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The VOLunteering for better EMployability project



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CHAPTER 1

VOLUNTEERING IN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT, AN INCUBATOR OF TRANSVERSAL SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABILITY

1.1. PROJECT CONTEXT

As a general point of view, the idea of volunteering implies — the voluntary decision or choice of an individual, unit or establishment to perform services to the advantage of a more extensive group without essentially expecting financial gain; a citizen commitment to society.

In recent decades, governments have perceived the basic commitment that volunteering makes to assemble a solid and unified society. This form of commitment can be a tool for sustainable development on a personal, organizational and collective level. The act of volunteering has been viewed as a form of social capital, with particular reference to the role of volunteering in promoting social inclusion, supporting marginalized groups, its relationship to other forms of civic participation and free work, creating a civil society, social action, for community building and community renewal. Its connection with other key social players such as government, business, communities, and people as individuals has given the voluntary sector strong power to affect society as a whole.¹

The VOLEM project aims to strengthen the recognition of key competences acquired by young adults during volunteer activities in local development and to promote them as valuable for their entrance into the labour market. It tackles the topic of volunteering from three different – but interconnected – points of view:

- a) Impact on individuals
- b) Impact on organisations
- c) Impact on local development

Taking into account past studies on volunteering²:

- Volunteering assembles a firmer, more secure, more grounded community, builds interpersonal organization amongst groups and neighbourhoods.
- Volunteering encourages individuals to be more dynamic in community engagement and to take a greater interest in social affairs.
- Volunteering conveys some areas of public services, empowering more individuals to work in public sectors, raising academic performances of youth, driving natural development and adjusting to the hazards of environmental change.
- Volunteering likewise has positive effects on volunteers as people, builds their self-esteem, improves a variety of skills and capabilities, develops their career paths and helps them become physically and mentally healthier.

¹ Source: <https://dekkak.com/social-impact-volunteerism/>


² Source: <https://dekkak.com/social-impact-volunteerism/>

Key words

- **Local development**

Since its emergence at the beginning of the 1980s, in developed countries hard hit by the crisis of traditional industries, local development has not ceased to renew itself in response to problems of employment, social cohesion or the autonomy of populations. Indeed, some regions or small towns have returned to growth in the form of small business creation and new services to the population, by enhancing their local human, natural or historical potential. It can be said that the determining factors are the place - often a valley, an employment area, a neighbourhood, but rarely an administrative district -, multiple partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors and collaborative methods centred around a federative project.

Thus, local development involves integrated territorialized strategies mobilising a large number of local actors in the form of partnerships, with a view to achieving an improvement in living and working conditions for local populations in the short term and, in the longer term, as part of the search for structural change. Its success can be explained by its ability to respond to local problems, by mobilising local resources (human and financial) and accessible external resources (public or private funding) to the best of its ability.



In my opinion, volunteering is important because it creates value, not only for personal satisfaction but because you realize what it means to work for the community. It is also formative because you put yourself in the game, understand what your limits are and the things you can give. It allowed me to gain a lot of experience, I received training and developed skills.

Luca, 26, volunteer in the Municipality of Cinisello Balsamo (IT)



- **Social Solidarity Economy**

According to RIPPSS members, the Social Solidarity Economy is an alternative to capitalism and other authoritarian, state-dominated economic systems. In an SSE ordinary people play an active role in shaping all of the dimensions of human life: economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental. SSEs exist in all sectors of the economy: production, finance, distribution, exchange, consumption and governance. They also aim to transform the social and economic system that includes public, private and third sectors. SSEs are not only about the poor, but strive to overcome inequalities, including all classes of society. SSEs have the ability to take the best practices that exist in our present system (such as efficiency, use of technology and knowledge) and transform them to serve the welfare of the community based on different values and goals.

Social solidarity economy is an ethical and values-based approach to economic development that prioritizes the welfare of people and the planet, over profits and blind growth.



I get bored quickly, I need to do new things all the time and volunteering offered the right environment. I love buying books, helping colleagues, I really like this community where we stick together [...] I'm more efficient in cooperation than in the competitive setting of my previous job.

Arcie, 23, volunteer at a local media library in a rural area.



- **Skill**

An overall difficulty in getting young people to recognise and validate their skills.

Skill is a term that refers to everything a person knows and is able to do. It is nowadays acceptable to differentiate between technical skills and social/transversal/behavioural, so-called soft skills. The latter refer to the way a person behaves during their voluntary assignment, for example.

These skills, acquired through volunteering, are currently largely underestimated and not sufficiently appreciated in the labour market by young people themselves and not recognised or appreciated enough by some employers.

During a volunteering experience of at least six months, the young person develops new knowledge and activates new skills. Their understanding of their environment evolves. In a context like

this, volunteers generally gain confidence and open-mindedness, learn to get to know themselves and strengthen their ability to act and/or their capabilities.

The labour market is constantly evolving, obliging recruiters to adapt to meet new needs. The EuroVIP project also provides a reminder that the World Economic Forum has estimated that 65% of children currently in primary education will work in a sector that does not exist today. According to a second study by the same institution, 50% of the knowledge acquired during technical training would already be obsolete by the time the diploma is awarded³.

In the face of these changes, cross-disciplinary skills are therefore becoming essential for recruiters. Social skills, pedagogy, mediation, versatility, adaptation, teamwork, self-confidence, initiative, creativity... It makes sense to promote these skills developed during a voluntary commitment, most of which are behavioural and therefore transferable to the world of work.

This is because these skills, difficult to learn at school, as more oriented towards formal knowledge acquisition, come from non-formal education. We were able to observe that they do develop during voluntary experiences. Informal learning takes place outside educational institutions and is linked to activities that a person undertakes without the intention of acquiring new knowledge. It is unintentional and an integral part of life. It is what WHO calls "life skills development". According to WHO, life skills refer to "the ability of a person to respond effectively to the demands and challenges of daily life. It is a person's ability to maintain a state of mental well-being, through appropriate and positive behaviour in relationships with others, one's own culture and environment".⁴



"When I started the Civic Service, I was 17 years old and I'd been out of school for 4 years. It was complicated interacting with people again, accomplishing things, I didn't know what to do, I was afraid of doing something stupid, how to do things right... And as time went by people trusted me more and more, I was given more responsibility and that was great. Volunteering has changed me, I feel that there has been a significant development, even on a personal level. As I have increasingly opened up, I am much better at communicating with people and I am better organised in public..."

Bastien, 18, digital technology promotion volunteer in a rural area



VOLEM

³ Eurovip – "Paid and unpaid voluntary experience, a lever towards employment - A guide for recruiters" - 2018

⁴ WHO - Division on Mental Health and the Prevention of Substance Abuse - 1993

1.2. OBJECTIVES AND INTELLECTUAL OUTPUTS

The specific objectives of the project are the following:

1. to raise awareness and upskill volunteering stakeholders and young people on innovative youth volunteering experiences in the field of local development;
2. to design a competency framework using innovative badges for the validation of competences acquired through voluntary action in local development by young people;
3. to boost the vocational integration and the employability of young people through the recognition of their skills and knowledge acquired during their voluntary missions;
4. to strengthen the capacities of the organisations working with volunteers;
5. to create working synergies in the promotion of voluntary missions in Europe and the recognition of competences acquired by young volunteers at a local or European Union level.

What you currently have in your hands is the first Intellectual Output created within the project. The organisations involved analysed the state of the art, what the volunteering experience looks like around Europe, but especially in our countries Italy, Luxembourg and France.

In this report, we looked closer at volunteering to understand what are the benefits for volunteers, organisations and the local community. How the volunteering experience can help young people to develop their capabilities and skills, but also how it can be recognised later, on the job market, since we strongly believe that volunteering is an important part of professional development and should be recognised by future employers.

In the next stage, the partners will design **an awareness raising and promotion toolkit on the added value of youth volunteering in a local development context** (Intellectual Output 2) based on the key findings which emerged from the first activity (Intellectual Output 1). In the future this production will provide volunteering organisations (national and European) with tools to raise awareness and encourage young people to volunteer but also to raise awareness among youth workers and local actors about the skills that can be enhanced through volunteering experiences in local development.

The third production (Intellectual Output 3) will design a **competence framework** for the skills that could be acquired by young people in **local development volunteering experiences** using an innovative **digital badge methodology**. This third IO will provide sustainability to the transfer of the toolkits (IO1 and IO2), giving youth workers the opportunity to capitalize on what they have experienced and learnt for the benefit of the young people they work with.

The process as a whole involves young volunteers, young people, youth workers and other stakeholders of the local communities where partner organisations are established.

1.3. CONSORTIUM

This strategic partnership is a cross-sector cooperation between UAESSG-CAP SOLIDAIRE (lead organisation), the Municipality of Cinisello Balsamo and Art Square (partners): the different nature of the partners involved makes it possible to analyse the topic from different points of view.



Figure 1 - Partners' representatives during the kick-off meeting in Langon (FR), February 2020

UAESSG-CAP SOLIDAIRE (Union des Acteurs de l'Économie Sociale et Solidaire du Sud-Gironde, non-profit organization, FR), leading partner of the VOLEM project, brings together social economy organisations, public and private, and develops projects in cooperation with a large number of

stakeholders. In 2019, this association had 83 members including non-profit organisations, public employment services, social and cultural organisations, local authorities...). Cap Solidaire facilitates a network of players in sustainable and local development and support to Social and Solidarity Economy projects with various stakeholders in the region: inhabitants (including young people), local authorities, social utility structures (non-profit organisations, companies, cooperatives). The association fosters the empowerment of young people with fewer opportunities, by their commitment to actions of general interest but also in their mobility, in their daily actions, helping them to gain confidence.

