



Digital technologies for validating  
young volunteers competences

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# STATE OF THE ART TRANSNATIONAL REPORT

## I02 - A1

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ISSUED: MAY 2021







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## 102 - A1

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7	INTRODUCTION
9	THE PROJECT
13	EUROPE AT A GLANCE
19	COUNTRY SHORT REPORTS
19	a. AUSTRIA
23	b. BELGIUM
28	c. ITALY
31	d. LITHUANIA
37	RECCOMENDATIONS FOR THE DYVO APP DEVELOPMENT
41	BIBLIOGRAPHY

# INTRODUCTION



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“The recommendation points to the importance of actively involving the voluntary sector in the implementation of validation: ‘[...] youth organizations and civil society organizations should promote and facilitate the identification and documentation of learning outcomes acquired at work or in voluntary activities, using relevant Union transparency tools such as those developed under the Europass framework and Youthpass”

*(Council of EU, 2012, p. 4, point 4a)*

## INTRODUCTION

This document is developed within the Intellectual Output 2 – DYVO EBOOK of the Erasmus+ project “**DYVO: Digital technologies for validating young volunteers competences**” (AGREEMENT NUMBER: 2020-2-IT03-KA205-019156) funded with the financial support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission.

The paper presents the results of the transnational research realized in the months of March and April 2021 in Italy, Belgium, Austria and Lithuania regarding the state of the art on validation of competences acquired through volunteering in Europe.

This research had been conducted basing upon previous reports, literature reviews, the analysis of the European Qualifications Framework and of the different National Qualifications Frameworks, and a summary of outputs and selected best practices.

The research is the first activity (IO2-A1) of Intellectual Output 2 of the project, the E-book on the DYVO Model, with the aim of elaborating and drafting the model for recognition and validation of skills and competences acquired by young volunteers that informs DYVO, producing an easy-to-use output for the dissemination and exploitation of the model and producing intermediate outputs useful for IO1 and IO3.

**THE  
PROJECT**



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## THE PROJECT

Thanks to the efforts done at the EU level (EVS, ESC, Youthpass, EU projects), practices of recognition and validation in youth volunteering have gradually diffused.

However, some obstacles still hinder their spread in the voluntary sector:

- a certain idea that presenting volunteering as an opportunity of professional growth would question its alleged nature of being an unselfish activity;
- the lack of awareness by both volunteers and organizations;
- the lack of specific skills in youth workers;
- the lack of a clear framework of learning outcomes; the lack of flexible, easy-to-use instruments.

DYVO intends to contribute to the overcoming of these obstacles. Its aim is to develop, test and disseminate an innovative model and tool to facilitate the recognition and validation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired in youth volunteering.

The project has the following specific objectives:

- 1) develop a new digital, easy-to-use and innovative tool to support the recognition and validation of competences in youth volunteering;
  - 2) empower YV, youth workers and organizations in the development and exploitation of methods and tools for validating competences, included the new Europass framework;
  - 3) elaborate a clear framework of learning outcomes, and related competences, of informal learning through youth volunteering, and a clear methodology of validation;
  - 4) promote recognition and validation of competences of YV with fewer opportunities.
- These objectives are better achieved through a transnational project.

### WHY DYVO PROJECT?

69% of youth volunteering activities happens locally and are focused on local communities (source: Eurobarometer). This makes sense since the people's power of changing something locally is much bigger than at higher levels.

Nonetheless, there is a risk of losing a large-scale vision of problems, needs, solutions, practices. This international vision can change the way young volunteers think and act, locally and globally, and can be nurtured by transnational exchanges and social networks. Moreover, an even short intercultural experience can be an important added value for young people's employability and professional development, as also stated by the Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU of 2008 and the Council Resolution of 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field.

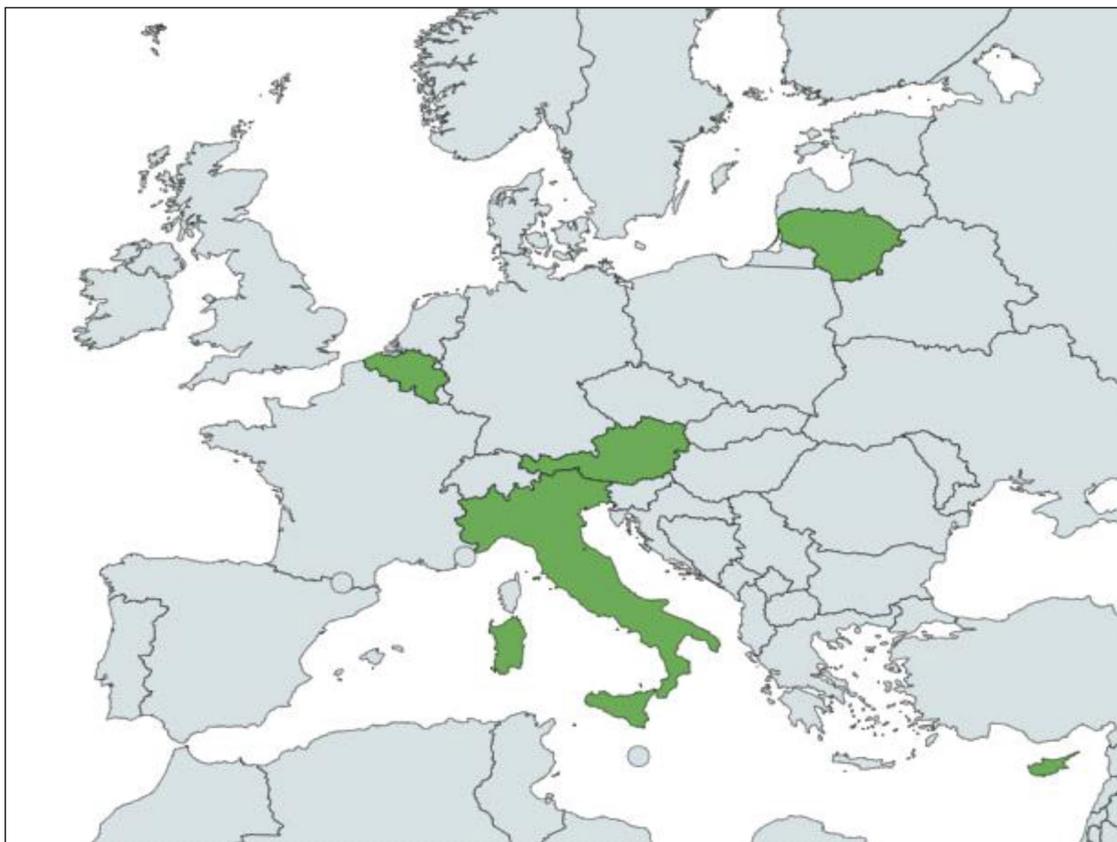
Despite of these recommendations, just 11% of young volunteers participate in projects of cooperation with youth from other EU countries. Finally, the project's outputs are suitable be exploited at the EU level. All the IOs can be exploited by young volunteers and organizations across Europe.

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The consortium consists of 6 partners from 5 EU countries (IT, AT, BE, CY, LT), covering a wide range of expertise and experience related to the project's scope and Strategic Partnerships objectives.

The Project partners:

- **CSV Marche, Italy**
- **Warehouse Hub (WCF), Italy**
- **ENTER, Austria**
- **Jaunuoliu Dienos Centras (JDC), Lithuania**
- **Centre Europeen du Volontariat (CEV), Belgium**
- **Pundi X 365, Cyprus**



DYVO partner countries (image credit: mapchart.net)



**EUROPE  
AT A  
GLANCE**



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## EUROPE AT A GLANCE

There's a wide consensus on the fact that individuals acquire skills, knowledge and competences outside the formal education and training system (formal learning). However, there is little or no consensus about the definitions of the terms, about value that should be given to this learning, about who should decide what is valued, and about the best ways to define the standards for the assessment of the outcomes of this learning.

