+
Original language: Italian	Source: A Magazine managed by the Voluntary Centre Services of Bologna, Marche, Messina, Milano and Rovigo	Link: http://www.ciessevi.org/sites/def ault/files/pubblicazioni/vdossier/2 014/numero-3/Vdossier-numero3- 2014-corretto.pdf
Target group Teacher / trainer X Counsellor X Social worker X Youth worker X future employer Other:	Type of best practice initiative campaign project website only programme model training learning material X other: research	Experiences X available for more than 5 years available for less than 5 years pilot phase / testing in development other:

Why associations should invest time, energies and resources to recognize their own volunteers' competences?

Description

Keeping in mind that volunteering is a chance of learning both in formal and informal situations, the European Project "Invest" (in which Ciessevi took part in partnership with a few European partners dealing with volunteering in Europe like Hogeschool Rotterdam- Rotterdam University of Applied Science, Centre for Frivilligt Socialt Abejde-CFSA, The National Volunteer Centre in Denmark; The University of Roehampton, London; Fundaciòn Cibervoluntarios of Spain) has shown that the competences in which all volunteers are mostly interested are for the 81.5% the inter-personal ones and the relational ones and for the 66.5% those concerning inter-personal communication. Volunteering anyway has always more space for independent initiatives and answers that cannot be achieved in ordinary working settings. Even though some aspects of the volunteering process are still under study and "invisible" at the moment, it is accepted by anyone that it is an important learning situation. In fact, when we learn through volunteering we can also expand our personal development, the education and formation. We must be committed in clearly defining the resources of volunteering, recognizing the figure of volunteers using validation and certification. We need to develop tools not just for validating the acquired learning, but also to increase the awareness, the confidence and familiarity of the volunteers, in a way that they will be able more easily and independently to transfer all these learning from a context to another, as clearly stated by the "Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe (P.A.V.E.). For an "organization" recognizing and managing the competences of its own volunteers can help to value inside the job human relationship, increasing the chances of its own success. An association usually requires three types of competences known as "core competences" of volunteering: motivate and give meaning, technical-operative competences, organization and strategic competences. In detail five tools have been experimented through the "Project Invest":

- 1. Telling the experiences
- 2. The 10 steps
- 3. Checklist
- 4. "AVE intended as Assessment of volunteering experiences"
- 5. VPL intended as portfolio for volunteering.

The first three tools require the help of an expert, while the other two can be handled independently. Telling or "narrating" the experiences means asking a series of questions which include the biography of the interviewed volunteer, the value, the stories of "success", the resources and the future. "10 steps" is a proposal that comes out of the "Valuation of Prior Learning (www.ec-vpl.eu) and it is made of two sections regarding two different targets: for the volunteering and for the association.

"Checklist" instead comes out from the necessity of comparing, categorizing and summarizing the proposals, more significant and present in other tools, categorizing the results of learning. The tool will help the volunteer to pinpoint all the elements that he regards as most significant when acquiring his baggage of competences. The association will always have to indicate all the essential elements that a volunteer should have. "AVE" is a tool that is much more articulated, born in the United Kingdom and formed by open questions about volunteering experiences, a self-assessment box of 26 competences, the building of a "mental map", mainly a synthesis template, a certification of participation and a plan of "future formation".

"VPL" lists 12 general competences of volunteering and requires for each one of them a self-evaluation and ends with a summarizing report containing a panoramic view of future learning opportunities.



VALCOVOL	EXPERIENCES OF NON FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING VALIDATION IN ITALY AND IN EUROPE	Erasmus+	
Original language: Italian	Source: ISFOL - ITALY	Link: http://librettocompetenze.isfol.it/materiali/Validazione.pdf	
Target group Teacher / trainer X Counsellor X Social worker X Youth worker X future employer Other:	Type of best practice initiative campaign project website only programme model training learning material X other: research/study	Experiences X available for more than 5 years available for less than 5 years pilot phase / testing in development other:	
Specific indications about competences and their enhancement, recognition and certification			
certification. The processification. For who to develop a better guidelines offered b Curriculum Vitae" (E		g and usage of proper tools of ople, the European action intends ect we intend to follow the umentation" like "The European up to the decision of December	

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VALCOVOL	VA.LI.CO Validation of the Booklet of Competences	Erasmus+
Original language: Italian	Source: INAPP National Institute for the Analysis of Public Policies	Link: http://librettocompetenze.isfol.it/validazione-delle-competenze.html
Target group X Teacher / trainer X Counsellor X Social worker X Youth worker X future employer other:	Type of best practice	Experiences X available for more than 5 years available for less than 5 years pilot phase / testing in development other:

A useful support in the design and implementation of validation practices of expertise from experience

Description

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is an opportunity launched several years ago in different European countries and strongly promoted at EU and international headquarters as a strategic element of innovation and optimization of learning systems for people's development and for the development of employability.

Tools and examples

- 1. Qualification system analysis Example from the Rear Window project
- 2. Experimental Certificate of Skills Example from the project "Investing in People"
- 3. Competence certification Example from the "Talenti di cura" project
- 4. Declaration of competences Example from 'RAP-VPL' practice
- 5. Individual Dossier Example from the "RAP-VPL" project
- 6. <u>Guide to the Method (Detection and Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Skills) Example from the project "Beyond formal skills in social work" (pp. 3-4)</u>
- 7. Competences Identification Booklet Example from the project "Beyond formal skills in social work"
- 8. "Highlight the Competences" Project Manual
- 9. "Investing in people. A competence validation model. Project Results" Manual
- 10. Guidance counselling model in the competences validation process Example from the Rear Window project
- 11. ECVET Memorandum of Understanding Example from "Highlight the Competences"
- 12. User card for enrolling in the validation process Example from the "Rear Window" project
- 13. Evaluation Sheet Example from the project "RAP-VPL"
- 14. <u>Assessment Evaluation Sheet for Execution of a Civilian Painted Plaster Example from the</u> "Trasforbuilding" Project
- 15. Skills dossier Example from the "Rear Window" project
- 16. <u>Detection tools for the operator to be attached to the portfolio Example from the project "Beyond</u> formal skills in social work"
- 17. VALEW Model Guidelines How to validate learning at work Example from the Valew project
- 18. Evaluation of competences Example from the project "Beyond formal skills in social work" (pp.7-11)