CAP Solidaire contributes to sustainable and local development on Sud-Gironde territory (50 kms south of Bordeaux). The rural district of Sud-Gironde is a territory with many social and economic difficulties, with a high unemployment rate and a very low standard of living. As an intermediary body of Civic Service, Cap Solidaire provides the link between the local hosting organization and young people who are willing to engage in public interest actions. Cap Solidaire offers complementary support for young people's "project for the future", through individual coaching, collective training and awareness raising workshops. In the future, Cap Solidaire would like to develop a "Mobility and Engagement Centre" in order to support hosting young people and offer them a resource centre on engagement, a platform for hosting young people in civic service and also develop European Solidarity Corps missions with its partners.

The **Municipality of Cinisello-Balsamo** is an Italian public body and is responsible for providing the youth policy plan in the city through its Youth Policy Department. With several local partners and stakeholders, it carries out projects which aim at supporting young people and their skill development. The intervention areas are youth policy, social cohesion & inclusion programmes (development of the community and involvement of foreign citizens), youth mobility, protagonist and active participation of young people in social life. Beneficiaries of the activities are mainly young people aged from 11 to 30. The activities also focus on the development of youth worker competences. Projects in the Department include different activities: educational and socialising activities (youth centre, training sessions in high schools, prevention of marginalization risks); culture and expression (creativity workshops, web radio, events); promotion of active citizenship and volunteering (National Civic Service, support to youth associations, European mobility, EVS activities, seminars), development of entrepreneurship skills (the municipality opened a coworking space in the city). Since 2005 we have

taken part or led more than 30 projects on an international level in the following European programmes: Youth in Action, Lifelong Learning Programme, Erasmus +, Europe for Citizens.

Art Square (company, LU) is the first service design agency in Luxembourg. The organisation combines research, creativity and technology to design innovative services. Art Square is active in social, business, educational and cultural fields. The organisation supports entrepreneurship of youth, focusing on artists and creative people, especially those in their formative years by developing their competence and engagement in activities outside the art world.

Since 2015 Art Square has been involved in education for creativity with Design Thinking methodology. Seeing the great impact it has on young people's life skills, the Art Square team is including this as a strategic part of our activities until 2025.

CHAPTER 2

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF STATUS BY COUNTRY

*“As for the future, your task is not to foresee it, but to enable it”
Antoine de Saint Exupéry*

2.1. VOLUNTEERING IN EUROPE

According to the [European Youth Forum](#) an activity can only be defined as volunteering if it is:

- undertaken of a person’s own free will and involves the commitment of time and energy to actions that benefit others and society as a whole;
- unpaid (although it can involve reimbursement of expenses directly related to the activity);
- for a non-profit cause, primarily undertaken within a nongovernmental organisation, and thus clearly isn't motivated by material or financial gain not used to substitute or replace paid employment.

The history of volunteering in Europe differs from country to country. While some countries have long standing volunteering traditions, other EU states are only beginning to create their own culture of voluntary action.

According to the 2018 [Barometer](#), 31% of citizens have been involved in volunteering in the last year, a six percent increase since 2014! Throughout the EU there has been a general increase in participation, with 18 member states seeing their number of volunteers rise.⁵

Young people volunteering

We know that volunteering is strongly influenced by the history, politics and culture of a community and a country, but young people can help change the tradition and boost volunteering in Europe. They might even be taking part in voluntary activities without even realising it: lending a hand at their local sports club, helping out an elderly member of their community or picking up litter in the forest or on the beach. In fact, sports and outdoor activities are the main volunteering sectors in Europe, followed by education, arts and music or cultural associations.⁶

The European Solidarity Corps⁷

Beside the Volunteering Programmes promoted by single countries, the European Commission funds specific actions aimed at fostering the active citizenship and sense of solidarity of young people, by supporting the development of a sense of belonging to the wider, European community.

In 2014, the [European Commission](#) launched [Erasmus+](#), a gateway to volunteering in Europe.

The Commission is working to improve and promote volunteering among young people, particularly to encourage the growth of the [European Solidarity Corps](#).

[The European Voluntary Service](#) was the previous programme which helped young people to volunteer abroad. Volunteering projects under the Solidarity Corps have a lot of similarities to EVS. They involve the same mobility activities, so volunteering can take place with individual participants or a group of them. Complementary activities, such as workshops and training courses, can also take place to add value and expand the results of the project, as well as strengthen its impact.⁸

⁵ https://europa.eu/youth/lu/article/45/188_fr

⁶ https://europa.eu/youth/lu/article/45/188_fr

⁷ https://europa.eu/youth/sites/default/files/0036_youth-2018-05_esc-factsheet_26june-02.pdf

⁸ https://europa.eu/youth/articles/volunteering-europe-1_en

The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) is targeted at young people between 18 and 30 years old who have the opportunity of taking part in a volunteering project abroad. The programme covers all the costs and provides candidates an unbelievable experience which allows them to improve their soft skills and other competences. For a period of 14 to 59 days or of 3 months to a maximum of 12 months, the young person is involved in a public-interest project in fields as varied as activity coordination, arts, environment, sport, etc.

The programme seeks to promote and foster: youth mobility within and beyond the borders of the EU; non-formal training; intercultural dialogue; youth employability; integration of all young people, whatever their level of education and social and cultural background.⁹

The European Solidarity Corps brings together young people to build a more inclusive society, supporting vulnerable people and responding to societal challenges. It offers an inspiring and empowering experience for young people who want to help, learn and develop. In addition, at the end of their placement, European Solidarity Corps participants are entitled to receive a European Solidarity Corps certificate, confirming their participation in the activity as well as the acquisition of the 8 Key Transversal Competences.

The European Solidarity Corps offers a great opportunity to learn new languages. All volunteers receive language support during their project for an easier integration and knowledge of the local culture. The host organisation is responsible for organising and providing this education within the frame of non-formal education.

European volunteering helps young people to meet new horizons, obtain and improve skills for personal and educational development and gain new abilities that facilitate social integration. In this way they have the opportunity to discover a new culture and make new friends in a country of the European Union.

For many European volunteers, volunteering is the opportunity to live for the first time in a foreign country and with the advantage of having almost all costs paid, because the volunteers receive almost 100% of their round-trip ticket, accommodation, meals, private insurance and pocket money for their expenses.


The learning experience is formally recognized in a certificate called [YOUTHPASS](#). This certificate of the European Commission guarantees that volunteers have performed their voluntary projects successfully and it is a useful tool for finding a job, especially in the social sector.

All the same, doing local volunteering is very interesting because the volunteers know the problems and needs of their communities and thus are able to help effectively.

The European Solidarity Corps is implemented in the 28 Programme countries, in 22 Partner countries and 3 Participants countries.

The Solidarity Corps aims to simplify the application process and make funding more flexible for organisations, as well as increase inclusion to widen participation of young people. Since its launch in December 2016, the European Solidarity Corps has attracted almost 67,000 young people who have expressed their interest to help in solidarity action across Europe. Almost 5,700 people have already started their placements in projects dealing with various topics such as environment, culture, social services, helping refugees, migrants, children or the elderly. The European Solidarity Corps is more than just volunteering. It also creates opportunities for young people to develop their skills and increase their future labour market prospects via a job or a traineeship.


⁹ https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en



«

I am very satisfied but there have been ups and downs. Clashing with the Danish culture that has a non-pyramid model has been difficult. There will never be a boss who tells you have to do this and this.

Giulia, ESC volunteer in Nykøbing (DK)



With the Commission's proposal to foresee €1.26 billion for the Solidarity Corps in the next EU budget, at least 350,000 other young people will be able to participate in a solidarity activity between 2021 and 2027.¹⁰

2.2. COMPARED ANALYSIS OF YOUNG VOLUNTEERING SCHEMES

The purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis of the young volunteering context in Italy, France and Luxembourg, the three partners involved in this Erasmus+ project. A comparative approach of the legal framework gives us an overview of the similarities and differences of each country.

Voluntary service allows young people to get involved in a concrete project of general interest. It is an opportunity for learning and orientation through practical experience, which represents a full-time, fixed-term commitment.

This experience must comply with a set of criteria in order to be recognised as a voluntary service at national level. Even though the spirit is the same in the three countries considered (Italy, France and Luxembourg), some aspects may differ as we shall see in this study.

Name, date of the programme and Ministry involved

The national scheme in France is 4-fold with sub-programmes including the Civic Service, International solidarity volunteering, International business and administrative volunteering and volunteering for young firefighters. The volunteering programmes and schemes are defined, developed and supervised by such public authorities as the Ministry of Youth, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Civic Service, on which we are focusing, has been implemented by the Ministry of Youth since 2010¹¹ whereas in Italy the Servizio Civile Nazionale was launched in 2001 by the Ministry of the Interior.

In Luxembourg, since 2007 the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth has been implementing two volunteer service programmes, coordinated by the National Youth Service (*Service national de la jeunesse* - SNJ): the national volunteer service programme (Luxembourg) and the Development Volunteer Service (developing countries). Depending on the programme, the activities therefore take place in Luxembourg or abroad.

Duration of the Volunteering programmes and target group

Eligible candidates in France must be aged between 16-25 years old (16-30 for young people with disabilities), in Italy 18-29 years old and in Luxembourg 16-30 years old.

As to the duration, France offers a 6-12 month experience (35hrs/week - at least 24hrs), Italy offers an 8-12 month experience (25hrs/week) and Luxembourg offers a 3-12 month experience (35hrs/week).

We thus see that the target group is pretty similar whereas the length of the volunteering project may differ to some extent between Italy and Luxembourg as to the minimum duration. Italy tends to favour longer volunteering for an older range of young people. It would be interesting to relate this aspect with maybe the unemployment rate of this category of people in Italy and the level of education.