Nevertheless, making non-formal and informal learning visible seems to be at the forefront of a lot of public policy in the European Union and the OECD countries<sup>1</sup>.

For sure, recognition of non-formal and informal learning touches on many different issues within the education and training system. It has an impact on the lifelong learning system countries or regions may want to adopt or implement because it opens up the perspective about where, when and how individuals learn; and which learning outcomes have value and need to be recognized.

According to the recent surveys (Eurobarometer) 31% of young Europeans aged 15-30 is engaged in voluntary activities, an increase of 6 points in 3 years. Youth volunteering is increasing almost everywhere, as for the project's countries: +14% in Italy, +6% in Austria, +5% in Lithuania, +3% in Belgium, +2% in Cyprus (Eurobarometer). For these young people, volunteering is an outstanding experience of informal learning that generates knowledge, skills and competences.

As stated by several studies, many of these competences – communication, decision-making, flexibility, creativity, intercultural competences, teamwork – are increasingly required by the labour market. Still, they remain often invisible. Only 28% of European young volunteers receive formal recognition, the same percentage of 3 years before. Thus, they are not fully aware of which competences they develop, and of their potential for employability. In most cases, they have little idea on how to recognize and give evidence to these competences in their cv and in job search activities. This is particularly true for young volunteers with fewer opportunities, whose connection with the labour market is even weaker.

Volunteering is considered as a key aspect in the EU youth policy since the White Paper *"A new impetus for European youth"* of 2001 that recognized it as a key element for individual and professional development of youth, and stressed the importance of validating competences.

Several studies confirm this statement, pointing out that young people involved in voluntary activities deploy competences that are not found in other young people.

For this reason, the Council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning states that *"youth and civil society organizations should promote and facilitate the identification and documentation of learning outcomes acquired in volun-*

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1. P. Werquin - Recognition of non-formal and informal learning in OECD countries: A very good idea in jeopardy? (OECD - Lifelong Learning in Europe, Vol. 3)

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*tary activities*". These organizations and their youth workers are however not fully aware of this role.

They need to be empowered to enhance their competences to manage the validation process and guide young volunteers through it. As stressed by the EU guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning (CEDEFOP), "guidance and training for those who manage and carry out the validation process are essential for the professionalization of practitioners, communities of practice, and transparency of the validation processes".

Moreover, if volunteering is a way to improve social inclusion it is also a way to (re-) enter the labor market. Many people have gained skills in volunteering that are of great value to society in general and to the labor market in particular. There, often these skills and competences are not appreciated because they were not acquired and validated within the framework of formal qualification. However, in order to meet the increasing social demands of a working environment, relevant competences must not simply lie idle.

The validation of non-formally and informally acquired competences therefore gains relevance in lifelong learning. Consequently, for all volunteers it is a matter of social appreciation as well as employment effects to get their gained competences adequately validated.

## **THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATION SYSTEM**

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning involves many actors and the rationale developed in different countries systematically relies on a multi-faceted approach<sup>2</sup>.

Whereas qualifications and learning outcomes related to "hard skills" are in majority known and even, converging at EU level (EQF / NQF, ESCO), so far there is no common understanding and agreed list of transversal skills in the voluntary sector that can be used as a reference by organizations operating in diverse fields or in different countries.

A first set of European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning were published jointly by the European Commission and Cedefop in 2009 (Cedefop and European Commission, 2009). Acknowledging the positive reception of these, the Council recommendation of 20 December 2012 on validation of non-formal and informal learning<sup>3</sup> invited the European Commission – in consultation with Member States and stakeholders – regularly to review the guidelines. The recommendation provided a strong platform for European cooperation in validation of non-formal and informal learning. Member States, education and training institutions, social partners and other relevant stakeholders have been invited to intensify work in this area and, by 2018, put in place appropriate national arrangements allowing individuals to value and make visible the outcomes of learning at work, at home, during leisure time and in voluntary activities. These arrangements will enable individuals to in-

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2. Ibidem

3. Council of the EU, 2012

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crease the visibility and value of their knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside formal education and training: at work, at home or in voluntary activities.

A revised edition of the European guidelines for validating of non-formal and informal learning has been published end of 2015<sup>4</sup> and it is the result of a two-year process involving a wide range of stakeholders active in validation at European, national and/or sectoral levels. The ambition of the revised guidelines is to clarify the conditions for implementation, highlighting the critical choices to be made by stakeholders at different stages of the process, both at national and at European level.

At country level the adoption and implementation of EU Guidelines reached very different levels of achievements, depending on the country. What seems clear is that development and implementation of validation arrangements relies on several interconnected steps and starts from the assumption that validation is about:

- (a) how to make visible the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning;
- (b) how to attribute appropriate value to outcomes of non-formal and informal learning.

Actually, after the turning point of 2018, there is more and more effort at EU level to develop a reference system of transversal skills, which is the very first step to better develop and validate these competences that can be useful both for volunteering and social work as well as for entrepreneurial careers.

We refer, for instance, to the work of the EU Joint Research *Center/Science Lab*<sup>5</sup> and to the *LifeComp*<sup>6</sup>, *Entrecomp*<sup>7</sup> and *DigComp*<sup>8</sup> frameworks.

The first is a framework to establish a shared understanding on the “personal, social and learning to learn” key competences.

LifeComp is a framework to establish a shared understanding on the “personal, social and learning to learn” key competence. It is a conceptual framework. It is non-prescriptive, and it can be used as a basis for the development of curricula and learning activities. The framework wants to help people to unleash their dynamic potential, self-regulate their emotions, thoughts, and behaviours. The aim is to build a meaningful life, cope with complexity, be thriving individuals, responsible social agents, and reflective lifelong learners. LifeComp, for example, describes 9 competences that can be learned by everyone in formal, informal and non-formal education.

Moreover, by focusing on the development of competences through the actual creation of entrepreneurial value, EntreComp breaks down the boundaries between education, work and civic engagement. In this respect, the EntreComp is transversal to formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts and applies equally to education and training systems --from primary to vocational education and training-- and to non-structured learning contexts including civil society, communities, youth work, start-ups and existing organisation such as corporations, non-governmental organisations or public administrations.

The European Digital Competence Framework, also known as DigComp, offers a tool

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4. Cedefop (2015). European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop reference series; No 104. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2801/008370>

5. EU Science Hub | The European Commission's science and knowledge service (europa.eu)

6. LifeComp: The European framework for the personal, social and learning to learn key competence | EU Science Hub (europa.eu)

7. EntreComp: The entrepreneurship competence framework | EU Science Hub (europa.eu)

8. DigComp | EU Science Hub (europa.eu)

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to improve citizen's digital competence. Today, being digitally competent means that people need to have competences in all areas of DigComp.

The report called DigComp 2.0<sup>9</sup> presents the updated list of 21 competences (also called the conceptual reference model).

Finally, we cannot avoid to mention ESCO<sup>10</sup> (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) which is the European multilingual classification of skills, competences, qualifications and occupations. ESCO works like a dictionary, describing, identifying and classifying professional occupations and skills relevant for the EU labour market and education and training area and systematically showing the relations between those occupations and skills. It is available in an online portal where its dataset of occupations and skills can be consulted and downloaded free of charge. ESCO is available in 27 languages (24 EU languages, plus Icelandic, Norwegian and Arabic), composed of 2 pillars (occupations and skills/competences) and it is linked to relevant international classifications and frameworks (e.g. the International Standard Classification of Occupations; the International Standard Classification of Education: Fields of Education and Training; the European Qualifications Framework).

