



*I'VE – I Have Experienced.
Recognition and Validation of
volunteering through peer support
and open source tools*

*Strategic Partnership
Erasmus + Youth*

Youth work, Volunteering, Recognition and Employability

Defining and recognizing competences



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Tomi Kiilakoski

Finnish Youth Research Network

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Lunaria (Italy)

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Movement SFERA (Russia)

Alternative-V (Ukraine)

Allianssi (Finland)

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To contact the project coordinator:

Mr Marcello Mariuzzo, mariuzzo@lunaria.org

Lunaria

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1 Introduction

The U.S. actor Jack Nicholson, who is quoted to have said, '*The minute you're not learning, I believe you're dead*', has made a profound statement on learning. We learn in myriad situations, and as living organisms we adapt to our surroundings; we are able to negotiate our relations to ourselves, to other people, to the environment and to societal structures. Learning is inherent in our human condition.

Mr Nicholson's statement implies that there is an *existential sense of learning*: we learn constantly, and it is an integral part of human life and identity to be able to learn. Learning is deeply rooted in our everyday practices. In this wide sense, just as Mr Nicholson is emphasising in comparing learning to being alive, 'participation in everyday life may be thought of as a process of changing understanding in practice, that is, as learning' (Lave 2010, 201). Sometimes the learning that takes place is recognised by other people or institutions; sometimes it is not.

Sometimes, however, learning is thought to take place only in schools, universities and other institutions designed especially for the purposes of learning. The *institutional sense of learning* (Jarvis 2011) emphasises that the most important learning environments are those located inside the formal educational system. Formal learning usually takes place in schools. It is structured and hierarchical, it is most commonly prearranged, it is led by teachers and curricula, it is sequential and it is evaluated; a formal certificate is usually provided. From the learner's point of view, the motivation to participate may be extrinsic, meaning that the reason to participate is not based on voluntary decisions or interest (Eshach 2006). This should not be seen as a critique of formal education. On the contrary, the availability of universal and free education evens the differences in development among different levels of society, ensures that individuals are able to learn necessary skills to cope in society and that they are able to enjoy the benefits of personally enriching learning (Cote 2014, 93).

From the point of view of lifelong learning, the problem is not about the nature of formal education *per se*; the problem is the difficulty in recognising the learning that takes place in all fields of society.

In a society that is highly mobile, where the labour markets are becoming unsteady and competences and skills have to be transferred, the recognition and validation of those skills and competences that one has already acquired are becoming key issues. The idea is to describe the total scope of knowledge and experience held by each member of society, no matter where the learning took place. For an individual, it is a question of respecting the full range of skills and competences he or she already has. For an employer, the management of human resources will be easier. And for a society, this allows for avoiding wasting resources and fully utilising the existing experience and knowledge (Colardyn & Bjornevold 2004). There are thus several reasons for recognising prior learning and trying to validate the skills or competences that people have acquired.

This paper examines what kinds of competences emerge from taking part in international voluntary service, and analyses how they are currently recognised and validated in countries that take part in the 'I'VE' project. The paper will begin with theoretical insights into the concept of competences and the recognition of prior learning in non-formal education. The second part is an analysis of current practices in the Europe and elsewhere in the world.

1.1. Competences

Compared to other pedagogical concepts, such as education, learning, teaching, knowledge, skills or attitudes, the concept of *competences* can be seen as a newcomer in the conceptual history of education. The term is thought to have gained popularity in the early 1970s, when David McClelland from Harvard University suggested using the term *competency*. His intention was to challenge the traditional criteria of assessment, such as intelligence tests. Since his work, the term itself has been debated and re-formulated from the perspectives of different fields of science and policy-making (Hsieh, Lin & Lee 2012). The concept of competences has been formulated in diverse ways. It may be impossible to create a definition that would reconcile all the different ways in which the term is used. The term *competency* may be categorised into conceptual, procedural and performance competences; heuristic, epistemological and actualised competences; or, for example, general problem-solving competences, critical thinking skills and social competences (Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist & Stringfellow 2005). Given the broad nature of the concept of competences, one has to explicate what is actually meant by using the concept.

