

Strengthening Youth
VOLUNTEERING

Validation of Learning Acquired by Youth when volunteering

DISCUSSION PAPER

October 2026



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1. Introduction

Youth volunteering has a long tradition in Europe. Every year, young people contribute their time, energy, ideas and skills to organisations and communities across Europe and beyond. Through these experiences, they support others, strengthen solidarity and develop valuable skills and competences. Yet, the contribution of young volunteers – and the learning that takes place through volunteering – is not always sufficiently visible, recognised or valued.

Strengthening the conditions for youth volunteering is at the heart of the [Strategic National Agency Cooperation on Volunteering](#). Bringing together 15 National Agencies for Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps and three SALTO Resource Centres, and coordinated by SALTO European Solidarity Corps, the cooperation works towards a stronger, more inclusive and impactful European volunteering landscape.

The Symposium “Recognising Youth Volunteering: From Experience to Impact” brings together different perspectives from across Europe to explore how youth volunteering is recognised today, where gaps and barriers remain, and what could be strengthened in the future.

This discussion paper focuses specifically on the validation of learning acquired through youth volunteering. It explores different perspectives and approaches to identifying, documenting, assessing and valuing the skills and competences young people develop through their volunteering experiences.

Rather than providing predetermined answers, the paper aims to provide a common starting point for discussion. Readers are invited to reflect on the questions posed and consider the suitability of different potential ways forward in their own contexts. This process is intended to support Symposium participants in identifying which aspects of validation could be strengthened and to explore practical ways to improve how learning and competences gained through youth volunteering are validated to ensure that every young person’s learning experience as a volunteer is truly valued.

The reflections will feed into the discussions in Dublin and contribute to our shared work towards stronger approaches to the validation of learning acquired through youth volunteering across Europe.

2. Introduction: Validating learning gained through volunteering in Europe

2.1. How has the process developed?

To better understand the importance of validation of learning outcomes for youth volunteering for the young people involved and also for overall societal value contributing to Europe's "Union of Skills", competitiveness and youth employability, it is helpful to look at how the process has developed in Europe both legislatively and socio-educationally. Also to highlight its unique value for personal development and social inclusion particularly for young people. These developments are closely linked to other key policy priorities and initiatives that the EU has put in place to tackle interconnected societal challenges such as the [Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027](#). This offers a comprehensive framework, emphasising access to employment, education, healthcare, and housing and expands previous actions aligning with the principles of the [European Pillar of Social Rights \(EPSR\)](#), which lays out principles for fair, well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems. The [European Year of Skills \(2023\)](#) further underscored the importance of upskilling and reskilling, including for young people.

Over the past fifty years, the European Union has worked toward harmonising education systems across its member states and the European Education Area, creating a shared legislative framework for access, assessment, and recognition of qualifications. These efforts support mobility rights, as enshrined in Article 45 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (EU, 2012: p. 404).

In the last two decades in particular, consensus among member states has grown, reinforcing citizens' personal and professional development in line with Articles 14, 15, 21, and 26 of the Charter (2012: pp. 398, 400–401). This progress led to the adoption of key instruments, such as the [European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning \(EC, 2008\)](#), and the formation of dedicated bodies like the [European Education Area \(EEA\)](#) to support policy development in lifelong learning. Within this evolving landscape, there has been a growing recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning for gaining knowledge and skills outside traditional education, including through volunteering.

The foundation for this recognition was laid in 1975 with the creation of [CEDEFOP](#) (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training), which later published a 2009 guide on validating such learning. [In 2012 the European Council issued a Recommendation](#) encouraging member states to establish systems for validating non-formal

and informal learning. The CEDEFOP guidelines for implementation have been updated, most recently in 2023 (CEDEFOP, 2023).