At a broader level, we need to mention that the Covid 19 pandemic has also had a profound impact on millions of people in the EU have lost their job or experienced significant income loss. Many will need to acquire new skills and move to new jobs in a different sector of economy. More will need to upskill to keep their job in a new work environment. For young people, entry in the labour market could be very challenging. The new *European Skills Agenda*<sup>11</sup> builds upon the ten actions of the Commission's 2016 Skills Agenda. It also links to the European Digital Strategy, the Industrial and Small and Medium Enterprise Strategy, the Recovery Plan for Europe and the increased support for youth employment. The European Skills Agenda is actually the broader framework that any decision on competences and skills in EU should take in account. It includes 12 actions organized around four building blocks:

- 1) A call to join forces in a collective action:
  - Action 1: A Pact for Skills
- 2) Actions to ensure that people have the right skills for jobs:
  - Action 2: Strengthening skills intelligence
  - Action 3: EU support for strategic national upskilling action
  - Action 4: Proposal for a Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET)
  - Action 5: Rolling out the European Universities Initiative and upskilling scientists
  - Action 6: Skills to support the twin transitions
  - Action 7: Increasing STEM graduates and fostering entrepreneurial and **transversal skills**
  - Action 8: Skills for life
- 3) Tools and initiatives to support people in their lifelong learning pathways:
  - Action 9: Initiative on individual learning accounts

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9. DigComp 2.1: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens with eight proficiency levels and examples of use | EU Science Hub (europa.eu)

10. European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission (europa.eu)

11. European Skills Agenda - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission (europa.eu)

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- Action 10: A European approach to micro-credentials
  - Action 11: New Europass platform

4) A framework to unlock investments in skills:

- Action 12: Improving the enabling framework to unlock Member States' and private investments in skills

In this regard, the future steps toward a more clear and co-defined EU approach on recognition of non-formal and informal skills, should also take in account another element of this multi-dimensional European framework, which is EQAVET<sup>12</sup>. It is a European wide framework to support quality assurance in vocational education and training (VET). EQAVET emerged from the 2009 Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council, which invited Member States to use indicative descriptors and indicators to strengthen the quality of VET provision. EQAVET supports the implementation of the 2020 Recommendation on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience and it can be used by VET providers and in VET systems to support:

- learning environments (e.g. school-based provision, work-based learning, apprenticeships, formal, **informal and non-formal provision**)
- all types of learning (e.g. digital, face-to-face and blended)
- public and private sector VET providers
- VET awards and qualifications at all levels of the European Qualification Framework

In the next chapter we will explore the state of the art at national level, in four countries that are participating in DYVO project, trying to underline which frameworks and practices are already in place, if they're aligned with European recommendations and standards, and how the DYVO Model could benefit from the existing experiences and develop a new innovative tool for validation addressed to volunteers and volunteering organizations.

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12. EQAVET - European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission (europa.eu)

**COUNTRY  
SHORT  
REPORTS**



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## COUNTRY SHORT REPORTS

### AUSTRIA

In Austria, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research is responsible for the education system. It creates framework conditions, such as curricula for the different school types, within which schools and other educational institutions operate. Even though the Federal Ministry holds the main competences, the areas of responsibilities are divided between the federal government and the federal states. In general, the federal government is responsible for academic secondary schools, schools for intermediate vocational education and colleges for higher vocational education, whereas the states are responsible for elementary schools, middle schools, pre-vocational schools and technical and vocational schools.

Furthermore, the education directorate, a federal-state authority, was established in 2019. The education directorates are responsible for the enforcement of school law. Although traditionally, Austrian schools had a low level of autonomy, within the education reform 2017, school autonomy was strengthened. While the federal ministry still creates the curricula and defines the educational standards and targets of the standardized tests and examinations, schools are now freer to decide on how to achieve the targets. For example, they can use flexible lesson time, develop an own educational concept, choose the staff instead of having them assigned, use extended forms of teaching (project work, open learning settings, peer-learning etc.) and use alternative forms of assessment. Universities are largely autonomous. Nevertheless, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and other institutions exercise supervisory rights.

The Austrian education system is highly differentiated. Young people have a great variety of educational options. Everyone living in Austria is obliged to continue education until the age of 18. Education starts with elementary educational institutions and children are required to attend at least one year of kindergarten. Children start going to primary school when they are 6 years old.

After 4 years of primary school, children can either attend a middle school or an academic secondary school (lower level) until the age of about 14. After these 8 years of schooling, students must add at least one compulsory year of schooling, which can be the one-year pre-vocational school or any other upper level secondary school. After 9 school years, students can either continue school or participate in vocational education and training. Students who want to continue going to school can attend academic secondary schools (upper level), schools for intermediate vocational education or colleges for higher vocational education.

There are also other specialized educational options, such as training in healthcare professions. On the postsecondary and tertiary level, education offers include universities, universities of applied sciences, university colleges of teacher education, post-secondary VET-courses, schools for people in employment, and add-on courses. Austria has one of the lowest youth unemployment rates in the EU.

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The main factor explaining this success is high participation in VET, this is one of the main educational pathways in the country, well adapted to the labour market, with VET courses of high quality and relevance.

## **VALIDATION AND NATIONAL QUALIFICATION SYSTEM**

As a response to the European qualifications framework (EQF) initiative, Austria carried out a national consultation process on the EQF in 2005–06 and designed a national qualifications framework (NQF) with an eight-level structure.

It was designed as a comprehensive framework which includes all types and levels of qualifications from the formal and non-formal sector. It also appreciates the results of informal learning.

The NQF has been designed to promote transparency and guidance, with no regulatory functions, as the education system is already highly regulated in terms of what kind of qualifications give entrance to certain education pathways and access to occupations/professions in the labour market. After several years of preparation, with intensive involvement of stakeholders and experts, the Austrian Parliament approved the Federal Act on the national qualifications framework in March 2016, establishing the governance structure for the framework and the procedures involved in allocating qualifications to levels.

Referenced to the EQF in June 2012, the Austrian NQF is now operational. Its influence has been observed since the development phase of the framework, with NQF principles being applied in the design of new qualifications and in the modernisation of existing ones to ensure mapping to NQF levels.

The main roles of the Austrian NQF are communication and transparency of qualifications, nationally and internationally. The framework helps map national qualifications from all education and training subsystems and learning settings, present them in relation to one another, and make the implicit levels of the qualification system explicit. It aims to strengthen coordination between the different subsystems by highlighting existing pathways and developing new ones to open up new progression possibilities.

The NQF is used as a basis for reform and further development in VET qualifications. The 2016 NQF Act<sup>15</sup> establishes the governance structure for the framework, and defines the responsibilities of institutions and bodies, as well as processes involved in implementation.

The OeAD (Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research) has been appointed as NQF/EQF national coordination point and the main implementation coordinating body. Its tasks include: formal and content-related verification of the request for qualification mapping; keeping a public NQF register with mapped qualifications, including description of a qualification and its learning outcomes, NQF level and the name of the provider; setting up a list of those with expertise for any content-related verification of request for mapping a qualification.

Development of a validation strategy started in 2013, with the establishment of a working group. Analysis of existing validation arrangements in three areas (the low-qualified, VET and higher education) fed into a consultation document for the

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national validation strategy (including key objectives and measures), published in 2015. Following a national consultation process, the national strategy for validating non-formal and informal learning was finalized and adopted in 2017.