Main host organisations

In France, the main host organisations are associations, NGOs, national or local public institutions. The situation in Italy is very similar with associations, NGOs, public administrations whereas Luxembourg foresees associations and NGOs.

¹⁰ https://europa.eu/youth/sites/default/files/0036_youth-2018-05_esc-factsheet_26june-02.pdf

¹¹ It is now run by the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports

Civic Service training programme

The training programmes organised are 3 days in France and 80 hours in Italy. Different types of seminars are offered to young volunteers in Luxembourg which also promotes a national system of certification of the volunteering experiences.

Monthly remuneration

In France, the monthly remuneration is between 473.04 EUR and 580.72 EUR (government – depending on the social situation of the young person) plus 107.58 EUR (host organisation), so a total of 580.62 EUR to 688.30 EUR.

In Italy it is 439.50 EUR per month and Luxembourg 684 EUR per month, in both cases directly provided by the government.

Social security coverage

In all three cases, social security is covered for young volunteers.

Benefits of volunteer status

These various Civic Service programmes allow applicants to obtain:

- § recognition of their volunteer status;
- § pocket money and a subsistence allowance;
- § family benefits, in the case of minors;
- § monthly financial aid from the State, for volunteers over 18 years of age;
- § registration with the Social Security services;
- § free training (pre-departure seminars, language training, workshops, etc.).

Intermediary organizations

Volunteers can benefit from professional and personalised support towards employment and/or obtain educational qualification. The tasks of intermediary organisations consist in providing administrative, cultural, organisational and mobilisation support

As an intermediary body of Civic Service, organisations like Cap Solidaire in France provide the link between the local hosting organisation and young people who are willing to engage in public interest actions. Intermediary bodies offer complementary support for young people's "project for the future", through individual coaching, collective training and awareness raising workshops.

Municipalities in Italy, like the Municipality of Cinisello Balsamo, have a long tradition in the promotion and development of projects for the Universal Civil Service. Initially this possibility was mainly oriented in the management of social services and schools. Later, due to two important structural reforms at government level, this possibility was extended in several areas, including Youth Policies. Over the years it has therefore been possible to develop the offer for young people involved in this experience: civil service was no longer just a year of volunteering dedicated to supporting a voluntary association or assistance services but it became a period of time committed to the development and growth of young people's skills.

At the end of the civil service every young volunteer also receives a specific certification which highlights the skills acquired during the volunteering experience. It is also possible to consider some of the hours dedicated to the civil service as a university internship.

CHAPTER 3 SPECIFIC CONTEXT IN OUR COUNTRIES

"We are doing it for our young people, to enable them to acquire skills, to get a foot on the employment ladder, but also to do some very useful work in this period, to support associations"

E. Macron

3.1. NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR YOUTH VOLUNTEERING IN FRANCE

The volunteering programmes and schemes are defined, developed and supervised by public authorities such as the Ministry of Youth, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Volunteering in France is governed by a number of legal frameworks, depending on the type of volunteering.

There are four main programmes of Volunteering: Civic Service, Volunteering of young firefighters, International solidarity volunteering, and International business and administrative volunteering.

Civic Service

Civic Service is a programme designed to encourage civic commitment by young people aged 16 to 25, as well as by young people with disabilities aged 16 to 30, without any qualification conditions. Missions typically last between 6 to 12 months with at least 24 hours per week, for "non-profit organisations or legal entities governed by public law". Host organisations can be associations, NGOs, national or local public institutions, etc. Since 2017 solidarity enterprises of social utility can also be hosts. During their project, volunteers are fully covered by the welfare system and receive social benefits. Implemented in March 2010, this policy is aimed at promoting social



Figure 2 - A civic service volunteer committed to seniors in Langon, France

diversity, integration, and citizenship among youth and giving them a second chance to become an active citizen. It is open to French and EU citizens, as well as non-EU citizens who can provide evidence that they have been staying in France for more than a year. The purpose of civic service is to serve the public interest through commitment on projects that cover various areas: culture and leisure activities, international development and humanitarian actions, education for all, environment, remembrance and citizenship, health, solidarity and sport.

The participants are required to work 24 to 35 hours a week and they receive a monthly allowance from the government (€ 473.04 to € 580.72) and the host organisation (€ 107.58). For projects taking place abroad, however, the costs of transport and accommodation are not covered.

There are no specific qualification requirements for young people wishing to take part in a civic service project. What matters is the will to contribute to the collective interest, to experience social mixing and acquire new personal and professional skills, as well as to promote republican values and solidarity.

Civic service is neither a job, nor an internship. It is based purely on volunteerism and can be seen as a stepping stone in the life of the participants, enabling them to broaden their perspectives and

discover various aspects of society. However, civic service can be combined with paid jobs or studies, as long as the participants have enough time to work on their projects.

Host organisations have to name a tutor for the follow-up of each volunteer during and after the project. Tutors help volunteers to prepare and carry out their tasks, adjust assignments to each volunteer, support them in everyday life on the project and guide them through their thinking process about their future (for example, tutors can help volunteers complete a skills portfolio to highlight the skills they acquired during the project). The host organisation also provides the participants with civic and citizenship training (theoretical part on notions such as citizenship and practical first-aid training). On the 14th July 2020, Emmanuel Macron announced in his speech that 100,000 additional Civic Service missions would be financed by 2021, i.e. a near doubling of annual beneficiaries.

The French version of the commitment scheme is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year and the direction taken is clearly a powerful reinforcement of schemes to promote the employability of young people.

Young firefighters volunteering

In addition to Civic Service volunteering, young people also have the opportunity to be volunteer Jeunes sapeurs-pompiers (JSPs-young firefighters). The scheme is designed for young people aged 11 to 18 who want to discover the firefighting profession.

International solidarity volunteering

The volunteer does not have the status of employee of the organisation since there is no work contract. It should be noted that international solidarity volunteering is now one of the forms that civic service may take. In this case, as provided for in Article 1 of the Law of 23rd February 2005, the international solidarity volunteering contract "is a civic service performed abroad and governed by the rules of this Law".

International business and administrative volunteering

International Business Volunteering (IBV) and International Administrative Volunteering (IAV) are two International Volunteering schemes that, under certain conditions, enable young people to carry out scientific, technical or commercial missions in a French business abroad (IBV) or a French Government department located abroad (IAV).

Civic Service with CAP Solidaire

As an intermediary body of Civic Service, Cap Solidaire provides the link between the local hosting organization and young people who are willing to engage in public interest actions.

Cap Solidaire offers complementary support for young people's "project for the future", through individual coaching, collective training and awareness raising workshops. Concretely, Cap Solidaire coordination of the civic service missions is reception, linking with hosting organisations, support for young people, inclusive approach.

To implement the civic service, Cap Solidaire is financially supported by different public bodies such as the Ministry for National Education, Conseil Régional de Nouvelle-Aquitaine, and Département de la Gironde.

As stated above, the Civic Service is a step in the citizenship education of all the young people through an accessible action. It improves self-confidence and helps young people acquire new competences and skills and also to think about their future citizenship or professional future.

Cap Solidaire members are very attentive to the fact that the **missions** of young volunteers strongly contribute **to the creation or strengthening of public interest activities with social value within the organisations and on a local level.**

Examples of missions are:

- Understanding the isolation of the elderly and contribute to the improvement of their quality of life at the Airial de Biron retirement home in the city of Captieux.
- Promoting mobility in the South Gironde region within Cap Solidaire.

- Contributing to the improvement of the health and living environment of older people at the associative care home Les Doyennés de Langon.
- Participating in the academic success of students at the AGIR high school in Langon.
- Participating in support for schooling and in educational, cultural, sports, leisure and recreational activities, and environment education and sustainable development for children within of the Municipality of Fargues.
- Raising awareness of citizen responsibility in environmental and social issues in the municipality of Fargues.
- Facilitating access to digital tools designed for cultural activities in the area of La Réole in Sud-Gironde.

Moreover, Cap Solidaire organises and facilitates collective activities based on non-formal learning for young volunteers: Controversy exploration seminars, brainstorming and action-training sessions on various themes, including sustainable development (non-formal education methodology).

Cap Solidaire hosted 15 volunteers in 2016, 24 volunteers in 2017, 38 volunteers in 2018, 44 volunteers in 2019. So 121 volunteers in total since 2016.

31 Cap Solidaire member organisations hosted at least one volunteer in 2019

The average age of the volunteers hosted by the Cap Solidaire's network is nearly 19 years old. 84,1 % have a level that is lower or equal to the Bacalauréate (68% in France).

3.2. NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR YOUTH VOLUNTEERING IN ITALY

In Italy all volunteering projects are monitored and recognised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, in particular they are regulated by the Legislative Decree 3rd July 2017, n. 117- Third sector code. In addition, the Ministry deals with the administrative management of the contributions paid to volunteering associations and non-profit organizations and financing experimental projects.

In general, public administrations are committed to promoting the culture of volunteering especially among young people, through initiatives in the context of public structures and schools, also with the involvement of organisations and other third sector entities.

In Italy about 6.63 million people, around 12.9% population who are at least 14 years of age, dedicate themselves to volunteering in its different organised or informal forms, providing help by offering some of their free time and resources.

4.14 million citizens volunteer in a group or organisation and represent about 41% of the total of Italian volunteers. Religious associations are supported by the activity of 24% of the volunteers, while around 3 million people commit themselves in a non-organised way, directly lending help without being part of any organisation. Finally, about 12.8% of the volunteers carry out their activities in public administrations (municipalities), in educational institutions or in places of democratic participation (unions, political parties, etc.)

