



COMUNE DI

CiniselloBalsamo



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



VOLEM

VOlunteering for EMployability

European Erasmus + VOLEM project



- This strategic partnership is a European cooperation between **CAP SOLIDAIRE** (association, FRANCE), the **Municipality of Cinisello-Balsamo** (public body, ITALY) and **ART SQUARE** (company, LUXEMBOURG).
- This project (Dec. 2019-May 2022) aims to **strengthen the recognition of the key skills acquired by young people during volunteering activities** in the field of local development and to promote them as useful for their entry into the labour market.



Key Skills refer to a particular set of skills that are commonly needed in a range of activities in education and training, work and life in general.

Here's a list of the key soft skills that employers value.

- Interpersonal skills
 - Teamwork
 - Networking
 - Empathy
 - Positive Attitude
 - Self-Confidence
- Communication skills
 - Writing
 - Reading
 - Speaking
 - Listening

Project summary (1)

Why?

The project stems from the general conclusions that the recognition of competences is not properly tackled after volunteering. With an innovative consortium involving an association, a municipality and a company, we will try to combine the 3 perspectives to better understand skills developed by young people, see how far they facilitate employability and come up with tools to foster the validation of competences.

Challenges of the cooperation project

- Foster the professional integration and employability of young people by recognising their skills and knowledge acquired during their voluntary missions.
- Create working synergies in the promotion of volunteer missions in Europe.
- Promote the engagement and participation of young people at local and European level.

Project summary (2)

Project objectives

- Raise awareness and improve the skills of those involved in volunteering and youth workers on innovative youth volunteering experiences in the field of local development.
- Design a skills framework using Digital Badges for the validation of skills acquired through voluntary action of young people in the local development.

Project participants

- The direct beneficiaries of the strategic partnership are youth workers with whom young volunteers are associated as indirect beneficiaries.

Project deliverables (intellectual productions)

- A **comparative analysis** of best youth volunteering practices in local development.
- A phase of **local experimentation of the innovative toolbox** on raising awareness and promoting the added value of youth volunteering in the context of local development in each partner country.
- A skills framework in terms of volunteering for local development using the **Open Badges of social innovation for skills validation**.
- A **web platform** in several languages integrating the resources and results of the project for direct use by the targets (voluntary organisations, youth workers, young people).

Intellectual outputs

- A comparative analysis
 - Local experimentation of the innovative toolbox
 - Open Badges of social innovation for skills validation
 - Web platform
-

A comparative analysis of best youth volunteering practices in local development

Online questionnaires and interviews

- **72 questionnaires** from **host organisations** in France, Italy and Luxembourg
- **68 questionnaires** from **young volunteers** aged 16 to 30 from France, Italy and Luxembourg
- **6 interviews** of **host organisations** in FR, IT and LU
- **9 interviews** of **young volunteers** in FR, IT and LU

Online questionnaire host organisations



Sample questions

Examples of volunteering missions offered to young volunteers?

Number of volunteers welcomed into your organisation?

Links between volunteering missions and the local development of your territory?

Basic skills acquired by volunteers during the mission within your organisation?

Improvement of the employability level of volunteers by the proposed missions?

Impact of welcoming volunteers for your organisation and for the local community?

Online questionnaire **young volunteers**



Sample questions

What were your missions as a volunteer?

Did you have links with the social and/or economic local organisations?

Have you acquired new skills, competences or knowledge?

Did you start building a professional network during your volunteering?

Did this help you find a job?

Have your recruiters recognised the volunteering experience?

How long after the end of the volunteering did you find employment?

Is your current job related to what you did during your volunteering?