The national validation strategy promotes summative approaches to validation, based on the requirements and standards of the qualifications system and aimed at the acquisition of a qualification or part of one; there are also formative validation approaches aiming to identify and document competences to empower individuals. After the adoption of the NQF Act22 in 2016, which establishes procedures for allocating qualifications to the eight levels of the NQF and the responsible bodies, the NQF entered an operational stage.

The NQF manual describing the process and criteria of allocation was adopted in September 2016 by the NQF steering committee and mapping of qualifications started in 2017. Academic higher education qualifications (bachelor, master and PhD/doctoral degrees) are directly allocated to levels 6, 7 and 8 of the NQF by law.

Mapping of all other formal and non-formal qualifications is based on a request for mapping a qualification made to the NQF NCP, with a detailed description of the qualification, related learning outcomes and the assessment procedure. In the formal sector, the allocation request is made by the responsible federal ministry or federal states government.

For non-formal qualifications, NQF service centres are envisaged as the applicants, serving as intermediaries between qualification providers and the NQF bodies. Mapping recommendations by the NCP, supported by the advisory body, are approved by the NQF steering group, which also has the right to appeal against the NCP's mapping recommendations.

## **THE VOLUNTEERING SECTOR**

In Austria, a total of 46 percent of the population over the age of 15 carries out voluntary activity. That means there are more than 3.5 million people in Austria engaged in voluntary activities. In organizations and associations there are around 2.2 million people who are active voluntarily.

About 2.3 million people are active in the field of neighborhood assistance. Generally, everyone can volunteer, even minors, there are no specific requirements. Most organizations offer advice for interested people who are not yet sure how to get engaged. The homepage [www.freiwilligenweb.at](http://www.freiwilligenweb.at) serves as a national network of voluntary services. There are several possibilities and areas to get involved in voluntary work: disaster relief and emergency services; art, culture, entertainment and free time; environment, nature and animal welfare; church and religion; social and health services; political work; community services; sports. In most provinces, there can be found centres for voluntary work.

One of these centres' works is the training, education and further education of volunteers. They organise training modules according to the Federal Ministry's manual, courses for coordinators and managers and offer educational opportunities in collaboration with local and regional educational institutions.

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The Federal Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for policies on voluntary engagement and provides a legal framework and a clear strategy.

The Federal Law for the Promotion of Voluntary Engagement regulates the framework conditions for voluntary work.

The Digital Freiwilligenpass (digital volunteer pass) serves as proof of voluntary activities, whereby volunteers and organizations get in contact in order to collectively record the activities and acquired competences of the volunteers in the pass.

The digital volunteer pass is available at [www.freiwilligenpass.at](http://www.freiwilligenpass.at)

## **BEST PRACTICES OF VALIDATION OF COMPETENCES FROM VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCES IN AUSTRIA**

1) The official way of validation of competences from volunteering experiences in Austria is the **DIGITALER FREIWILLIGENPASS (digital volunteer pass)**.

Austrian politics have recognized that volunteering is a place of learning and education, personal development and acquisition of skills.

The proof is based on the proven methods of holistic competency assessment of knowledge, ability and action. It thus contributes in a special way to more orientation and activation in the educational planning of young people and in personal development as well as to recognition in the entire professional life.

The focus of the preparation of the evidence of voluntary activities is the dialogue between volunteers and responsible representatives of the volunteer organizations. Volunteers, supported by representatives of the volunteer organizations, create their proof in several steps.

In order to be able to fill out the evidence of voluntary activities for volunteers, the organization must first be entered in the organization directory of the volunteer web. Registered and activated organizations or associations receive a “tested” seal from the Federal Ministry for Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection.

This is intended to guarantee the authenticity and transparency of the organizations or associations, and to make the issuing of evidence of voluntary activities more secure. The evidence of volunteering consists of a folder in which volunteers can collect their various evidence of volunteering, instructions on how to create evidence, as well as examples of competencies and worksheets that are intended to facilitate the creation of evidence.

The folder also contains the “volunteer pass” to confirm voluntary work. Proof of voluntary work balances a personal development process and can be used as a supplementary application document.

2) Another kind of validation of competences from volunteering experiences, that was often used before the implementation of the **FREIWILLIGENPASS**.

It is the competence portfolio for voluntary engagement, including proof of the acquisition of skills in voluntary engagement.

The competence portfolio of voluntary engagement was developed by the Ring österreichischer Bildungswerke. The competence portfolio for volunteers is an instrument for exploring and documenting the acquired competencies in order to be able to use them specifically for reorientations in engagement, for personal development,

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for applications in the labour market, etc.

The volunteers create their portfolio, supported by certified companions, in individual consultations or as part of workshops. In the individual consultation, the portfolio creation includes an approx. 2-hour competence interview, which is then evaluated in several phases (via e-mail and telephone contacts).

The workshops take up two half days or a full day. In addition to the portfolio, products are an action plan and (optionally) proof of applications.

The personal competence profile and the activity portrait should give insight into the skills acquired by voluntary work.

## BELGIUM

Belgium is divided into three distinct language communities: Dutch-speaking, French-speaking and German-speaking. Each community has their own regulations in regard to the education system and enrolment in schools. While some aspects may differ, the compulsory school age throughout Belgium is between six and 18. Compulsory education is divided into primary (6-12 years) and secondary (12-18 years). Before the compulsory school age, there are also free pre-primary school facilities for children aged 2,5 years and over. Within each region there are three main types of institutions for compulsory school: community schools, subsidized public schools, subsidized private schools, fee-paying private schools. Primary education – *lager onderwijs* in Dutch and *enseignement primaire* in French – is compulsory from ages six to 12. The local departments of education oversee the requirements and curriculum of each region. Public primary education is free to all throughout the country. Possible costs include various learning materials – some of which can be subsidized – and excursions. The curricula tend to be fairly traditional, with morning classes based around literacy and mathematics and a range of other subjects, including music and history, taught in the afternoon. Wednesday afternoons are often free. Secondary education in Belgium – *secundair onderwijs* in Dutch; *enseignement secondaire* in French – is compulsory from ages 12 to 18. However, after age 16 students can opt to study part-time and undertake vocational or technical training. States schools are free to all pupils, although they may require a contribution for textbook costs. When students begin to specialize within secondary education, their courses of study focus on one of four areas: general education, technical education, vocational education, art education. Students can go on to higher education in either a specialized institution, such as an art college, or to a university or college, depending on the subjects studied. It is important to note, however, that with vocational training, education must be continued a further year to obtain the certificate. It is therefore necessary to choose carefully between the specializations when thinking about higher education. International and alternative schools offer different qualifications for graduating students, including A-levels, for British schools, and the International Baccalaureate. Where integration in mainstream schooling is not possible, a variety of specialist schools are available from pre-school age until 21 years. Some cater, for example, to those with a physical disability, and others to students with behavioural difficulties. Higher Education - Dutch-speaking community Bachelor programmes in Flanders

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may be both professionally oriented and academically oriented. Professionally oriented bachelor programmes are primarily aimed at practicing a profession and offer a direct access to the labour market. Academically oriented bachelor programmes focus on a broad academic education or an education in the arts. They aim at offering access to a master programme or to the labour market. Both professionally and academically oriented bachelor programmes comprise at least 180 credits. In theory a student takes 60 credits a year, but variations are possible. Master programmes focus on advanced scientific or artistic knowledge or competences which are needed for the independent practice of science or arts, or for practicing a profession. They are rounded off by a master thesis. A master programme comprises at least 180 credits. An institution of higher education can, in addition to a general master, also offer a research master, which comprises 120 credits. French-speaking community Bachelor programmes in Belgium may be both professionally oriented and academically oriented. Professionally oriented bachelor programmes are primarily aimed at practicing a profession and offer a direct access to the labour market. Academically oriented bachelor programmes focus on a broad academic education or an education in the arts. They aim at offering access to a master programme or to the labour market. In general, a bachelor programme lasts 3 years to complete (180 credits). Master programmes focus on advanced scientific or artistic knowledge or competences which are needed for the independent practice of science or arts, or for practicing a profession. They are rounded off by a master thesis. Most master programmes last 2 years (120 credits).