In the characterisation of volunteers, there is a greater tendency for men to volunteer than women (13.3% against 11.9%). In part this imbalance is explained by the different amount of free time available, which is on average lower for middle aged women, due to the addition of extra-domestic and domestic work. The average age of Italian volunteers turns out to be on average slightly less than 50, which also influences the role held within the organisations; presidents are on average 58 years old, the age is linked to the longer period of apprenticeship. Only 23% of the volunteers are under 35 years old.

Finally, the characterisation of volunteers is also linked to qualifications. About 22.1% of those who have graduated have had volunteering experiences against 6.1% of those who only have an elementary school diploma. Furthermore, volunteering and having a job are two highly correlated conditions, in fact a greater number of volunteers are employed.

Finally, voluntary work is more widespread in the north of the country. The highest total volunteering rate was recorded in the North-East (16%), while the South was characterised by significantly lower levels of participation (8.6%).

The Universal Civic Service

To date, the only state volunteering programme promoted nationally is the Universal Civic Service. The Universal National Civic Service in Italy is a project funded and regularised by the Ministry of the Interior - Civic Service Department. Its origins date back to 1972 when it was first established to replace the compulsory military service for all those who exercised the right to conscientious objection, but it officially became a voluntary service for young people, male and female, in 2001.

The Civic Service is the voluntary choice to dedicate a limited period of one's life to the unarmed and nonviolent defence of the country. In particular, young people aged between 18 and 29 years old have the opportunity of volunteering either for a public service or for an NGO, running activities for the citizens. The projects last from 8 to 12 months, with a monthly allowance of 439.50 Euros, for a total of 25 working hours per week.

The sectors of intervention of the voluntary operators are:

- assistance
- civil protection
- environmental heritage and urban regeneration
- historical, artistic and cultural heritage
- education and cultural & environmental promotion, sustainable and social tourism
- mountain agriculture, social agriculture and biodiversity
- promoting peace between peoples, nonviolence and unarmed defence; promotion and protection of human rights; development cooperation; promotion of Italian culture abroad and support for Italian communities abroad.

The volunteers also participate in a general training programme based on the founding principles of the Civic Service and specific training about the particular features of the project they choose, the overall duration of general and specific training cannot be less than 80 hours.

From 2001 to 2017, the total number of young volunteers who started the Civic Service was **425,739**. During 2017, 43,141 volunteers started the national Civic service (42,342 in Italy and 799 abroad). In particular, 3,356 served in the Lombardy region.

The Universal Civic Service in the Municipality of Cinisello Balsamo

The Municipality of Cinisello Balsamo has a long tradition in the promotion and development of projects for the Universal Civic Service. Initially this possibility was mainly oriented in the form of management of social services and schools. Later, due to two important structural reforms at government level, this possibility was extended in several areas, including Youth Policies. Over the years it has therefore been possible to develop the offer for young people involved in this experience: the Civic service was no longer just a year of volunteering dedicated to supporting a voluntary association or assistance services but it became a period of time committed to the development and growth of young people's skills.

Over time it became clear that for the majority of the volunteers, this experience represented the first real approach to the world of work and the acquisition of **professional skills**. As a result, young people in the field of Youth Policies find the opportunity to experiment in European planning and mobility, as well as in school orientation and support and other projects in which they are protagonists. The volunteers also have the opportunity to directly experience what it means to work in a group, coordinate and plan actions and communicate with the representatives of local institutions. Every young volunteer at the end of the Civic service also receives a specific certification which highlights the skills acquired during the volunteering experience. It is also possible to consider some of the hours of the Civic service as a university internship.

The young volunteers, employed in different departments of the Municipality, participate in various training programmes which represent a good opportunity to meet and share advice on their experience but also to transmit the culture of “active citizenship”, i.e. the importance of their role for the city in which they live and perform the service.

After many years of development, one of the most tangible results in the Youth Policies is to see the **personal growth of young volunteers at an entrepreneurial and associative level and the accomplishment of new opportunities for services and activities dedicated to young people in the city**. For most of them it also represents an opportunity to understand how their municipality works, an institution that might seem very removed from their daily life and routine.

The Municipality of Cinisello Balsamo has hosted Civic Service projects since 2013. To the present day, the applications submitted for the Civic Service within the municipal offices has exceeded the submitted offer by 400%: from 2013 to 2019, the Municipality received a total of 479 applications,



Figure 3 - A volunteer running a workshop activity during a Youth Exchange promoted by the Municipality of Cinisello Balsamo, in May 2015

compared to 113 available places and it hosted 25 volunteers in 2016, 20 volunteers in 2017, 25 in 2018 and 31 in 2019. Most of the applications came from girls (53.5%) compared to boys (46.5%). The age of the hosted volunteers is 18-21 (40%), 22-25 (42%) and 26-30 (18%). 16% of the volunteers have a bachelor’s degree, while 70% of them have a high school diploma.

At the end of the volunteering projects, the Youth Policy Office proposes two different questionnaires to the participants, the first in the period immediately following the service, and the second one after two years. Thanks

to these tools, it is possible to monitor the level of effectiveness of the projects, as well as investigate the degree of satisfaction of the volunteers.

For example, the responses show that all the volunteers would recommend this type of experience to their friends, considering it "positive" or "very positive".

The same data is confirmed by the appreciation that former volunteers give their tutor, a person with whom they can exchange and from whom they learn the practical aspects of the projects.

Two years after the end of the service, 60% of the volunteers had found employment, 30% continued their university career, only 10% are unemployed and 64% had found a job related to the volunteering project carried out at the Municipality of Cinisello Balsamo.

This data confirms that, during the Civic Service experience, volunteers can develop useful competences for their future to find employment in the same field; moreover, it can help understand how employers in the private sector recognise and value these skills.

Another important aspect is career guidance: the volunteers often highlight that the Civic Service year has been useful to understand which job they wanted to do - or not do.

3.3. NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR YOUTH VOLUNTEERING IN LUXEMBURG¹²

Voluntary service allows young people to get involved in a concrete project of general interest. It is an opportunity for learning and orientation through practical experience, which represents a full-time, fixed-term commitment.

For some programs, activities take place in Luxembourg, for others in another country in Europe and even beyond.

Young people aged between 16 and 30 can apply for a voluntary service lasting from 3 to 12 months. Students in higher education are the most likely group to volunteer.

Interested volunteers can contact the **Service National de la Jeunesse** (National Youth Service) for information on how to participate. The SNJ has a **network of 200 partner organizations**, which can accommodate young people wishing to do voluntary work.

Projects are available across the Grand Duchy, Europe, or other cooperating countries. 244 Luxembourgers began a voluntary service in 2018, with 21 Europeans choosing to volunteer in Luxembourg. Although the nature of the work is unpaid, the idea is that it should not cost the volunteer to participate. The SNJ can support volunteers through paying expenses, as well as transport and housing for the duration of the project. The goal is to make volunteering available to anyone between the ages of 16 and 30, regardless of their financial situation

The purpose of voluntary service is to **develop solidarity** among young people, promote **active citizenship**, foster mutual understanding between them, and create a **learning and guidance experience** for them within the framework of a volunteer programme.

It offers young people **under the age of 30**, who have completed their compulsory schooling, informal training experience by enabling them to take part in **public-interest projects** in Luxembourg or abroad, on a **full-time basis**, for a fixed period of time.

In Luxembourg, there are three volunteer service programmes, coordinated by the National Youth Service (Service national de la jeunesse - SNJ): the national volunteer service programme (Luxembourg), the European Solidarity Corps (other European countries) and the Development Volunteer Service (developing countries). Depending on the programme, the activities therefore take place in Luxembourg or abroad.

Who is concerned?

Volunteer service is intended for young people - from the age of 16 - wishing to engage in a public-interest project, on a full-time basis without interruption, for a period of up to 12 months.

Prerequisites

To qualify for a volunteer service programme, the candidate must:

- have **completed their compulsory education**;
- be **less than 30 years old** at the beginning of the volunteer service;
- be legally resident in **Luxembourg**;
- speak one of the country's 3 official languages (Luxembourgish, French or German);
- be **registered** as a volunteer worker with the SNJ.

Note that **age conditions** may vary depending on the programme.

How to proceed - The different volunteer service programmes

The National Volunteer Service programme (*Service volontaire national - SVN*)

Volunteer workers between **16 and 30 years of age** commit to work in:

- a **host organisation in Luxembourg**;

¹²<https://guichet.public.lu/en/citoyens/loisirs-benevolat/milieu-associatif/engagement-benevole/service-volontaire.html> and <https://www.volontaires.lu/>

- for a duration of up to 12 months.

Volunteers can benefit from **professional and personalised support** towards employment and/or obtain an educational qualification. Their tasks consist in providing administrative, cultural, organizational and mobilisation support.

The SVN enables the volunteer worker to give meaning to a stage of their life on a national level, to become a committed citizen and to discover themselves.

The [SNJ](#)'s local youth branches (*Antennes locales pour jeunes - ALJ*) are responsible for the implementation of the SVN.

The Development Volunteer Service (*Service volontaire de coopération - SVC*)

The **SVC** enables young adults to travel to developing countries. This programme was set up in partnership with the Development Cooperation Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.

Volunteers are sent—by **sending organisations that are accredited** as non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) or as volunteer service organisations—to work on a humanitarian project that they are encouraged to find on their own. The [Development NGO Cooperation Circle](#) (*Cercle de Coopération des ONG de développement*) provides them with useful advice.

Interested young people can contact the [National Youth Service](#) or the [NGO](#) Circle to learn more about the Development Volunteer Service programme. They can also get in touch with the sending organisations directly.