Key findings of the survey

> Young volunteers (1)



Motivations of the young volunteers:

- Young people are particularly motivated by the desire for experience, skills, references and qualifications
- Altruistic motives are also important to them
- They want to have fun and make friends but is not a primary motivation
- They value the career-related benefits from volunteering but also satisfaction, enjoyment and making a contribution to the community
- They want to start building a professional network and explore different career orientation possibilities

Key findings of the survey

> Young volunteers (2)



Volunteering fosters **soft skills**:

Soft skills are non-technical skills that relate to how you work. They include how you interact with colleagues, how you solve problems, and how you manage your work.

- Personal development
- Communication in foreign languages
- Social capital and civic competences
- Cultural awareness and expression
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- Leadership skills and team working skills
- Sense of independence, responsibility, openness and competences
- Learning and competence development
- Broaden perspectives of different career possibilities
- Interest in European topics (in case of mobility), international orientation

Key findings of the survey

> Young volunteers (3)



Volunteering also fosters **life skills**:

- Ability to adapt to new or unforeseen situations
- Flexibility, resilience, the ability to cope with stress
- Problem solving skills, critical thinking
- Further mobility in education or employment

Key findings of the survey

> Young volunteers (4)



Impact on **future educational and professional perspectives**. Young volunteers:

- Are planning to engage in further education opportunities (formal, non formal, vocational)
- Have a clearer idea about their further educational path
- Have a clearer idea about their professional career aspirations and goals
- Believe that their job chances have increased
- Believe that volunteering fosters entrepreneurial skills (more open to take risks, empowerment)

>> Volunteering improves the employability and career prospects of volunteers

Key findings of the survey

> Young volunteers (5)



To describe the experience I would use the word "serendipity": tackle **the journey** with a goal and then, along the way, come across other very interesting things".

"In my opinion, volunteering is important because it creates **value**, not only for personal satisfaction but because you realise what it means to work for the community".

"I met a lot of people, **connect more with the local community**, people who are working in the field. They saw me also during different events and how I worked. I think that it helped me a lot to find later job".

Key findings of the survey

> Host organisations (1)



Benefits for the host organisations:

- Hosting a volunteer allows to expand their actions and launch new projects, while offering a better service to their target audiences
- The presence of young volunteers, with their ideas, experiences and enthusiasm, is an opportunity to reflect on their actions, their organisation, but also a good way to revitalise their volunteer network and to make their actions and values known beyond their usual circles
- The volunteers welcomed today will, for many, be the volunteers, employees and supporters of tomorrow

Key findings of the survey

> Host organisations (2)



Volunteering impacts on the organisation development:

- It contributes to staff skills development (project management, technical and language skills)
- It builds the capacity of organisations:
 - Increase in resources (mainly human and financial resources) that benefits small NGOs in particular
 - New ideas and perspectives brought by volunteers (changing perspectives with new concepts and competences: i.e. social media)
 - Good practices and know-how learned from the volunteer in other organisations
- It strengthens the bond between the organisation and young people
- It increases intercultural awareness and it impacts on the internationalisation of organisations in case of mobility

Key findings of the survey

> Host organisations (3)



"We have a volunteer who has been with us for 5 years and is moving towards a career path with us. At the moment she brings a huge advantage to our association because she has a series of skills that she can put at the service of the association that are very precious. I would say that if I have to give a percentage I would say that they bring 40% of their personal skills and we give them that 60%, GIOSEF is naturally a container where volunteers can express their talents and grow their passions as well. So in this sense there is also room to bring what they already know how to do and link it with the activities of the organizations"

"To understand that it is a mission and not a job"

"To help the development of the young person who is not employed but there to help and observe" "That the tutor is there to guide and orient".

Key findings of the survey

> Local development



Impact on local development/community:

- The volunteering was perceived as enrichment: new competences, different ideas and cultures (intercultural learning and dialogue)
- Awareness of the concerns and interests of young people
- Ripple effect: volunteering projects and activities develop capacity of local communities and strengthen civil society
- The work of volunteers seems to be particularly important for the hardest-to-reach target groups (NEETs, people with disabilities...)
- Gains of human capital (individual responsibility, solidarity, participation and respect for cultural differences)
- Raising awareness about Europe (in case of mobility)

To sum it up...