2.2. What is Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning?

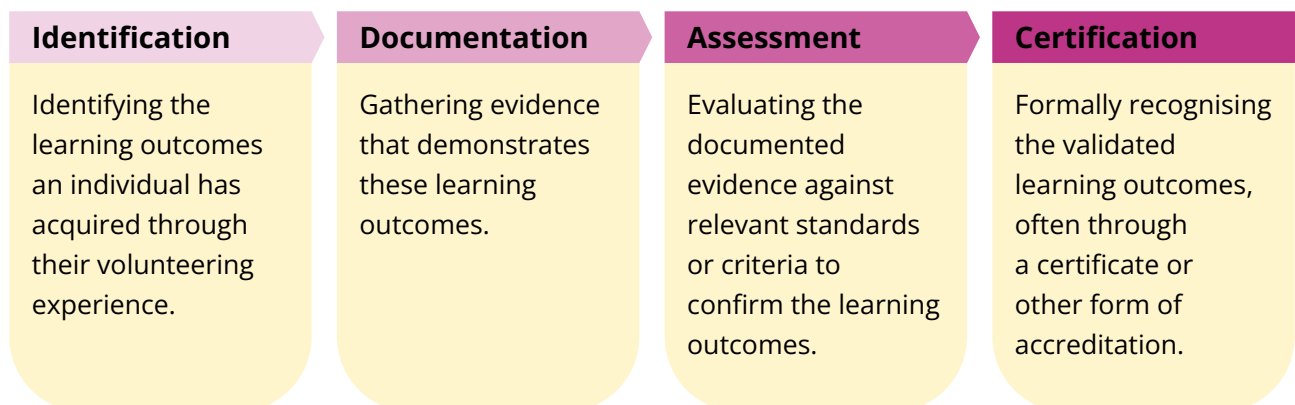
According to the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012, validation is defined as *“a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard”* (2012: p.5). This process helps individuals tailor their training pathways, promotes active engagement in learning and volunteering, and enables formal recognition of competencies, especially for those from underrepresented or vulnerable situations and backgrounds.

For youth volunteering, this is particularly relevant as young people, especially in cross-border volunteering situations, often gain valuable competencies through intercultural experiences, multilingual environments, and transnational community involvement. Validation of learning outcomes helps ensure their contributions are acknowledged and their learning formally recognised. This supports both their civic participation and access to employment. It transforms individual volunteering experiences into recognised learning outcomes that can support future education and/or career opportunities.

At their heart, validation of learning processes are about making learning visible. In the context of volunteering, it is essential that the free will nature of volunteering is reflected in any validation of learning processes that are offered. A volunteer embarking on a “validation of learning” process should do so as a result of their own informed choice to take part. They should also be aware of and have the possibility to exit the process at any time without any negative impact on their overall volunteering engagement experience.

The validation of learning outcomes can bring added value to volunteering experiences for some people and this value is at its greatest when best practice principles are applied. The [CEDEFOP Guidelines for VNFIL](#) provide details about barriers, enablers and best practice indicators for validation and the information [hub](#) about how they are implemented across Europe.

The validation process, as outlined in the guide, typically involves **four key phases**:



3. Cross Sector Collaboration for Validation

3.1. Validation Standards

The [Erasmus Plus project eQval](#) implemented from 2023 - 2025 by a consortium of partners including CEV (Centre for European Volunteering), is the most recent in-depth European funded project on the topic of validation of learning from volunteering. A core part of the initiative was to develop standards for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the volunteering context. These standards, yet to be implemented and/or broadly adopted by key actors, are intended for a wide range of stakeholders involved in, or benefiting from, the validation of learning from volunteering including:



Volunteers: To understand how their skills and knowledge gained through volunteering can be recognised.



Volunteering organisations: To implement quality validation processes for their volunteers.



Education and training institutions: To understand and potentially integrate learning from volunteering into formal learning pathways.



Employers: To recognise and value the skills and competences that individuals have gained through volunteering.



Public authorities and policy makers: To support and promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

In using these standards, stakeholders, together or individually, can ensure that a broad range of learning outcomes acquired through youth volunteering can be validated. This includes not only specific “hard” skills directly related to the volunteering tasks undertaken (such as accounting or gardening) but also transversal competences such as teamwork, communication, problem-solving, initiative, and adaptability. The focus is on recognising the knowledge, skills, and responsibilities gained, regardless of the context in which they were learned.