Benefits of volunteer status

These various programmes allow applicants to obtain:

- recognition of their volunteer status;
- pocket money and a subsistence allowance;
- family benefits, in the case of minors;
- monthly financial aid from the State, for volunteers over 18 years of age, if they are effectively and continuously resident in Luxembourg and have their legal domicile there;
- discounts (cinema, theatre, etc.);
- registration with the Social Security services;
- free training (pre-departure seminars, language training, workshops, etc.).¹³

¹³ <https://guichet.public.lu/en/citoyens/loisirs-benevolat/milieu-associatif/engagement-benevole/service-volontaire.html> and <https://www.volontaires.lu/>

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE COLLECTION OF BEST PRACTICES METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Launched in 2019, this international study aims to look back at the experience of those who make community commitment a reality every day - current and former volunteers, tutors and representatives of host organisations - and to reveal the impact of these schemes in the development of young people, their host structures and the local and European community as a whole.

68 young Europeans were surveyed, as well as 72 host structures that agreed to take part in our study.

Like many other things, this study has taken on another dimension due to the health crisis that is sweeping through the world. This new context confers a new dimension to our partnership work: highlighting the exceptional spirit of commitment that drives European youth.

This commitment is often experienced as a revelation by young people. Putting oneself at the service of others - especially those more vulnerable than oneself - is a source of personal enrichment and collective recognition. But beyond this concrete and truly useful action to improve the world and shape their personalities, commitment enables these young people to develop skills that are essential for their professional future, both in employment and entrepreneurship.

These measures are a source of wealth for Europe. It is our collective responsibility to defend, develop and promote them.

We thank all those who have taken the time to participate. Your testimonies were necessary and we hope that they will develop into great projects. You are giving us the opportunity to consolidate this school of youth commitment to the European community.

Methodology

The partners of the VOLEM project have developed together a consultation questionnaire open to all former volunteers in their networks, as well as their on-site advisors.

This survey was structured around two main components:

- Administrating the quantitative questionnaires to those involved
- The organisation of interviews in South Gironde to collect qualitative data, aborted twice because of Covid-19. The partner organisations then implemented the qualitative interviews locally: Cinisello Balsamo Municipality interviewed two ex-volunteers (one participant in the SCU Programme and one within the European Solidarity Corps Programme) and two organisations (one NGO and one Municipality); Art Square interviewed 3 ex volunteers and 2 host organisations.

All data has been collected in strict compliance with the privacy policy relating to applicable standards.

These contributions are based on a voluntary approach and therefore cannot claim to be scientifically representative. The choice has been made to account for all of them in such a way as to illustrate trends that we hope will be instructive to the reader.

In this respect, the types of sample that contributed to our survey can be distinguished as follows:

- 68 young Europeans of which: 28 Italians, 23 French, 17 Luxembourgers
- 72 structures of which: 51 in Italy (41 municipalities, 3 NGOs, 12 public libraries and 1 museum), 11 in France, 10 in Luxembourg



Figure 4 - Design thinking workshop in Luxembourg

Quantitative analysis

Profile of volunteer respondents

62% of the volunteers are women. The average age of the respondents is 25, while in France it is 22. In Luxembourg, a large majority (70%) of volunteers are women, aged between 24 and 30, with a master's degree (50%). But if all respondents are included, 69% of the young people have a level below or equivalent to the Baccalaureate exam. This even rises to 74% in France.

86.7% carried out a voluntary mission focusing on people: 39.7% in education, 23.7% in culture, 11.8% supported the local community, 8.8% worked for the environment. For 83.8% of them, the missions lasted at least 6 months.

Almost one in two young people say they volunteered to gain initial experience in a professional field in order to acquire new skills and knowledge. One in three explains their choice by the need to get involved in a cause and help others. The rest admit to having signed up in order to discover new horizons (10%), to meet new people (6%) and to challenge themselves (4%).



The volunteers' main mission is to provide support for specific projects that often involve animating local spaces or services that carry out activities aimed at other young people or the community; to provide support to the internal organisation at different levels, from the logistical and organisational level to direct participation in the design and implementation of specific interventions - but this depends very much on the interests and skills of the individual volunteers.

Michele di Paola, project manager in SpazioGiovani



VOLEM

Profile of the structures

71% of the structures surveyed are public bodies. This information is to be tempered with regard to the French situation where 72% of respondents are voluntary organizations. These offer missions in education, culture and social work to retired people, families and vulnerable groups.

The Italian organisations also offer a wide range of missions in the fields of education, culture and social work.

The target audience of their actions during the volunteering experience were mostly young people in the cultural and education sphere (53,6%). In Luxembourg, the main domains concerned are personal assistance services (35%), education (20%) and culture (15%) for the main target groups: children, young people and the elderly.

The organisations stated that they had decided to take on volunteers in order to:

1. Support the inclusion of young people and take advantage of a youthful perspective on the activities, offer them work experience that is very important for their human development and professional training, to train and possibly hire the volunteer.
2. Have additional human resources available to support their team to implement actions and/or develop new ones, bring new and creative ideas and update the image of the organisation by supporting existing staff, find additional human resources with a new perspective in staff support.



I would say that they bring 40% of their personal skills and we give them that 60%, GIOSEF is naturally a receptacle where volunteers can express their talents and cultivate their passions as well.

Sara Bertolino, Project coordinator in GIOSEF (Italy)



VOLEM

Generally positive impacts of volunteering on young people

The survey shows a high level of satisfaction among young volunteers. 78% of former volunteers would do exactly the same if they had to do the mission again (compared with 3% who were "dissatisfied"). 90% said that the experience met their expectations.

The surveys also show the virtuous nature of volunteering. For example, to the question: *"three words to define your volunteering experience?"* those that stand out the most in all three countries are: "enrichment", "commitment" and "motivation".

Volunteering as an accelerator of acquiring and developing skills

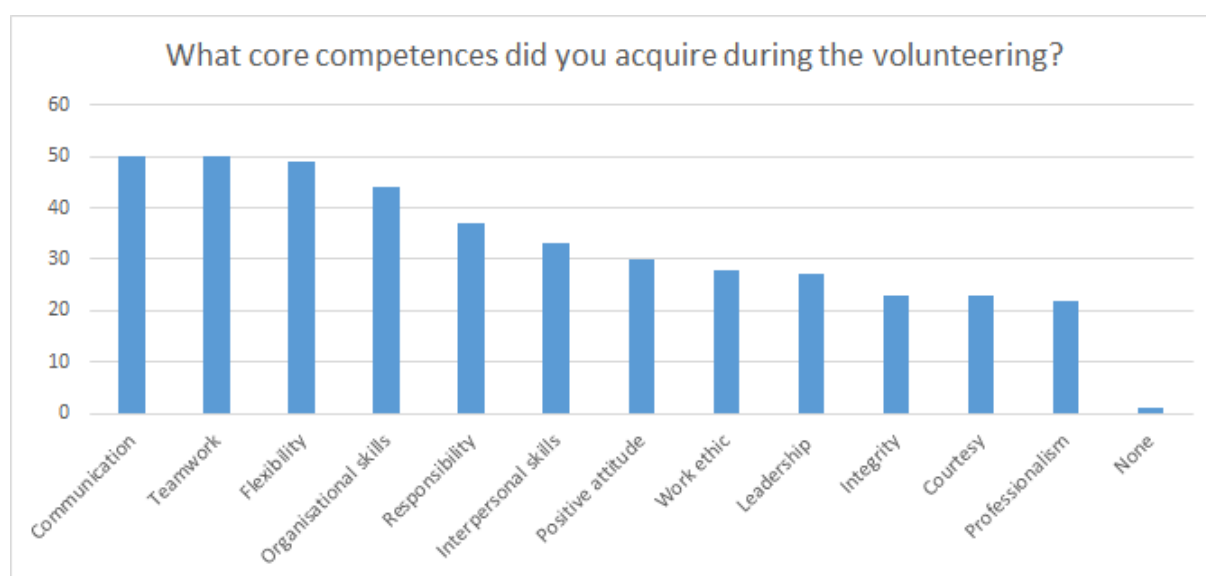
According to the young volunteers

98.5% of responding volunteers admit to having acquired or developed new skills, competences or knowledge during their mission:

- technical skills including managing events, project management, administrative tasks, computing and digital skills...
- soft skills: 74% reported having acquired skills in communication, teamwork, flexibility and organisation (65%).

«
The Civic Service has given me more confidence in my ability to do things. It gave me self-confidence at a time when I was rather indecisive in nature.

Jeanne, volunteer at a coworking space in a rural area



Communication (74%) – oral speaking capability, written, presenting, listening, clear speech & writing.

Teamwork (74%) – cooperative, gets along with others, agreeable, supportive, helpful, collaborative.

Flexibility (72%) – adaptability, willing to change, lifelong learner, accepts new things, adjusts, teachable.

Organisational skills (65%) – physical organisation, time management, teamwork.

Responsibility (54%) – accountable, reliable, gets the job done, resourceful, self-disciplined, wants to do well, conscientious, common sense.

Interpersonal skills (49%) – nice, personable, sense of humour, friendly, nurturing, empathetic, has self-control, patient, sociability, warmth, social skills.

Positive attitude (44%) – optimistic, enthusiastic, encouraging, happy, confident.

Work ethic (41%) – hard working, willing to work, loyal, initiative, self-motivated, on time.

Leadership (40%) – motivation, creativity, communication, positivity, feedback.