## **VALIDATION AND NATIONAL QUALIFICATION SYSTEM**

**French-speaking community** - Consortium of validation is created by a cooperation agreement between the 3 French speaking government of Belgium and run through the cooperation of the 5 most important public sector training providers in the French speaking part of Belgium : Adult education, Bruxelles Formation, IFAPME, Le Forem and SFPME (vocational training). Consortium of validation organizes the accreditation of validation centers; coordinates the supply of validation and promotes its development; establishes the methodology for assessing; promotes the recognition of the skills certificate delivered; ensures the overall management of the whole process of validation. Validation centers run the testing sessions. The skills validation system is based on a Consortium of public continuing vocational training institutions, namely: Bruxelles-Formation (Cocof), Social advancement education (CFWB), Le Forem (RW), Institute for Work-linked Training and Small and Medium Enterprises (RW), Training Service for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (Cocof), a simplified structure mobilizing the largest platform for professional qualifications in French-speaking Belgium.

The Consortium has legal personality and is made up of three internal bodies: a steering committee: organization and day-to-day management of the system, an executive unit and benchmarks committees, including representatives of the sectoral social partners, in order to produce the validation benchmarks. This structure is completed by two external organs: an Advisory and Approval Committee for Validation Centers:

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general orientation through Strategic Orientation Notes, global evaluation based on annual activity reports, approval of Centers, selection of qualifications to be validated. It is made up of interprofessional social partners and the public employment services. An Appeals Commission: appeals from candidates and Validation Centers. More than 50,000 skills certificates have been issued in approved validation centers in Wallonia and Brussels, in 13 sectors - such as personal services, construction, logistics and even administration. 48 trades are implemented, including shortage or essential trades. In the top 5 trades in 2019, we find the administrative employee, the housekeeper, the forklift driver, the residential electrician installer and the painter decorator. In 2019, the average success rate for the validation tests was 73.5% and 59.6% of candidates are looking for a job. In terms of gender, we achieve almost perfect equality: 49.9% of the events are carried out by women and 50.1% by men. As can be seen, validation is mainly done in reference to “hard” vocational skills. There is little attention and focus on Validation of skills and competences gained in non-formal and informal ways, (including transversal / soft skills) such as through volunteering. The volunteering sector does not promote the need for external validation/ certification of skills gained but prefers to focus instead on self reflection of volunteers on their own learning and self development without any outside assessment or testing. The sector notes the lack of “certification” culture in Belgium and that employers don’t usually request certificates and there is a low demand from volunteers in the French speaking part of Belgium for this.

**Dutch-speaking community** - Validation of skills in the Dutch-speaking community is called “Recognition of prior learning”. The decree of 30 April 2009 laid down a Flemish qualification structure. The qualification structure is a systematic classification of all qualifications recognized by the Flemish Government, on the basis of an all-round applicable framework. This classification aims to make qualifications and their mutual relations transparent so that education, course providers and other social players can communicate unambiguously about qualifications and the competences contained therein. The qualification structure can also be used as a frame of reference to: develop assessments for recognition of acquired competences and align procedures; provide direction and/or guidance in school careers and careers. A distinction is drawn between vocational qualifications and educational qualifications: vocational qualifications are completed and ranked units of competences by means of which professions can be carried out; educational qualifications are completed and ranked units of competences that are necessary to function and take part in society, with which studies in secondary or higher education can be started or with which vocational activities can be carried out. They can only be acquired through education and only institutions recognised by the Flemish Government can issue proof of qualification in this respect.

**Flemish Speaking Community** - Multiple departments and actors are in charge of this at regional level through a five steps integrated procedure. Anyone who has acquired a qualification whether through traditional formal education or through validation processes receives proof of the same. Proof of qualification is a document recognised by the Flemish Community such as a diploma (diploma), getuigschrift (certificate), or certificaat (certificate) which certifies that a person is qualified and

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possesses a relevant set of competences. The Flemish Government will need to determine which type of proof will be linked to which qualifications or combination of qualifications.

## THE VOLUNTEERING SECTOR

The Belgian law, dated 3 July 2005 defines volunteering as “any activity that”: a) which is performed without compensation or obligation; b) which is exercised for the benefit of one or more persons, group or organization or the community as a whole; c) which is organized by an organization other than family or private person who engages in the activity; d) that is not exercised by the same person and for the same organization as part of an employment contract, a contract of service or a statutory designation”<sup>13</sup>. The law highlights two main aspects, that volunteering must be a free act and for others. This law contributes to creating an enabling environment for volunteers by providing protection (such as insurance). The main responsibility regarding the implementation of the provisions of this law lies with the Belgian Government. In 2002, the Ministry of Social Affairs created the High Council for Volunteers (Conseil supérieur des volontaires). The High Council is an advisory board, consulted on matters concerning volunteering, when statements are being issued or laws are being drafted. The Council is composed by Belgian NGO representatives. In a study made by the King Baudouin Foundation<sup>14</sup>, two researchers established another definition of volunteering: “Volunteering is an activity a) Of nonbinding character to other people or to the benefit of a community, b) Performed for free c) Performed in a more or less formal structure d) By an individual. ” Outside of these two definitions, it seems to be very difficult to define volunteering, just as it is difficult to define the concept of work. The 2005 Belgian Law on volunteering came into force between 2006 and 2007<sup>15</sup>. The law includes a set of guidelines concerning the following topics: the definition of volunteering activity, the obligation of the organization to inform volunteers about: what it stands for: social goals, legal statute; the insurance covering them; the possible allocations; the obligation of an liability insurance and the possible accident insurance, the obligations of the volunteer and the organization, the insurances linked to volunteering, the rules of application of the labour law, the authorized indemnities, reimbursements of the expenses incurred during volunteering, specific situations: unemployed, pre-retired, workers in situation of incapacity, people entitled to a social integration income, elderly people receiving special guaranteed income, family benefits. More regulations have been created by some public institutions.

The Federal Public Service/ Ministry Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, and the Ministry of Finance, respectively, regulate the authorization for the unemployed, retired or pre-retired, people excluded from unemployment, and the self-employed to volunteer, and indemnities free of taxes for the volunteers when it goes over expenses made for their volunteer activities<sup>16</sup>.

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13. <http://www.socialsecurity.fgov.be/fr/specifieke-info/vrijwilligers/geldende-wetgeving.htm>

14. M. D'hondt et B. Van Buggenhout, *Statuut van de vrijwilliger. Knelpunten en oplossingen*, Fondation Roi Baudouin, Bruxelles, 1998

15. DUMONT D. & CLAES P., 2006. “ Le nouveau statut des bénévoles, commentaires de la loi du 3 juillet 2005 relative aux droits des volontaires et réflexions sur le droit social et la gratuité ”, Les Dossiers du journal des tribunaux, 217 pp.).

16. <http://www.socialsecurity.fgov.be/fr/specifieke-info/vrijwilligers/hoge-raad-vrijwilligers/hoge-raad-vrijwilligers.htm>

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The importance of a specific law for creating an enabling environment for volunteering: The introduction of a specific legal framework for volunteers is considered as a necessity for creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Belgium, particularly since this gives volunteers a recognized status and provides rights and obligations within the volunteering sphere. Legislation on volunteering is important for those who volunteer but also for the organizations they volunteer for and for the clients of the organizations, since it provides guidance, protection and accountability. This notwithstanding, it is important that legislation on volunteering does not lead to overregulation, which would hamper the flexibility that volunteering implies. Indeed, legislation should facilitate volunteering and not hinder it.