3.2. Validation and Formal Education

Youth volunteering has been linked to the academic framework for a number of years. Learning acquired during youth volunteering activities can be mapped to specific competences which align with academic standards, such as digital project management or cross-cultural communication. In this context and complementing their formal classroom courses and studies, young students (undergraduates) have been earning valuable credits from the learning outcomes acquired whilst volunteering. However, since ECTS credits are calculated based on workload rather than learning outcomes there is a friction for volunteering contexts. This stems from the fact that recognition facilitators such as validation of learning are frequently linked to time based metrics rather than learning outcomes. Furthermore, according to a recent study by SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, there are non-unified and complicated systems across Europe, low uptake, and an over-emphasis on the 3rd and 4th phases of validation as compared to the 1st and 2nd.

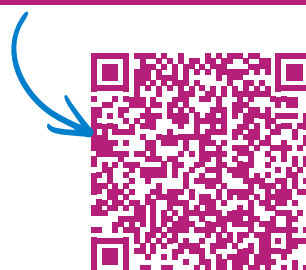
READ MORE ABOUT THE
SALTO T&C STUDY:



3.3. Validation and Public Agencies

[CEDEFOP's renewed reference framework for lifelong guidance](#) was published in April 2026 and aims to support more coherent and high-quality guidance systems across Europe. This framework builds on the 2008 Council Resolution on Lifelong Guidance, the Lifelong Guidance (LLG) Inventory maintained by CEDEFOP and CareersNet, and evolving policy priorities under new EU strategies,

READ MORE ABOUT THE
EUROPEAN GUIDANCE SYSTEMS:



including the Union of Skills. The Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices by CEDEFOP keeps evolving and additions for Germany, Slovenia and Luxembourg have been recently included. **The renewed framework consists of 18 guidelines, grouped into three clusters:**

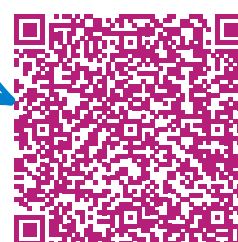
Transversal Guidelines (1–9):	Covering areas such as career management skills, access, quality assurance, governance, professionalism, use of ICT, funding, evidence, and information services.
Sectoral Guidelines (10–16):	Addressing the needs of school pupils, VET learners, higher education students, adult learners, workers, unemployed persons and older adults.
Social Inclusion Guidelines (17–18):	Focusing on young people at risk and other vulnerable groups.



It is notable that young people as an overall group are not included here and young volunteers could be part of several groups.

The [PES Network](#) has been addressing the issue of “Career Guidance in the Evolving World of Work” and analysing how Public Employment Services are adapting their guidance services to a changing labour market characterised by more frequent job transitions, emerging occupations, digitalisation and increasing skills shortages. It maps current practices across Member States, including legal mandates, delivery models, target groups and partnership structures, and explores ways to address fragmentation in service delivery, promote cross-sector collaboration, and strengthen cooperation with education providers, employers and social partners. Dissemination activities are expected to follow in 2026.

**READ MORE ON THE
PES NETWORK:**





EXPLORING FURTHER



- What can **formal education providers** do to better align validation of learning acquired whilst volunteering to learning outcomes?



- How can **guidance procedures** take into better consideration the role and value of volunteering for young people?



- What can be done to increase the number of **well-trained guidance professionals who truly understand and appreciate the added value of volunteering** for young people's development alongside experiences in the education and training sector?