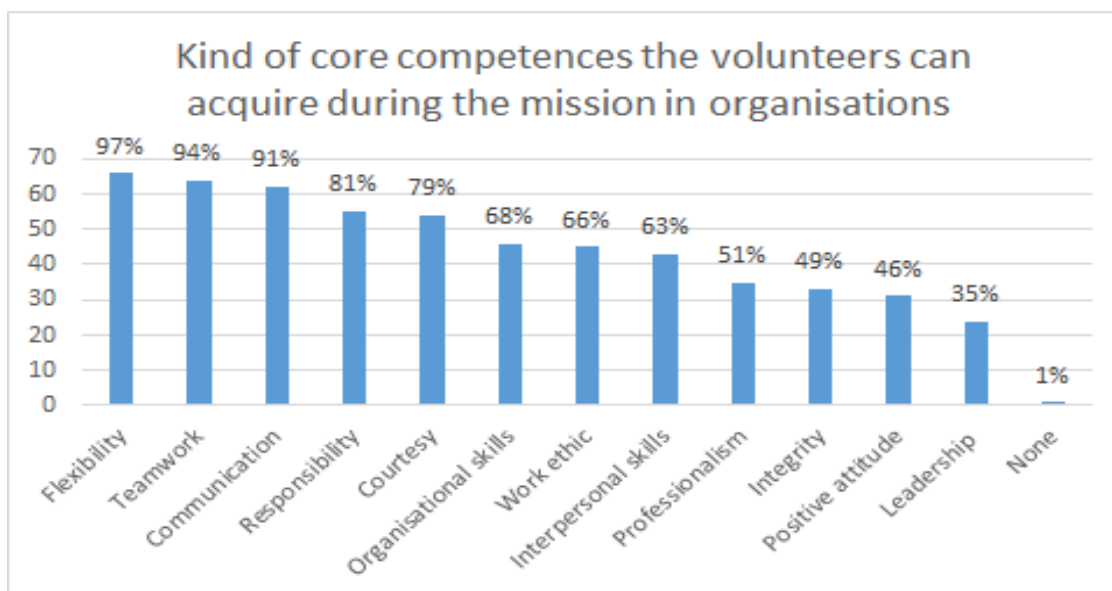
Integrity (34%) – honest, ethical, high morals, has personal values, does what's right.

Courtesy (34%) – manners, etiquette, business etiquette, gracious, says please and thank you, respectful.

Professionalism (32%) – business-like, well-dressed, appearance, poised, attitude towards duties, sense of responsibility.

According to the host organisations

100% of the organisations stated that volunteers who had carried out an assignment in their organisation left with a set of new skills. This discrepancy can be explained by the difficulty some young people have in standing back and evaluating the significant progress they've made, due to the lack of an effective tool for recognising the skills acquired during their mission.



In France, 100% of the host organisations replied that the two main basic skills that volunteers acquire in their organization are communication and teamwork. In Italy, 50 out of 53 organisations replied that the most important skill acquired during the volunteer project is flexibility (ability to adapt, willingness to change, continuous training, acceptance of new things, adjusting, willingness to learn), followed by communication and teamwork. In Luxembourg 100% of the host organisations responded that the main basic skills acquired during volunteering are: communication, flexibility and interpersonal skills.

A rewarding experience to help them fit into the working world

At the time of the study:

- 41% of the respondents have a professional activity and among them: half have a fixed-term contract, 46% have a permanent contract, 4% are freelancers;
- 29% are still looking for a job, of which 1/3 regularly do temping work;
- 26% have resumed vocational training or studies;
- 4% have continued as a volunteer in another commitment scheme.

65% of volunteers say that their current work is partially or fully related to their volunteer mission.

More than a third of the young people have looked for work in the commercial sector. A quarter applied in non-profit organisations, and another quarter in the public sector.



The main benefit for the volunteer is definitely the action of coming into direct contact without filters. We usually have only one volunteer, so they are forced to get in touch with all the colleagues in the office. They bring a fresh approach, new ideas and often social media skills. Being young helps us greatly to talk to our target that is closer to them than us.

Italian volunteer



96% of the host organisations believe that the voluntary activities offered by their organisation will increase the employability of their volunteers. 100% of the young people highlighted their mission on their CV when looking for employment. 79% of the participants have had job interviews since the end of their volunteer experience. 82% of them mentioned their voluntary service during their interviews. 55% of the young people who have had job interviews say that their mission worked in their favour with recruiters. The percentage rises to 86% if we include young people who received mixed assessments from recruiters.

84% of volunteers feel that all or part of the skills acquired during their mission have enabled or will enable them to find a job. 74% of respondents found a job within a year of the end of their mission (63% within 6 months).

« We were given support for positioning advice in favour of employability. This assignment provides experience and legitimacy. From the moment it developed my confidence, I felt good, so it's obviously easier to feel comfortable with work and employers. You know that you are proficient when you leave the Civic Service: the result is that I know how to do something.

Aricie



VOLEM

The recognition by a company and its human resources team of the added value of a voluntary experience is a concrete lever for taking account of voluntary experiences during the recruitment process and when studying an application. It contributes to the process of "standardising" volunteering as equivalent to professional experience, in terms of skills development.

It is therefore a starting point for promoting volunteering as a pathway to employment.

Public commitment to volunteering is also a powerful lever to change the way people look at these experiences, while being easy to implement in business.

Skill-based recruitment increases the chances of professional integration of volunteers. It makes it possible to take into account all kinds of experience and knowledge, from the professional and educational spheres to less formal learning contexts. This approach also enables internal and external mobility for people who do not necessarily have the right qualifications or experience, but the right skills.

Establishing a direct link between voluntary activity and a professional occupation shows first of all that the skills acquired in these two environments are similar and transferable, helping to enhance the value of volunteering. The recruiter and the NGO share common interests: promoting these pathways is a way of attracting new talent and developing the skills required for projects. For volunteers, this demonstrates that their activity can be a real springboard to employment, encouraging long-term commitment.

A tool that promotes human relations and helps future projects to mature.

90% of the young people believe that the skills they have acquired and the people they have met during their voluntary service have helped them to see their future in a different way.

47% of the volunteers began to build a professional network during their volunteering experience (61% of Italians), which is positive but leaves a lot of room for improvement.

In hindsight, the young people speak highly of volunteering as an initial experience in the working world, which promoted social mixing through encounters (colleagues/public) and helped them gain experience while reflecting on their role in society.

The French participants said that their volunteer work gave them the opportunity to gain work experience (60% of them), gave them time to think about their future (52%) and to acquire new skills (48%).



I mostly understood what I don't like to do. I had to organise sporting events which I hope not to do again. The choice of the master was also made on the basis of my experience abroad

French volunteer



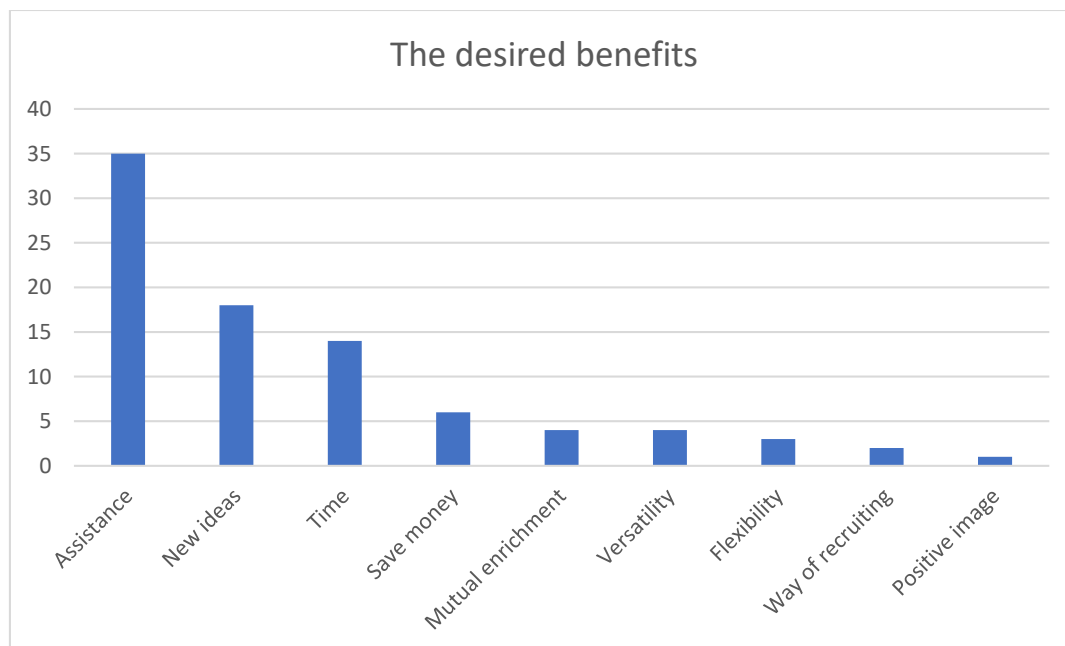
VOLEM

The Italian participants said that their volunteer work gave them the opportunity to gain work experience (64.3% of them), meet new people (53.6%) and stimulate personal development (53.6%).

For the Luxembourgers, the choice of volunteering was mainly related to work (35%), commitment (30%) and social inclusion (20%).

A useful instrument for host organisations

What benefits are the structures looking for?



Young volunteers, vectors of development and visibility of the core activities offered by the hosting structures and vectors of social innovation within these structures.

Generally speaking, the organisations attribute great value to volunteering for the development of "bonus" support activities that really contribute to improving the quality of the services provided, but which could not exist without the support of volunteers. Above all, the organisations praise the dynamic young volunteers' refreshing attitude and different way of looking at things. Depending on the different volunteer profiles and the amount of autonomy they are given, the spirit of initiative of some young people can result in innovative projects and ways of working. In support of this, 72% of the organisations believe that the missions they offer have an innovative social aspect compared to other organisations.