The only public body is the High Council of Volunteers<sup>17</sup>. The High Council is an advisory board, at the federal level, consulted on matters concerning volunteering, when statements are being issued or laws are being drafted. The Council is composed by Belgian NGO representatives<sup>18</sup> and is responsible for collecting, systemizing and analysing information concerning volunteers and volunteering; examining the specific issues volunteers and volunteering can be confronted with, giving advice or making propositions concerning volunteers or volunteering, on its own initiative or on requirement of competent Ministers. In order to successfully achieve its tasks, the Council has contacts with organizations, institutions and authorities that, considering their goal, work or competences are linked to volunteers or volunteering<sup>19</sup>.

This public body meets around four times a year and is composed of 25 effective members nominated by the King, which are the representatives of the volunteering across Belgium. The composition of the Council<sup>20</sup> reflects the diversity of volunteering. Unlike in its first mandate, where members of the Council were physical people, members of the High Council are currently organizations that are mainly working with volunteers.

The High Council for Volunteers is therefore the official body intended to support volunteering in Belgium. However, this national body has limited resources. At the regional level, there are volunteering Platforms in both the Dutch-speaking and the French-speaking communities.

## **BEST PRACTICES OF VALIDATION OF COMPETENCES FROM VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCES IN BELGIUM**

1) **Scout Leaders Skills**<sup>21</sup>: Les Scouts and the Scouts en Gidsen Vlaanderen have developed Scout Leader Skills, a tool which helps their 25,000 volunteer leaders and managers to evaluate the skills they have acquired during their scouting experience, to better understand them and to determine how best to use them in their personal and professional projects. They can be interpersonal, functional or attitude-related skills. They are what have come to be known as 'soft skills', in contrast with the more theoretical or technical 'hard skills'.

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17. French: Conseil supérieur des volontaires, Dutch: Hoge Raad voor Vrijwilligers, German: Hohen Rates der Freiwilligen

18. [http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi\\_loi/change\\_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&cn=2002100230&table\\_name=loi](http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&cn=2002100230&table_name=loi)

19. [http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi\\_loi/change\\_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&cn=2002100230&table\\_name=loi](http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&cn=2002100230&table_name=loi)

20. <http://www.socialsecurity.fgov.be/fr/specifieke-info/vrijwilligers/hoge-raad/samenstelling.htm>

21. <https://scoutleaderskills.lesscouts.be/en/methodologie> and <https://scoutleaderskills.lesscouts.be/en/origine>

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Scout Leader Skills aims to answer to the current situation, in which volunteering and non-formal education are increasingly recognised and soft skills are becoming more valued; to the fact that, as leaders, we are not always aware of the skills we have acquired throughout our volunteer experience; and in particular, to our wish to thank leaders and managers for the 600 hours they spend every year on average to help children and teenagers to realize their full potential, both during their time at their scout and afterwards.

Scout Leader Skills is a questionnaire which asks you about leadership situations you have already been through and lets you define your personal profile. This assessment can be a yardstick of personal progress if repeated every year. Attention! You must have worked for at least one year as a leader (i.e. you need to have gone to at least one camp as a leader) to take a skills assessment. This is to make sure that you have enough experience to answer the questions.

2) **LEVER UP Project**<sup>22</sup> an Eu-funded project coordinated by the Italian University Politecnico di Milano and implemented together with CSV NET. The project contributed to design a complete model to accompany volunteers and operators in the process of identifying the transversal skills acquired in volunteering. The model provides tools to carry out steps that allow volunteers to be able to understand, identify, document and validate their skills through the creation of a portfolio that demonstrates them and supports them with documents and evidence. The European team of Lever Up has defined a set of 15 transversal skills divided into four areas: personal, social, organizational and methodological and in Italy 70 operators from 28 CSV have been trained on this model.

## ITALY

In Italy the educational system is organized according to the principles of subsidiarity and of autonomy of institutions. The State has exclusive legislative competences on the general organization of the education system (e.g. minimum standards of education, school staff, quality assurance, State financial resources).

The Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) is responsible for the general administration of education at national level. Its decentralized offices (Regional School Offices - USRs) guarantee the application of general provisions and the respect of the minimum performance requirements and of standards.

Regions have joint responsibility with the State in some sectors of the education system (e.g. organization of ECEC (0-3), school calendar, distribution of schools in their territory, right to study at higher level). Regions have exclusive legislative competence in the organization of the regional vocational education and training system. Local authorities organize the offer (e.g. maintenance of premises, merging or establishment of schools, transport of pupils) from ECEC to upper secondary education at local level.

Schools have a high degree of autonomy: they define curricula, widen the educatio-

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22. <http://www.leverproject.eu/>

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nal offer, organize teaching (school time and groups of pupils). Every three years, schools draw up their own Plan for the educational offer (PTOF).

At higher education level, universities and High-level arts and music education (Afam) institutions have statutory, regulatory, teaching and organizational autonomy. According to the “Education and Training Monitor 2019” of EC, the share of teachers satisfied with their jobs is among the highest in the EU, but only a small share believes that theirs is a valued profession.

Compulsory work-based learning in vocational education and training could help provide more structured training for apprentices and ease the transition from education to work. The level of tertiary educational attainment is low, and the transition from education to work remains difficult, even for highly qualified people.

## **VALIDATION AND NATIONAL QUALIFICATION SYSTEM**

In Italy the process of building the National System of Competence Certification started in 2012 and the Decree 13/2013 designed the national and comprehensive system as it covers all the range of qualifications from education, HE, VET and even the ones with legal value.

The institutional authority in charge of the implementation of the system is the National Technical Committee led by the Ministry of Labour and by the Ministry of Education and composed of all the Qualification Authorities.

Entitling Bodies are the following: Ministry of Education and Universities (for school and university qualifications), Regions (for VET qualifications), Ministry of Economic Development - UE Policies Department (for regulated professions), Ministry of Labour (for non-regulated professions).

The National Technical Committee is also in charge of defining the National Guidelines on validation of non-formal and informal learning and certification of competences. but this task is not accomplished at the time of writing.

In addition, a further regulatory element that was still lacking in the system was finally achieved: in January 2018, the National Decree concerning the National Qualifications Framework came into force. This Decree published on 8 January 2018 provides the establishment of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) according to the Recommendation on the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and defines a clear common set of descriptors for the eight levels of qualifications by identifying what kind of knowledge, skills and Decree structures the procedures for referencing every qualification to the Framework through the National EQF Coordination Point established in ANPAL (National Agency for Active Labour Policies) and with the independent evaluation of Inapp (National Institute of Public Policies Analysis and formerly Isfol).

Regarding the connection with employability policies, the emergence of a national policy on validation is related to the Law No. 92/2012 about the reform of the labour market in Italy. The law states that all the stakeholders should constitute local networks for the concrete application of the policies on lifelong learning which also aim to re-trace and value formal, non-formal and informal learning and based

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on this approach, the system covers the range of qualifications and thus it includes also the professional qualifications (those regulated and unregulated). These are the main reasons why the Italian strategy and policy on validation is directly related to the labour market as it has been developed primarily for employability purposes. However, both of these institutional contexts have not yet addressed the validation issue in an organic and official way. This is because both systems have been undergoing reforms which have included changes in relation to European and Italian policies on professions. Nevertheless, the framework of the Decree 13/2013 led to considerable interest and debate. Concerning the services of validation, in many Regions the bodies entitled for the validation services are, sometimes exclusively, the public or private employment services. For instance, in Lombardia and Veneto regions, the validation service is focused only on the employment service. In recent years, the Youth Guarantee Programme in Italy was managed almost exclusively by the employment service system, supporting the use of validation for young NEETs as a method of increasing their employability. However, it was limited to the Regions which already have validation systems in place. Finally, it is remarkable how some sectors standardized their own work processes, competences and qualifications and so they participated in the building of the qualification and validation system.