Validazione delle competenze

La validazione dell'apprendimento non formale e informale è una opportunità lanciata da alcuni anni a sistema in diversi paesi europei e fortemente promossa nelle sedi comunitarie ed internazionali quale elemento strategico di innovazione e ottimizzazione dis sistemi di apprendimento per la valorizzazione delle persone e lo sviluppo della occupabilità.

Nel giossario CEDEFOP, nonché nelle Raccomandazioni relative all'EQF e all'EQVET, per validazione, o convalida, dei risultati dell'apprendimento si intende: "La conferna, da parte di un ente competente, che i risultati dell'apprendimento (conoccenze, abilità e/o competenze) acquisiti da una persona in un contesto formale, non formale o informale sono stati accertati in base a criteri prestabiliti e sono conformi ai requisiti di uno standard di convalida.

La convalida può essere seguita dalla <u>certificazione</u> o dal <u>riconoscimento dei</u> <u>crediti</u>

A distanza di circa 10 anni dalla ampia diffusione dei dibattito e delle pratiche in materia di validazione in Europa esiste un consolidato di pratiche e di caratteristiche tecniche e giundiche legalet a questo dispositivo. Al fine di esplicitare questo consolidato di punti comuni nel 2009 CEDEFOP ha pubblicato le Linee Guida Europee per la validazione dell'apprendimento non formale e informale (European Guidelines for validating non formal and informal learning http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news/4041_aspx_e inoltre ha raccolto le pratiche europee nell'European Inventory on Validation of non formal and informal learning 2014.

Utisfol nel 2012 ha prodotto analoghe Linee Guida a partire da quelle europee: Linee Guida per la Validazione delle competenze da esperienza .

Judicimenti ed escripi

I documenti che vengono qui proposti sono stati tratti dalle più interessanti prassi di validazione individuate nell'ambito dell'indagine condotta nel contesto della ricera "Recognition of non formal and informal learning", che ha previsto uno screening di progetti promossi dal 2004 al 2010 da Associazioni, Enti di Formazione, Istituti di Ricerca, Fondazioni, Regioni e Enti Locali, finanziati mediante Fondi privati, Fondi Nazionali, Fondo Sociale Europeo e attraverso i Programmi comunitari Leonardo da Vinci 2000-2006, Equal, Gioventù in azione, Programma quadro sull'Apprendimento Permanente sub programmi Grundtvig, Leonardo da Vinci e Trasversale.

VALCOVOL	Guidelines for a Methodology for the collection and validation of competences both formal and informal	Erasmus+
Original language: Italian	Source: ISFID Company	Link: http://librettocompetenze.isfol.it/materiali/strumenti-esempi/7.%20Guida%20al%20metodo.pdf
Target group X Teacher / trainer X Counsellor X Social worker X Youth worker future employer other:	Type of best practice initiative campaign project website only X programme model training learning material other:	Experiences X available for more than 5 years
Steps for a useful evaluation tool for coordinators of services		

Description

Step 1. Indication of characteristics and competences of the professional figure under study. This first step targets the professional figure analyzed.

Step 2. Indication of the professional figure, description of competences and analysis model of such competences; indication of the professional roles of the figure of the operator that will be analyzed and evaluated.

Step 3. A survey of the competences and of the setting used for the observation; the complexity of the person during his job, the elements intended to be collected, the analysis intended to investigate these competences; the operational tools can be so summarized: A) a preliminary phone interview for the sharing of the objectives, the collection of a resume of the person interviewed (see tips given by "Portfolio") and the sharing of the further steps about the analysis of competences to be evaluated if they are present.

B) a semi-structured interview about the competences that a person has; indication of the context where they have been acquired, define the "weight" (the real value) of such competences

C) Indication of modality of acquisition of the studied competences.



VALCOVOL	GUIDELINES FOR THE VALIDATION OF EXPERIENCE COMPETENCES	Erasmus+
Original language: Italian	Source: ISFOL – ITALY	Link: http://librettocompetenze.isfol.it/materiali/Linee- Guida-processo-di-validazione-competenze-sito.pdf
Target group	Type of best practice	Experiences
X Teacher / trainer	○ initiative	X available for more than 5 years
X Counsellor	○ campaign	available for less than 5 years
X Social worker	oproject	opilot phase / testing
X Youth worker	website only	in development
X future employer	oprogramme	O other:
other:	X model	
	○ training	
	learning material	
	other:	

The Guidelines are a methodological effort to integrate and lead to "common factors" both the indications provided by the European Commission and Cedefop, as well as the numerous experiences of validation of experience acquired in Italy, sharing the same language and the same methodological approach.

Description

In the Conclusions on European Common Principles for the Identification and Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning, issued by the European Commission in 2004, the importance of identifying and validating nonformal and informal learning outside the institutional and traditional vocational education and training places (workplace and civil society) has been confirmed. Validation devices do not give rise to a formal title but may facilitate the path to obtaining one (also through the recognition of training credits). It was also underlined the importance of defining common European principles for the identification and validation of informal and informal learning not only to homogenize experiences and practices but also to facilitate exchanges and geographical mobility.

Screenshot