Volunteering
improves foreign
language skills



Volunteering
improves
intercultural competences



Volunteering is an enrichment for local
communities

Volunteering promotes solidarity, tolerance,
respect and mutual understanding among
young people

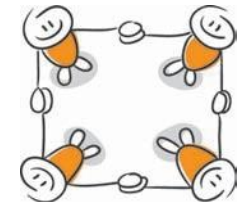
Volunteering helps
to realise one's ideas



Volunteering makes local communities more
aware of the concerns and interests of young
people



Volunteering helps
identify future opportunities



Volunteering makes
young people better team workers



> Volunteers

- **Obstacles to volunteering:**

Limited access to information, future employment prospects, lack of funds, poor pre-departure preparation (if mobility)

- **Suggestions for improvement:**

1. Appointment of volunteering ambassadors (i.e. alumni)
2. Empowering and training frontline youth workers
3. Create new and use existing peer-to-peer networks to raise awareness
4. Training of mentors and pre- and post-mobility training for volunteers
5. Using 'youth-friendly' tools and channels for raising awareness: social media



> Youth workers

1. Help with the validation of the competences and support in the process of learning
2. Support with evaluation and monitoring learning process
3. Ensure that young people are developing one of the competences which they will need in the future and skills needed on the job market
4. Create a safe space where the volunteer feels at ease taking responsibilities, even with the risk of making mistakes, always with the support from the youth worker/staff of the organization
5. Facilitate relationships based on trust
6. Give space to the volunteer's initiative
7. Encourage the teambuilding among volunteers and colleagues



> Host organisations

1. Strengthening the quality systems in volunteering (monitoring)
2. Improving the capacity and resources of volunteers' host organisations to ensure high-quality activities (training of mentors, training on maximising the impact on the local community)
3. Clarify since the beginning the aim/mission of the organisation (it is useful also for the on-going process)
4. Develop a more inclusive organisation
5. Economic contribution can support the inclusion of young people
6. Follow-up processes after volunteering is vital for ensuring re-integration of the volunteer in the 'home' community in case of mobility



> Local communities

To maximise the local community impact, volunteering:

1. Should facilitate support for direct interaction between volunteers and locals
2. Should be designed to match the needs of the local community
3. Impact on this level should be planned as an integrative part of the project
4. Facilitate the recognition of the volunteers' work by the players in the local community
5. Let the volunteers feel inspired by the community to propose new activities

Conclusions and perspectives (1)



Soft skills, winning assets for employability:

According to a study in 2016 of the World Economic Forum (WEF), the soft skills expected in 2020 are: creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, team management, work coordination, decision making, emotional intelligence, customer service, negotiation and finally cognitive flexibility (adaptability to new processes and ideas).

In parallel, a **Monster survey** reports that 90% of recruiters believe that soft skills will become a more important part of the recruitment process in the coming years.

Conclusions and perspectives (2)



It is essential to develop these "soft skills" every day to turn them into real assets. This is all the more important in today's digital world, which is constantly and steadily evolving the professions.

Young people are entering a job market that is now more complex. Robots, increasing digitalisation and AI are already doing most of the technical work.

Their advantage in an increasingly competitive market is to make the most of their soft skills which, for the moment, are difficult for robots to imitate.

Volunteering fosters the development of soft skills, winning assets for employability, and should thus be encouraged in Europe.

**Further information
on
our new website**



www.volem-project.eu

VOLEM publications and communications only reflect the views of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use, which may be made of the information contained therein.



Project partner in France
Cap Solidaire

Clément Bosredon
direction@cap-solidaire.org



Project partner in Italy
Comune di CiniselloBalsamo

Elisa Scardoni
elisa.scardoni@comune.cinisello-balsamo.mi.it



Project partner in Luxembourg
Art Square Lab

Piotr Gawel
piotr@artsquarelab.net