## **THE VOLUNTEERING SECTOR**

Italy is a country where a large number of citizens volunteer in various forms: according to the last ISTAT survey, the estimated number of volunteers in Italy is around 6.63 million people (total volunteering rate is 12.6% of population). Law No. 266 (August 11th, 1991) regulates all the organized volunteering activities, and it establishes structures for the support of volunteering organizations on a regional basis (voluntary service centres), which provide to organizations free of charge services and tools in the field of promotion, counselling, training, communication and many other fields of activities. The national network of voluntary service centres is CSV NET ([www.csvnet.it](http://www.csvnet.it)) and it supervises the activity of more than 72 regional and district centres, providing training and coordination and working also as advocate at national level on volunteering policies and programs.

The spread of validation and certification practices within the voluntary sector in Italy actually finds various obstacles. The first one is the prejudice of the superiority of formal training.

European studies reveal, in fact, a certain reticence by parts 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.

The second obstacle that makes the certification of competences a difficult process in this context is 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.

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CSV NET realized some interesting pilot projects in this field, as LEVER UP Project ([www.leverproject.eu](http://www.leverproject.eu)) created in order to help volunteers to validate their soft competences achieved while doing social work.

## **BEST PRACTICES OF VALIDATION OF COMPETENCES FROM VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCES IN ITALY**

1) In 2015, the **National Programme of Competence Validation for volunteers in the civil service** under the Youth Guarantee (Garanzia Giovani), started. The programme was carried out by almost all the Regions and targeted at more than 5 000 volunteers. This programme was the first concrete national application of the new validation framework outlined in the Decree on the National Framework of Regional Qualifications, adopted in June 2015.

The programme was aimed at validating the competences of 5666 volunteers involved in 1137 projects in the Civil Service (CS) in 11 Regions within the Youth Guarantee Programme. The procedure was thus divided into three main phases: Step 1. Identification: it consists of the definition of the CS project's profile for certification; Step 2. Identification and transparency of competences through the "Individual DOSSIER" through collection of documents and evidence needed; Step 3. Validation and release of the Validation Document by an entitled body through the technical examination of the dossier or direct examination.

2) **VALidazione Competenze - Vali.CO project** promoted by INAPP (Istituto Nazionale per l'Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche - National Institute for Public Policy Analysis). The project site is divided into two main sections. The first one (Training Booklet) describes the Citizens' Training Booklet, which is a tool designed to collect, summarize and document the different learning experiences of working citizens as well as the skills acquired by them: in school, training, work, volunteering, daily life.

Its aim is to improve the recognition of skills and the employability of people. The second one (Competences Validation) contains a vast repository of documents taken from the most interesting validation practices identified in the survey conducted in the context of the research "Recognition of not formal and informal learning", which included a screening of projects promoted from 2004 to 2010 by Associations, Training Bodies, Research Institutes, Foundations, Regions and Local Authorities.

## **LITHUANIA**

Primary and Catholic schools have been growing in Lithuania since the 16th century. Earlier there were no higher education institutions so children used to study in Western Europe universities. In 1579 was established the first local university- Vilnius university.

In 1988 started the education reform. Core principles of Lithuanian education system were laid down, many educational institutions –public and private were established. With the reestablishment of Lithuania's independence (11 March 1990), the educational reform was started.

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The education system of Lithuania is defined by the law on education. As per the law, the education system of Lithuania comprises formal and non-formal education. Formal education encompasses primary, basic/lower secondary and upper secondary education, formal vocational education and training, and tertiary education.

Non-formal education encompasses pre-school education, pre-primary education, and other non-formal education for adults. According to the laws of the Republic of Lithuania, education is compulsory for all children aged 6/7 to 16 and is free of costs. Before starting their primary education, children could be educated at home and/or by pre-school education institutions. General education system is with 12 years duration and consists of the following stages: primary education, 4 years; basic (lower secondary) education, 6 years; upper secondary education, 2 years.

The majority of pupils with special educational needs are educated at general education schools together with their peers through inclusive education. General education, vocational education and training, and other programmes are adapted to pupils with special educational needs. Pupils with very extensive or extensive special educational needs can study at designated general education schools up to 21 years of age.

Vocational education training (VET) programmes are provided by VET schools, VET centres, labour market training centres or other institutions which have the right to provide VET.

There two types of higher education institutions: universities (called university, academy, or seminary) representing university sector of higher education; colleges of higher education (called higher education college or higher education institution) representing non-university higher education sectors.

Universities offer university level degree granting studies and award Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral degrees. Colleges offer college level degree granting studies and award Professional Bachelor's degrees. Both universities and colleges can also offer non-degree granting studies.

Non-formal education programs for children are implemented by music, art, sports, other schools, freelance teachers, and other education providers. The competence acquired by a person through non-formal learning may be recognized as a part of a formal education program or qualification in accordance with the procedure established by the Government or an institution authorized by it or in accordance with the procedure established by higher education institutions. A long-term arts education program for children in music, art, sports or another school may be recognized as a vocational training module.

The Lithuanian Qualifications Framework (LTQF) was approved in 2010 and referenced to the European Qualifications Framework for LifeLong Learning (EQF) in 2012. The LTQF is a comprehensive system that covers all sectors of formal education and consists of 8 EQF levels.

## **VALIDATION AND NATIONAL QUALIFICATION SYSTEM**

Lithuania decided to develop its National Qualifications Framework prior to the adoption of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning on

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23 April 2008. A model and concept for the National Qualifications Framework was developed in 2005-2008. On 4 May 2010, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved the Description of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework. On 24 July 2019, the Government renewed the Description, according to the Recommendation on the Establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

Qualifications are categorized according to competencies, which a person requires in his/her activities. The Lithuanian Qualifications Framework was necessary to set rules for the identification of qualifications and their acquisition, assessment and recognition. It also facilitates information about the content, acquisition, improvement and/or change in qualifications needed for a certain activity. The set qualifications framework enables easier workforce flow nationally and internationally. Thereby progressing from one qualification level to another, the promotion of lifelong formal, non-formal and informal learning forms and methods is achieved.

The Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre is responsible for the development of the qualification system, e.g., it prepares and renews professional standards after reconciling them with Sectoral Professional Committees. In the management of the system of qualifications, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport is responsible for creating, organizing and implementing policy in this area.

The Ministry of Economy and Innovation is responsible for creating and implementing human resource development policy. It is therefore involved in the recognition of regulated professional qualifications. Both ministries together set and approve the procedures for a professional training standards structure and the preparation and modification of professional training standards. The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) executes the recognition of foreign academic qualifications. According to the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework, qualifications that are established, granted and recognised in Lithuania are classified, evaluated and compared. The Lithuanian Qualifications System, including the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework and qualification planning, implementation, recognition and management, is linked to other qualifications systems in the European Union.

The Lithuanian Qualifications Framework consists of eight levels of qualifications. The levels of qualifications are arranged in a hierarchical order, with regard to the underlying competence of the qualifications and criteria defining different levels of qualifications, which are as follows: complexity of activities, autonomy of activities, variability of activities. Every level of qualifications includes qualifications designated for the performance of activities of similar complexity, autonomy and variability. There are two types of qualifications: work qualifications, the main goal of which is to prepare a person for further work; learning qualifications, the main goal of which is to prepare a person for further learning.