The multifaceted positive impact of volunteering on organisations

In France, it makes it possible to rework the way missions to be carried out are organised and allocated; to develop and bring new skills to permanent teams and to create special relationships in order to recruit new staff more easily (recruitment of former volunteers as employees).

The observation is similar in Italy: it makes it easier to integrate future employees; it improves the efficiency of the general interest missions carried out by those involved on a daily basis; and it develops the quality of the service offer thanks to the skills provided by the volunteer at the beginning of their mission.

In Luxembourg, volunteering has a direct impact on the structures' medium-term projects through the new skills assimilated after taking on a young person. It helps develop communication strategy on social networks and contributes to improving the image of the structures. Finally, by rejuvenating the teams, it helps maintain momentum and support permanent staff.


A useful tool for the local community and society as a whole

Mission links with the local community

According to the volunteers

79% of participants felt connected with the local community during their volunteering work. A very important aspect for the volunteers was being in contact with the local population and maintaining contacts and relationships with the community. They said that being in contact with people also helped them get to know their region better and develop their network. 71% of them even strengthened the relationship with their local community.

It should also be noted that 70% of the volunteers stated that they had been in contact with certain social and/or economic organisations in their area.




I met a lot of people, connected more with the local community, people who are working in the field. They also saw me at different events and saw how I worked. I think that it helps me a lot to find a job later. Of course, I learned languages.

Giulia, ESC volunteer in Nykøbing (DK)

According to the host structures

As the themes of the missions cover mainly education, culture and social work, it is not surprising that the volunteers felt connected with the local community given the diversity of the audiences they were in contact with. Thus, 82% of the participating organisations stated that the volunteer missions they offer are connected with the local community (90% France - 85% Italy - 60% Luxembourg). At the same time, the organisation - and by extension the local area - benefits by welcoming volunteers.



Volunteers bring young and creative energies that stimulate the organisation to experiment; rejuvenation also in the approach to services to citizens; greater organisational well-being thanks to the presence of young people; a greater sense of responsibility of employees; positive effect on the perception of the organisation among citizens; direct feedback from young citizens on the way public affairs operate; help in managing, improving, developing and innovating services to citizens

Massimo Capano, Head of Youth Policy
Department of Cinisello Balsamo
Municipality

Links between missions and development of the local area

The skills learned through volunteer roles are used to better the communities in which the volunteer lives and improve the quality of life within and around the community.

Today, volunteering is a great lever for economic and social development.

The link between local development and volunteering is a concrete reality in many associations that seek to promote locally more solidarity, sustainable development, citizen participation and a circular economy. Young volunteers can be a vector of change at local level by bringing new ideas, facilitating partnerships and implementing new practices at the service of populations in a given area for better social cohesion.

For more than half of the organisations, the proposed voluntary missions are linked to local development of the area by involving young volunteers in local life, proposing contacts and meetings between volunteers and local actors (inhabitants, recipients, businesses, public services, etc.), actions to promote the idea of "living together" to local populations but also by involving other young people and triggering virtuous mechanisms around the image of civic commitment. On the economic side,

they contribute to the reduction of public expenditure thanks to the fact that their work is carried out at a reduced cost. In this respect, a study carried out by Goodwill-management demonstrated that €1 invested by the French State in its commitment scheme brings in €1.92 to the local authority. Generally speaking, each activity in which volunteers participate has and must have an impact on the local area in terms of both efficiency and improvement of services; supporting local activities and also meeting the needs of the local community.¹⁴

Finally, it is essential to underline the impact of commitment on associative volunteering: while ¼ of volunteers were already volunteering before their commitment, 32% of young people who had never volunteered before worked with a non-profit organisation after their volunteering experience!

4.2. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Besides the questionnaire we have also decided to conduct interviews with representatives of hosting organisations and ex-volunteers to better understand their experiences and challenges. Thanks to these interviews we can gain understanding of the organisations' and volunteers' perspective on volunteering and its impact on local development.

Organisations

Volunteers can help increase an organisation's advocacy, awareness, diversity, and marketing (Andrews & Lockett, 2013). Many youth organisations could not exist without volunteers.

Multiple research studies have looked at the value of time spent volunteering. "Many studies use volunteer hours as a proxy for impact; they assume a positive correlation with the hours contributed by volunteers with the impact on the organisation, the clients (recipients), the society and the community, and the volunteers themselves" (HaskiLeventhal et al., 2011, p.139). In addition, volunteers should be viewed as important programme ambassadors. Volunteers can support youth development programmes by making them accessible and welcoming for new participants.

The value of volunteers to our youth development organizations cannot be minimized. It is important to share the organisational benefits of volunteers with stakeholders and decisionmakers. Doing so helps them to understand the value of volunteers and the reason youth organisations need to build staffing and structure to effectively support volunteers.

For the organisations, hosting volunteers is on the one side challenge, which requires preparation, resources but also it helps to be closer to the community, end users and brings new perspective to organizations.

For organizations, hosting a volunteer is also a learning experience, not just for volunteers.

It also helps organisations to keep up to date: a lot of organisations who took part in the research work with young people. Many of them mentioned that hosting young people helps them to understand their users better, bring new perspectives and ideas, but also refresh their way of relating within the team.

But hosting a volunteer is also a challenge for organisations; to plan, involve them in action, explain the rules and provide support in taking initiatives. Sometimes organisations are small, where people know and understand each other well, but a new person in the team needs more explanation and time, which to begin with can also be challenging.

This is why everyone in the team should be informed and prepared for hosting a new person.

Lastly, the volunteering experience is about bringing new people to the team, sharing experiences, supporting employee and organisation development, For the organisations it is also important to be

¹⁴ <https://goodwill-management.com/>

“grounded” and connected with an external world, something which new volunteers definitely provide.

Volunteers

Volunteering is a great opportunity to grow personally and professionally. It connects people regardless of race, sex or religion. It is not only society that benefits from such a social activity, it also allows volunteers to meet new friends, obtain new skills, and even improve their career.

Volunteering certainly has a positive effect on the volunteer, for example, social acknowledgment, better wellbeing and self-regard, building résumés, training and vocation upgrade, monetary advantages and work capacity.¹⁵

Sometimes they use it as a time to figure out what they would like to do in life, sometimes to test themselves, to try a first job and see if this is what they would like to do in life, but sometimes young people use this opportunity to get to know the country or place where they are going to live.

Young people search for volunteering experiences on social media, between friends based on their interests. That’s why it is important for organisations to be visible on social media and easily accessible through different channels. For many volunteers it is a great experience, with ups and downs, which gives them their first experience, sometimes difficult, but usually a great learning process.

Volunteers always say that it was learning by doing, an experience which they appreciate a great deal (sometimes after a certain amount of time, they see how much they have learned)

What is most important is self-development, soft skills. All the volunteers expressed how this experience changed their lives, sometimes it is difficult for them to express exactly what they have learned, but they see that they are different people.

It is really important for career development. A lot of young people during this time discover what they like, what they don’t like, what they would like to do in the future and what not. It’s a great “job laboratory” which can also prepare young people to face the challenges of the job market.

For many volunteers it is also a time to improve, share their experience, learn and demonstrate their competences. Thanks to this experience, they can get themselves noticed and show what they can do, something that also increases their potential employability.

It mainly contributes to learning how to build self-confidence through the multiplicity of tasks, encounters and situations it induces.

It enables young citizens in development to realise that they are capable of things.¹⁶

It is therefore a tool that facilitates and accelerates the revelation of potentials that will be assimilated into society with an increased sensitivity to social and societal issues (due to the increased awareness of belonging to a community), while giving structures working for the general interest the opportunity to improve the quality of their service, creating a virtuous circle for the development of young people's skills and their feeling of belonging to the community, as well as to their host structure, their local area and society as a whole.

As a refugee, I decided to become a volunteer to facilitate my integration in Luxembourg.

Luxembourg volunteer



This commitment allowed me to gain self-confidence and to understand what I could be worth in the professional domain. I was also able to develop my open-mindedness and skills in relation to working in the social environment, which I didn't think I would be able to do.

French volunteer



¹⁵ Study on the Impact of Transnational Volunteering through the European Voluntary Service, April 2017

¹⁶ Capability Approach, A. Sen

CHAPTER 5

GUIDE FOR ORGANISATIONS THAT WISH TO ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

“Voluntary work is not a means of professional integration, but an integrating device”
H. Grimbelle, National secretary of the French education league, France

For 91% of the young people who took part in this survey, their volunteer experience met their expectations. In order to ensure that this percentage continues to increase and to maintain high-quality activities, we are suggesting a few recommendations and good practices to be implemented by the host structures.

These observations are based on the analysis of questionnaires, interviews, our expertise and that of those involved in the commitment.¹⁷

1. Improve the on-boarding process and set up a system based on inclusion

To make access to volunteering as easy as possible it can be crucial to involve young people. A limited access to information (including on future employment prospects), lack of funds, poor pre-departure preparation can represent obstacles for volunteering. Some tips to make the organisation more inclusive¹⁸:

- Clarify the aim of the organisation from the start, so young people can feel involved as an important resource to fulfil a mission, by sharing the same vision;
- Use ‘youth-friendly’ tools and channels (such as social media) for raising awareness;
- Empower and train frontline youth workers;
- Create new and use existing peer-to-peer networks to raise awareness (e.g. to set up appointments of volunteering ambassadors)
- If possible, even a modest economic recognition can support the inclusion of young people

2. Do not substitute a contract of commitment for a job

The golden rule is complementarity. Respecting the young person's status as a volunteer is a prerequisite for their development within the structure. This is why it is recommended to involve a volunteer as back-up in a support activity or an innovative/experimental project. An organisation must be able to function normally without the need for a volunteer.