4. Support, Intergenerational Engagement & Mentoring

4.1. Exchange & Mentoring Across Age Groups

Volunteering as a form of lifelong learning facilitates the exchange of skills and knowledge across different age groups, thereby fostering intergenerational cooperation. It offers mutual benefits for different generations especially when they interact to address mutually important causes and challenges. For validation of learning to be successful, support structures such as mentoring need to be in place. Intergenerational interaction in these support structures and processes can be highly beneficial. As the EU faces demographic shifts and a skills gap, integrating young people into the workforce is crucial. Volunteer mentors from other generations engaging with young volunteers can contribute to accelerating upskilling and fostering social inclusion alongside labour market integration for young people. Senior expert volunteers, (people over 50 including retirees) with valuable skills and experience, are a particularly under-utilised

resource in supporting young volunteers to validate their learning outcomes acquired whilst volunteering.

More experienced volunteers from different generations can bring a wealth of experience to upskilling efforts in youth volunteering contexts. They can design and deliver training programmes, offer one-on-one mentorship that supports validation journeys, and provide practical insights into industry-specific as well as general expectations as concerns education and training needs. Their role as volunteer mentors to young people going through validation processes allows them to not only teach technical skills and support the identification and recording of learning outcomes and objectives, but also help young people to navigate the cultural aspects of the workplace when they are there as volunteers. This can include elements such as understanding workplace norms, building professional networks, and managing conflict.

For younger people, the intergenerational cooperation involved in volunteering can encourage disconnection from the digital world. This can contribute to addressing issues such as digital addiction, cyberbullying and over-dependence on technology. It can be particularly impactful in bridging the digital divide between different generations, while also addressing the over-reliance on technology among young people. This engagement with people from other generations can encourage young people to develop much needed interpersonal skills and can help foster a deeper understanding and appreciation for older generations reducing societal polarisation.

4.1.1. Intergenerational Collaboration Models

Promising-practice intergenerational collaboration models that have been applied to good effect in the **education and training sector** could be inspirational for the volunteering sector.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE FROM GERMANY



Germany has introduced integration courses that combine language learning with vocational training, allowing young people with migrant backgrounds to gain the necessary skills to enter the workforce. These programmes such as the VerA initiative managed by the [Senior Experten Service \(SES\)](#) are supported by senior volunteer mentors, who provide guidance on both professional skills and cultural integration.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE FROM SWEDEN



Sweden operates a fast-track programme for young people with migrant backgrounds, particularly those with qualifications in fields with labour shortages, such as healthcare and engineering called the [“Fast Track” \(Snabbspår\)](#) initiative. This programme includes the involvement of senior professionals, who help mentor and coach newcomers through the Swedish work culture and industry-specific practices.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE FROM SPAIN



Spain has introduced [dual vocational training programmes \(Dual VET\)](#), which combines work experience and education, offering young people a path into employment in technical fields. These programmes are highly supported by older volunteers, who share their professional expertise to enhance the hands-on training provided.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE FROM FRANCE



The [“Share Ami”](#) programme supported by the French Red Cross amongst others fosters relationships between generations by setting up video chats between French language students and volunteer senior citizens who reside in France. In this programme, older people engage in video conversations with French language learners, fostering communication and mutual understanding between age groups.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE FROM BELGIUM



In Belgium [MentorYou](#) is a personalised coaching programme for young job seekers (mentees) that involves professionally active (mentors) who put their expertise and knowledge of the labour market to the service of the professional integration of mentees. Together for six months, they form a pair and address the challenge of finding a job.

4.2. Importance of Interpersonal Connections

It must be kept in mind that tasks that form part of validation processes such as CV coaching, interview preparation, or professional mentoring are not just technical; they require empathy, cultural understanding, and experience-based judgment. With the growth of the use of AI capacities in the skilling and upskilling fields it must be remembered that these are qualities that AI cannot replicate. Moreover, AI systems often embed biases from the data they are trained on. For young people, this can mean reinforcing existing inequalities - automated AI screening tools might under-value non-traditional qualifications, unconventional career paths, or culturally diverse experiences. If there is a heavy reliance on using AI, there is a danger that vulnerable groups may be inadvertently disadvantaged, rather than supported, therefore **volunteer mentors from other generations as part of the support network for validation processes aimed at young volunteers have a clear added value.**



Intergenerational engagement is increasingly understood as an important key driver of social cohesion, active ageing, and youth empowerment but opportunities for meaningful interaction between age groups remain limited.