Lithuanian qualification levels and their acquisition:

- Level I-IV qualifications are acquired by finishing the vocational education and training and/or general education curricula and/or by learning individually and/or through professional practice.
- Level V qualifications are acquired by finishing vocational education and training

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programmes for individuals who already have a vocational qualification and a certain amount of work experience. Also, by finishing short-cycle study programmes and/or through the professional practice and/or by learning individually.

- Level VI qualifications are acquired by finishing first-cycle studies, professional study programmes and/or through professional experience and/or individual learning.

- Level VII qualifications are acquired by finishing second-cycle integrated studies or professional study programmes and/or through professional experience and/or individual learning.

- Level VIII qualifications are acquired by finishing third-cycle study programmes and/or through professional experience and/or individual learning.

## **THE VOLUNTEERING SECTOR**

On 22th June 2011 was adopted the Law on Volunteering of the Republic of Lithuania. This law establishes the peculiarities of volunteering, the principles of volunteering, the rights and obligations of volunteers and the organizer of volunteering, the procedure for organizing volunteering, insurance cases, compensation for the costs of volunteering.

According to the law, the following requirements are set for a volunteer: citizens of the Republic of Lithuania over the age of 14 and foreigners legally residing in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania may be volunteers; persons under the age of 18 may participate in voluntary activities, unless the child's legal representative objects; the volunteer does not need special qualifications; depending on the nature of the activities carried out, the volunteer may be subject to other requirements laid down in sector-specific legislation.

The following may be registered as organizers of voluntary activities in the Republic of Lithuania: charity and support funds; budgetary institutions; associations; public institutions; religious communities, associations and religious centers; branches and representative offices of international public organizations; political parties; trade unions; other legal persons whose activities are regulated by special laws and whose purpose is not to make a profit, and the obtained profit may not be distributed to their participants.

The volunteer organizer may reimburse the volunteer for the following volunteering-related activities: travel expenses; accommodation costs; dishes; postage and telephone costs; training costs related to the preparation of the volunteer for the planned activities; expenditure on equipment or special clothing; insurance costs during the term of the voluntary activity contract or other.

The conditions and procedure for reimbursement of expenses for voluntary activities shall be established by the Minister of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania.

Participation in a voluntary activity, depending on its objectives and nature, may be recognized as a volunteer's practical work and / or learning experience. Volunteering can be considered a social activity according to general education plans.

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## BEST PRACTICES OF VALIDATION OF COMPETENCES FROM VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCES IN LITHUANIA

1) The Lithuanian National Agency has published a guide<sup>23</sup> “**Opportunities for All**”, which contains the Youthpass in Easy to Read (E2R) and Easy to Understand (E2U) language. This is a good tool for volunteers who have difficulty reading and understand written language to evaluate their skills.

2) **Additional scores when accessing the university**<sup>24</sup>: when entering Lithuanian higher education institutions, 0.25 additional competitive points can be obtained for volunteering.

Participants in long-term transnational volunteering and youth volunteering programs will be able to benefit not only from the experience but also from formal recognition.

You can reap the benefits of voluntary service certificates if you have participated in:

- 3 months or more in international volunteering under the Erasmus + and European Solidarity Corps programs;
- 3 and more months in the volunteer project “Discover yourself”;
- At least 6 months and 40 hrs. / month duration in voluntary service for young people.

In order to take advantage of the 0.25 additional competition score, proof of volunteering must be submitted at the time of accession: a Youthpass certificate or a Youth Volunteer Service certificate in the LAMA BPO information system, following the instructions provided there.

The Youthpass certificate is issued by Erasmus + Youth and European Solidarity Corps project promoters. And the Youth Voluntary Service Certificate is issued by the Department of Youth Affairs.

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23. [https://www.jtba.lt/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Leidiny\\_s\\_Galimybes-visiems\\_200x280.pdf](https://www.jtba.lt/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Leidiny_s_Galimybes-visiems_200x280.pdf)

24. <https://zinauviska.lt/savanoryste-ir-jaunimo-politika/savanoriauk-lietuvoje/savanoryste/>

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DYVO APP DEVELOPMENT



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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DYVO APP DEVELOPMENT

What follows is a summary of recommendations merged from the partner countries report, as inputs for the development of DYVO APP and methodologies.

- *On the overall process of DYVO MODEL:*

- It would be good to take a look at already existing competence validation systems all over EU, to get an overview of what can be applicable to the DYVO project.
- Specific and easy advice on what can be done to acquire those competences the APP will certificate, some sources and suggestions for users should be accessible.

- *On the competence framework of DYVO MODEL:*

- Possible competences that can be acquired through volunteering experiences should be outlined – they should not be related to a specific activity or job description, but instead, universal competences should be taken into account.
- A link could be shown between competences acquired through volunteering and their practical applicability in a professional and job-search setting. Possible needs can be highlighted.
- We suggest to start from the consolidated results coming from the EU Joint Research Center/Science Lab and to the LifeComp, Entrecomp and DigComp frameworks. All these frameworks can be used as a basis for the development of curricula and learning activities in different learning and educational contexts, including volunteering. DYVO project, that for sure can be inspired by all these, and it should refer to these Eu comprehensive efforts and works in the development of its model and help to facilitate the process of acknowledgment and validation of the main competences which can be developed and valued while volunteering, to facilitate the access of young volunteers to the job market.
- We suggest to analyze the existing validation tools, in particular the ongoing process within the project IMPROVAL ([www.improval.eu](http://www.improval.eu)) should be taken into account and DYVO competence framework should be complementary.
- The vocabulary and categories used in the DYVO competence framework, including those for the most important soft and transversal skills, should be developed on the basis of existing practice and with reference to ESCO ([www.ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/ww.ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/qualificationqualification](http://www.ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/ww.ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/qualificationqualification)) which is the European multilingual classification of Skills, Competences and Occupations.
- DYVO competence framework should be based on a bottom up approach and maximum cross sector collaboration, in order that there is common ownership and 'buy in' to the process and eventual results and outcomes.
- DYVO competence framework should be compatible with the possibilities offered by the new Europass for documenting soft, transversal skills acquired through volunteering that are validated.
- The role of a Peer Review group to develop and provide a Quality Label for the DYVO competence framework should be explored in order that users (individual citizens and employers / education providers) can have trust and confidence in a specific certificate / Open Badge or other kind of credential based on the DYVO competence framework.

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- The development of the DYVO competence framework should take into account the CEDEFOP Guidelines on Validation and the process towards the updated version. It should be updated in order to include the advanced knowledge of the topic in the field and the recent developments.

- DYVO competence framework should have built in quality assurance processes for validation tools.

- The DYVO competence framework should be made visible in the “Validation Community” e.g via regular meetings (like the Validation Festival and the VPL Biennale) and other instruments that facilitate the exchange of knowledge across sectors, actors and countries.

• *On the technical and usability aspects:*

- The framework could be linked to the EQF system or provide a similar allocation and matching of requirements to reach certain levels.

- Recommendations for developing a DYVO competency system based on JDC practice and taking into account a volunteer with fewer opportunities and a volunteer with a disability. The self-assessment tool must be E2R (easy to read) and E2U (easy to understand).

For example: very short sentences with very clear examples or symbols; the ability to upload the photos/ video to prove the competencies gained; the ability to use Speech to Text translation and vice versa.

- A volunteer with a learning disability has long-term memory (memorization) problems.

It is therefore important that the self-assessment is periodic. For example: assessment could be done after a specific activity, every day, each week. Less frequent assessment is not recommended.



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