3. Allow the young person to take initiatives.

It is worth remembering that the first factor in breaking commitment is boredom. Alongside the above example, volunteers are sometimes frustrated at not being able to put their energy and desire for commitment and usefulness into practice. It is crucial to create a safe space (and relationships based on trust) where the volunteer feels at ease taking responsibilities, even

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Before starting I had expectations, I would have liked to work on European projects, learn about design and travel. Expectations that have been confirmed! I found it very interesting to train with unconventional tools such as those of the non-formal method. 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. For 80% I did things that I did not expect to do and that I was very happy to learn.

Luca, 26, volunteer in the Municipality of Cinisello Balsamo (IT)



VOLEM

«

I found a team where I wasn't told what to do, follow your instincts, do what you think is right. This helped me a lot to be more independent in the world of work and also helped me work better as part of a team. Managing my own time was important, also for organising events, having deadlines to follow then helped me make decisions later and organise myself better.

Giulia, ESC volunteer in Nykøbing (DK)



VOLEM

¹⁷ <https://www.skillpass-game.com/>

¹⁸ Study on the Impact of Transnational Volunteering through the European Voluntary Service, April 2017

with the risk of making mistakes, always with the support from the youth worker/staff of the organisation;

4. Ensuring the material conditions in which each mission is carried out.

For instance, for running workshops based on non-formal education in High Schools, what can be useful is a proper space (outdoor or indoor), flipchart paper, markers, pens, post-its, notebooks, a projector; also a car can be useful to run activities especially in rural areas, where public transport is not available.

A consolidated factsheet can assist volunteers by giving their arguments a strong background.

5. Improve the volunteers' capacity to develop a network.

As the survey reveals, the missions of a large half of the young people involved did not give them the opportunity to create professional contacts. It could be interesting, for instance, to develop some partnerships with schools and/or social centres to keep regular contact about the learning activities. Partnerships with other associations in the neighbourhood can be developed in order to increase the chance for the volunteers to find a job during/after the volunteering activities.



With the other volunteers the training is not a marked appointment, but it is more like a "learning by doing" process, we also offer them the opportunity to participate in courses we usually organise for the community or in schools. We also encourage the volunteers to build a professional network, it is easier with the structured volunteers (civic service) because they already work for four different organisations.

Sara Bertolino, Project coordinator in GIOSEF Torino (IT)

6. Make the volunteer a part of your team

Most of the volunteers highlighted in the survey that the most important aspect of the volunteering experience was being part of the team and developing teamwork skills.

Teambuilding should be encouraged in order to foster peer-to-peer learning and keep motivation high. The positive accompaniment of the volunteer by all the members of their structure is at the heart of the hosting project. Volunteering is a time of transmission between each young volunteer and their tutor, but also by the other members of the team including employees, volunteers and trainees. In a caring environment, volunteers open up to others, discover and progress more quickly in their mission, their career path and their vision of their community. We can only advise you to consider young people as people you trust. Don't hesitate to tell them: for some, this will be a first! And to value them on a daily basis: personal qualities, work force, accomplishments... The all the staff of the structure must take ownership of the hosting project: to understand what a volunteer is, but also what a volunteer is not, in order to encourage their commitment throughout their stay in the hosting structure.

7. Maximize the local community impact

The impact on the local community should be planned as an integrative part of the project, by matching the different needs. In order to maximize it, the host organisation should¹⁹:

- Facilitate support for direct interaction between volunteers and locals;
- Facilitate the recognition of the volunteers' work by the players in the local community;
- Allow the volunteers to take inspiration from the community in order to propose new activities.

Accompany the volunteers on a daily basis

Accompaniment is at the heart of the hosting project, from taking them on-board until the end of the experience, and it defines a quality system in volunteering.

¹⁹ Study on the Impact of Transnational Volunteering through the European Voluntary Service April 2017

On one side, it means supporting the volunteer in the accomplishment of their duty. It can include training sessions with experts on specific topics, professional counsellors and contacts that can provide technical advice on teaching methods and who are a reference person for socially and/or mentally taxing situations.

On the other side, it means mentoring and tutoring them throughout the learning process:

- By validating the competences acquired;
- By being sure that young people are developing the competences they will need in the future;
- By being sure they keep up to date their knowledge about competencies and skills needed on the job market;
- By assisting in the formulation of skills to promote recognition of volunteer work by recruiters. 92% of the organisations declare that they support their volunteers in the recognition and validation of the skills acquired during their volunteering project (only 50% of young people in Luxembourg have their skills recognized by recruiters).

In the case of volunteering abroad, the mentor should also be able to:

- implement follow-up processes for ensuring re-integration of the volunteer in the 'home' community;
- implement pre- and post-mobility training for volunteers.²⁰

A good practice is to involve a youth worker in the process, or to give the opportunity to the tutors to develop proper competences in the field of youth work.



It makes sense to have a welcome phase to prepare well, an observation/acceptance phase, going step by step towards autonomy, to help her acquire the basics for 4-5 months so that she can then develop more independently for the rest of the mission.

Italian volunteer

²⁰ Study on the Impact of Transnational Volunteering through the European Voluntary Service
April 2017

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISION MAKERS

RECOMMENDATION 1 Decision-makers should support unemployed people that want to volunteer.

RECOMMENDATION 2 Decision makers should promote tools and methods to help volunteers raise awareness on their skills.

RECOMMENDATION 3 Decision-makers should promote non-formal and informal learning contexts of volunteering, contexts throughout awareness-raising campaigns.

RECOMMENDATION 4 Decision-makers should keep in mind and support that volunteering means that people are volunteers. The public authorities must promote the fact that volunteers are not expected to be, nor are they replacing, employees.

RECOMMENDATION 5 Decision-makers should support volunteering and involving volunteers in their actions and thus, they should approach hosting organizations for support in this matter.

RECOMMENDATION 6 Decision-makers should promote that financial benefits should not be sought from the employment of volunteers.

RECOMMENDATION 7 Decision-makers should support and encourage people to be concerned and responsible about their community issues, encourage the spirit of society with a view to territorial cohesion.

RECOMMENDATION 8 It is important that the decision-makers promote associating of structures employing volunteers in the development of public policies.

CONCLUSION

Voluntary work is not a means of professional integration, but an integrating device. It mainly contributes to learning how to build self-confidence through the multiplicity of tasks, encounters and situations it induces.

It enables young citizens in development to realize that they are capable of things. It powerfully develops *capabilities*.

It is therefore a tool that facilitates and accelerates the revelation of potentials that will be assimilated into society with an increased sensitivity to social and societal issues (due to the increased awareness of belonging to a community), while giving structures working for the general interest the opportunity to improve the quality of their service, creating a virtuous circle for the development of young people's skills and their feeling of belonging to the community, as well as to their host structure, their local area and society as a whole.

And how can we fail to add that volunteering has taken on even greater significance in recent months, at a time when Europe and the world are going through an unprecedented crisis. Indeed, the community of Commitment - volunteers, tutors, and reception structures - has been strongly mobilised. Young people in particular have expressed their desire to be useful, to help the most vulnerable, even though they have had to suspend or modify their mission, in accordance with the various government orders requiring citizens to remain confined. This only confirms the immense resource that is Commitment. This indispensable link between the young's desire for commitment, the unalterable needs of society regarding socio-cultural and environmental issues, and the local economic fabric at the basis of our lives.

If you are still curious about hosting volunteers or bringing them to our organisations, please check our website <https://www.volem-project.eu/> and stay tuned. Also if you are thinking about volunteering but you are not sure that is for you, please check... Here we have tried to analyse and understand better the challenges for organisations and volunteers and what we can do better to increase recognition of young people's competences and employability. We strongly believe that for youth it is one of the best ways to acquire new competences and skills.

Moreover, we are not the only ones: at the end of 2020, France, through its agency, launched a vast programme for the recognition of skills acquired during volunteer missions, accompanied by an unprecedented plan for young people, resulting in particular in massive support for the Civic Service system.

The objective of the IO2 will be specifically to design a toolkit to raise awareness on the added value of youth volunteering in the context of local development, highlighting in particular the development of practical skills. This awareness raising and promotion toolkit will be targeted initially at young people, in order to engage them in volunteering and at the same time at local authorities or local development organisations to inspire and stimulate them to offer volunteering opportunities.

ANNEX

	France	Italy	Luxembourg
Programme name	Many volunteer programmes but focusing on Civic Service : - Civic Service commitment (CS) - European Solidarity Corps - International solidarity volunteering - international business and administrative volunteering - Associative volunteering	Servizio Civile Universale	Service Volontaire - 2 programmes: - Service Volontaire National ; - Service Volontaire de Coopération
Ministries involved	Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Ministry of the Interior	Ministry of Education, Children and Youth
Date of creation	2010	2001	2007
Places	In France or abroad	Italy	Luxembourg
Duration Civic Service (CS)	6-12 months 35hrs/week (at least 24hrs)	8-12 months 25hrs/week	3-12 months 35hrs/week
Target group (CS)	Aged 16-25 Aged 16-30 for young people with disabilities	Aged 18-29	Aged 16-30
Host organisations (CS)	Associations, NGOs, national or local public institutions Since 2017, certain forms of private companies approved by the state (solidarity enterprises of social utility)	Associations, NGOs, public administrations	Associations, NGOs
Training programme (CS)	First week of integration 3 days training about citizenship and first aid Tutor in host organisation	80 hours	Different kinds of seminars Tutor in host organisation + follow up and evaluation from SNJ National system of certification of volunteering experiences

Monthly remuneration (CS)	580.62 EUR up to 688.30 EUR	439.50 EUR	684 EUR
Social security coverage (CS)	yes	yes	yes

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<https://www.volem-project.eu/>

direction@cap-solidaire.org

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