EXPLORING FURTHER



What needs to be done to **improve the support and mentoring young volunteers undertaking validation of learning processes** have access to? How can intergenerational approaches be better harnessed as part of this support?



What are the support structures that need to be in place so that **volunteering is better recognised within the EU Skills Agenda** as part of a lifelong and lifewide learning approaches?



What is needed to support youth volunteering as a more **central component of flexible learning pathways**?

5. Making learning visible - how is it important for different groups?

The exploration of why it can be important to make learning visible, and what are the different processes and benefits associated with it, supports growth in awareness about how validation adds value to youth volunteering experiences. Furthermore it can increase knowledge about how it strengthens the quality and impact of youth volunteering. It can also increase the understanding for which young volunteers validation could be of most benefit and why some young volunteers may choose to have their learning validated and others not.

Youth volunteering plays a vital role in fostering inclusion and building more connected, resilient communities. Volunteering not only supports the directly identified objectives of the initiatives but also creates meaningful opportunities for personal development, social participation, and learning, especially for young people with fewer opportunities. However, young people with fewer opportunities are often left with no choice other than to prioritise increasing their skills and competencies to enter or progress in the workforce and/ education and training using more well-known and obvious routes. Despite offering clear added value, validation of learning acquired whilst volunteering, is often not considered to be a possible factor in their learning pathways. The lack of systemic application and understanding across disciplines as well as education and training support services can lead to situations where volunteering is not clearly recognised as a source of learning. Young people, particularly those from vulnerable or marginalised groups who arguably have the most to gain, can be discouraged and even prevented from taking up volunteering opportunities. Motivating and including young people from diverse and marginalised backgrounds in volunteering as a whole, and furthermore in the associated validation of learning opportunities, is essential.

5.1. Quality Validation of Learning Procedures for Young Volunteers

By developing and adopting validation procedures that align with identified quality principles and phases, youth organisations and other entities engaging youth volunteers can implement some or all phases of validation of learning. By following the standards identified in the [Erasmus Plus project eQval](#), and applying a more systematic approach, organisations can ensure more inclusive outcomes to their volunteering opportunities. Volunteering organisations play a particularly crucial role in the identification and documentation phases of validation of learning, thereby, when they are unable to complete all phases themselves, providing a valuable basis for possible implementation of the following phases by other relevant stakeholders, such as formal education institutions or employers.

Key Procedures for quality:

Establishing clear criteria for identifying and documenting learning outcomes from different volunteering roles.

Providing support and guidance to volunteers in preparing their documentation.

Training staff or engaging external assessors to conduct fair and reliable assessments.

Developing appropriate certification mechanisms to formally recognise validated learning.

Ensuring transparency and communicating the validation process to volunteers and other relevant stakeholders.

Regularly reviewing and improving validation practices based on these standards and feedback.



EXPLORING FURTHER



What needs to be done to achieve a **more systemic implementation of validation quality standards** leading to more robust and credible validation processes that could be well-harnessed by the youth and volunteering sectors?



What needs to be done to ensure that **navigating the required steps towards validation of learning acquired by young people whilst volunteering is easier and more accessible**, leading to a more inclusive approach and outcomes?



What needs to be done to **build trust in the validation processes and its outcomes**, implemented by the Non Formal and Informal Learning (NFIL) stakeholders?

6. Ensuring Quality Validation across Europe

6.1. Validation Frameworks

Despite the significant social progress that validation guidelines and youth policies have brought in recent years, true harmonisation in their implementation across countries has yet to be fully achieved. While instruments such as [Europass](#) and [Youthpass](#) were designed to support pan-European validation practices, many countries still prefer to use their own national tools, often diverging from the European recommendations. Youthpass is also only available for use within the European youth programmes. This limits the broader impact and consistency of the original validation initiative for a European approach (eQval, 2023: p.4).



It is essential that volunteer managers are aware of these variations in national frameworks, as they can directly affect how learning outcomes acquired whilst volunteering are validated. Such awareness is especially important when working with international or mobile young volunteers.

The way in which validation adds value and strengthens the quality and impact of youth volunteering varies across Europe. This is as concerns **access** as well as **uptake**. The **overall cost** of the process, as well as the **length and user friendliness**, in addition to **who bears the cost**, are all determining factors. Additionally, which entities are involved in the **governance process** for validation as well as the procedures and possibilities for becoming **certified authorised bodies** that can oversee the process and issue learning certificates are critical aspects to take into account. Additional efforts still need to be made to convince Social Partners (Employers & Trade Unions) to better engage with, and invest in, validation of learning outcomes systems.

Although not universal, youth volunteering is widely recognised as a rich source of non-formal and informal learning. It offers space to acquire and develop a wide range of skills, competencies, and attitudes that are transferable to other areas of life, including education, employment, and broader aspects of civic engagement. These can include interpersonal communication, intercultural understanding, teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving, and more.

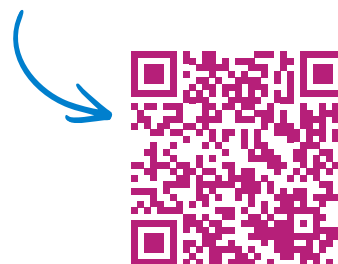


Whilst awareness of the importance of transversal skills is high, as is the understanding that transversal skills are typically acquired by volunteers, it is important to note a comprehensive list of transversal skills in Europe is still not available and badly needed.

Volunteering complements formal education and employment pathways for young people by creating low-barrier, real-life learning environments, rather than serving as an alternative to them.

Whether or not, and how, hard, soft and transversal skills are given importance in validation opportunities are determining factors for the way in which validation of learning contributes to the recognition of youth volunteering experiences, for who, and in what ways. Other aspects to consider include who awards certificates (volunteer-involving organisations, volunteer infrastructure organisations, public authorities, formal education providers, exam boards etc.) and how that impacts on the recognition of any learning credentials obtained via validation processes. How these credentials are framed within and connected to NQFs and the EQF are important factors in supporting the recognition, transparency and portability of these credentials across borders. This aspect brings attention to the relationship to the framework of the European Higher Education Area that aims to create a zone where learning mobility is not hindered by incompatible qualifications. The EQF/NQF structure directly supports this by enabling recognition of qualifications, facilitating lifelong learning, and improving transparency. Both systems rely on a **“learning outcomes” approach**, focusing on what a learner knows and is able to do, rather than the duration of study or learning programme/ experience. This approach is advocated for in the best practice indicators for validation of learning outcomes acquired whilst volunteering as identified by the Erasmus Plus eQval project, together with **these benchmarks:**

**READ MORE ON THE LEARNING
OUTCOMES APPROACH:**



Volunteer-centredness: Ensuring the process is focused on the individual volunteer's needs and learning.

Transparency: Making the process, criteria, and outcomes clear and accessible to all stakeholders.

Reliability: Ensuring the methods and tools used for identification, documentation, and assessment consistently produce dependable results.

Validity: Confirming that the assessment accurately reflects the learning outcomes achieved.

Fairness and impartiality: Ensuring the process is conducted without bias and provides equal opportunities for all volunteers.

Accessibility: Making the validation process accessible to all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Data protection: Handling all personal information collected during the process in accordance with data protection regulations.

These quality standards align with the EU's broader policy objectives on lifelong learning and the validation of non-formal and informal learning. They support the idea that all forms of learning, including that gained through volunteering, have value and should be recognised. By providing a framework for quality validation, the eQval standards contribute to increasing inclusion, transparency, mobility, and employability within the European context. They can also help to bridge the gap between non-formal learning and formal qualifications frameworks bringing a clear added value to youth volunteering experiences for those that choose to take up the validation opportunities available.

6.2. Validation Tools

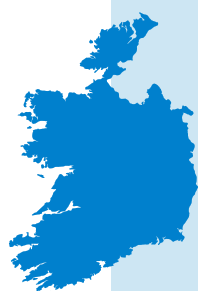
ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE FROM GERMANY



Since January 2025, building on the previous Valikom pilot project, the assessment of individual, profession-specific competencies has been a new official task of the chambers of commerce. The new assessment procedure makes visible professional skills acquired outside of dual vocational training or continuing professional development, in non-formal and informal settings including volunteering. This benefits not only individuals but also employers as it allows them to better assess the skills and abilities of people without formal vocational training enabling them to deploy their employees more effectively and provide targeted further training. The legal basis is the [Vocational Training Validation and Digitization Act \(BVaDiG\)](#) Section 6. The procedure is aimed at adults over 25 years old with several years of professional experience but without a professional qualification in the practiced occupation. It facilitates the connection or reconnection to formal learning systems for those marginalised from the process. The model uses the reference of a complete occupation rather than components or fragments of the knowledge, skills and competencies needed to reach the level of a full scale occupational qualification. The validation and certification process follows a performance based procedure rather than written exams. For people with disabilities full, predominant and partial certification / qualification is possi-

ble, micro-credentials can only complement the process for this and lead to full qualification eventually. This example takes an approach based almost entirely on “hard-skills”, giving a very vocational and less complex approach to validation of learning than is reflected in many youth volunteering contexts.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE FROM IRELAND



The **National Youth Volunteer Portfolio (MyVP)**, developed by Localise, is a national digital framework that validates and recognises the learning, skills and competencies young people acquire through volunteering and civic participation. Rather than simply recording volunteering hours, the portfolio enables young people to evidence their experiential learning through verified action projects, reflective practice, skills development and civic contribution. Each portfolio is validated by Localise and partner organisations, creating a trusted record of non-formal and informal learning.

The model has been developed and tested in partnership with Dublin City University (DCU) as a pathway to further education and employment.

Following successful pilot and beta testing, the first two young people have already progressed into DCU using their National Youth Volunteer Portfolios as part of their progression journey. Building on this success, the model is now being further developed to support progression into apprenticeships, employment and public service careers, while also aligning with Ireland’s emerging Life Events Digital Wallet.

The National Youth Volunteer Portfolio demonstrates how validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) (known as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Ireland) can move beyond recognition alone to become a practical equity tool. This ensures that the knowledge, skills and civic competencies developed through youth volunteering are recognised and translated into real progression opportunities for young people, particularly those from communities where access to opportunity has traditionally been more limited.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE FROM SPAIN



Supported by the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, Vol+ is a certification programme in Spain run by the [Plataforma del Voluntariado de España](#) (Spanish Volunteering Platform). It formally recognises and certifies the soft skills and transversal competencies volunteers of all ages gain through their activities. It helps volunteers increase their employability by enriching their CVs and providing evidence that proves their non-formal learning. It evaluates seven core areas, including teamwork, interpersonal communication, problem-solving, planning, initiative, leadership, and flexibility. To support assessment and maintenance of common standards, each competence has a stipulated definition and a series of significant experiences that will serve to collect, compose and evaluate the collected information. In Vol+, three possible range levels are considered (low, intermediate and advanced). Volunteers are supported by trained tutors and HR professionals through structured interviews, self-evaluations, and the Voluncloud platform to validate their real-world experience.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE FROM AUSTRIA



In Austria an innovative proposal has been developed that pegs 11 carefully selected learning outcomes that European Solidarity Corps volunteers can reasonably be expected to acquire to NQF level 3. Each of the learning outcomes has three criteria and the aim is to assess the acquisition of competences on the basis of multiple pieces of evidence. Learning outcomes can be assessed from different perspectives, namely through the training formats (OAT/MTE), personal reflection with the mentor, and the work context via the tutor. This multi-perspective approach is designed to contribute to a comprehensive, balanced and transparent evidence base, thereby strengthening the validity of the assessment process. The model envisages that throughout their placement European Solidarity Corps volunteers continuously engage with their experiences, activities and learning processes and reflect on these through various formats, in particular during the on arrival training, the mid-term evaluation and the mentoring sessions. In doing so, they use supportive tools such as the Youthpass and a learning diary to document, structure and further develop their learning experiences. The self-assessment contained in the Participant Report complements the overall view of the volunteer placement and can provide additional insights

into participants' perceptions of their own learning experiences. The active participation of the volunteers thus forms a central basis for the generation and traceability of the evidence, without itself being part of the formal assessment.

Assessment is proposed to be based on four clearly defined elements: On-Arrival Training (OAT); Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE); Ongoing feedback discussions with the mentor; Final review with the tutor. These elements represent different learning and observation contexts: Training context (learning and guided reflection); Personal development (mentor); Implementation in the work and project context (tutor).

6.3. Validation Instruments

The use of **micro-credentials** is growing but still of limited practice. So far only 18 NQFs involve micro-credentials. Awareness and understanding of the potential of validation of learning as an added value of youth volunteering experiences could provide additional arguments for, and practical implementation of, micro-credentials.

Developments in this direction, as well as the digitalisation of the certificate supplements, could strengthen learning portfolios and interoperability with broader tools through sharing data with Europass for example. **Digitalisation** involves the transformation of paper-based documents into secure, machine-readable digital formats. As part of the Europass framework, this process aims to improve the recognition of academic and vocational qualifications across borders, facilitating easier sharing with employers and institutions. The process creates credentials which are “natively digital” rather than mere scans, allowing for automatic processing by IT systems, instant verification, and direct sharing from digital wallets.

An additional aspect to take into account concerns the fact that validation of learning acquired while volunteering needs to be better connected to existing **competence frameworks** developed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC). They are designed to create a common language and set of standards across Europe for key skills required for life, work, and personal development in the 21st century. These frameworks are often used together in curricula, teacher training, and policy

READ MORE ON
MICRO-CREDENTIALS:



development, and can be interlinked to provide holistic, modern learning experiences including as part of youth volunteering experiences.

Framework	Full Name	Focus Areas	Primary Purpose
DigiComp	Digital Competence	5 Areas (21 Comp)	Digital Literacy & Citizenship
EntreComp	Entrepreneurship	3 Areas (15 Comp)	Entrepreneurial Mindset
LifeComp	Personal, Social, Learning	3 Areas (9 Comp)	Social/Emotional Skills
GreenComp	Sustainability	4 Areas (12 Comp)	Green Transition Skills



EXPLORING FURTHER



- Are volunteer organisations **ready to issue digital certificates**? If not, what, if anything, needs to be done to change this?



- How can micro-credentials in Europe better **support validation of skills gained outside of a formal courses** e.g. through volunteering?



- How can we **overcome barriers and build trustworthy, inclusive and portable (across borders) systems** for the validation of learning acquired through volunteering across Europe that align with NQF, EQF and agreed competence frameworks?



In what ways can the peer Learning activity on Validation in connection with the Skills Portability Initiative planned for spring 2027 in Estonia involve a specific focus on validation of learning for young volunteers, as an important milestone in the follow up and legacy actions for the 30th anniversary of the EU youth volunteering and solidarity programmes? How could it contribute to placing volunteering more centrally in flexible learning pathway opportunities?

Editorial info

Editor and Publisher: OeAD-GmbH | Ebendorferstraße 7 | 1010 Vienna | Headquarters: Vienna FN 320219k | Commercial Court Vienna | ATU 64808925 | **Author:** Gabriella Civico | Centre for European Volunteering | **Coordination:** Christine Weil – SALTO European Solidarity Corps | T + 43 153408-0, rc-solidarity@oead.at | **Visuals:** Rita Marques | **Layout design:** Eleonora Schulze-Battmann | Vienna, Oct 2026.

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