The concept of competency can relate to those personal characteristics that influence performance. Competency also refers to performing the tasks at hand according to a certain criterion or standard. According to Hsieh et al., a widely accepted definition of competences states that competency is:

a cluster of related knowledge, skills, and attitudes that affects a major part of one's job (or a role or responsibility), that correlates with performance on the job, that can be measured against well-accepted standards, and that can be improved via training and development (Hsieh et al. 2012, pp. 28-29). This definition states that competences combine knowledge, attitudes and skills. This means that competences cannot be evaluated by looking at atomised or individual characteristics. The concept of competency offers a more holistic approach compared to other ways of evaluating a person's performance. In addition, the definition emphasises the measurability of the competences. It also provides a pedagogical perspective—competences can (and usually will) increase with the learning opportunities one has.

The above-mentioned way of seeing competences as a cluster of knowledge, skills and attitudes can be termed the KSA framework of competency, (short for *knowledge, skills* and *attitudes*). The *knowledge* portion of the framework relates to the cognitive domain that an individual possesses, and it relates to relevant information. The set of *skills* a person has relates to his or her ability to act; it can be considered part of the physical domain. *Attitudes* relate to the qualitative aspects that people have, as well as their personal characteristics or traits. These three factors will influence how well one is able to perform a job or an activity (Tripahti & Agrawal 2014). It is clear that all of these dimensions are learnt within the formal learning system, as well as in various other learning environments.

The KSA framework is used in the European Union's 'Youth Pass' programme's definition of competences (and the key competences of lifelong learning upon which the definition is based). The Youth Pass is a way of recognising non-formal learning developed by the European Union. The programme also sees competency as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Contrary to human resource management perspectives, they also emphasise that competences contribute not only to employability, but also to active citizenship, personal fulfillment and social inclusion (Youth Pass n.d.). This is an important point to make: the discourse on competences transfers easily to questions of performing in a job (as indicated by the definitions quoted above). There are other important spheres of life that cannot be ignored, however, when evaluating the perennial educational question: What kind of knowledge is of most worth? (Pinar 2012).

Using the competency definition, this question can be translated as, 'What set of knowledge, skills and attitudes is of most worth?' For example, referring to the social philosophy of Axel Honneth, one can differentiate various social spheres, all of which require different competences. On the first level is personal and family life, where one needs emotional support. Primary relationships such as friendship and love are autonomous, and create the basis for self-confidence. The level of civil society means that as citizens we are all able to have the same rights and will be treated equally. The level of the community of value (such as a village, town, a state or the European Union) refers to the socially shared world. Working and acting as a citizen will serve as a basis of self-esteem. All of these spheres require different sets of social relations, and different ways of relating to other persons and institutions; they all require different aspects of recognising one's value and agency (Honneth 2005). This brief excursion into social theory is used

as a way of noting that although the perspective of employability is not sufficient to analyse young people as citizens and as persons, the perspective of employability is certainly an important one in becoming a subject in a society.

1.2. Non-formal learning

The idea of competences as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes involves the idea that competences cannot be gathered from inside the formal educational system alone. The simple fact that much of our knowledge and attitudes derive from our interactions with everyday environments and practices means that a combination of these elements is based on a totality of our meaningful learning experiences. Certainly, while some of the most meaningful ingredients of any competency are learnt inside conventional education—in schools and universities—the perspectives of life-long and life-wide learning all point to the fact that many important learning experiences occur outside schools: in the work-place, in one's hobbies, in daily life, etc.

A perspective of life-long learning means putting an emphasis on the whole, vast, and seemingly unbounded amount of learning one has attained during one's life. This means that *the educational process will no longer be confined to schools and book-learning and concerned with merely intellectual faculties. It will embrace the totality of human life, experience and activity* (Quane 2011, 304). Taking into account the full scope of learning means that different environments are all seen as *learning environments*: spaces where humans interact with each other, learn new things, develop skills, practice criticism, engage in shared practices and are able to put their individual properties together to achieve common goals.

Different conceptual efforts have been made to describe the learning that takes place outside the formal learning system. These efforts usually aim to conceptually separate the learning place inside the formal system from the learning place outside that system. As such, some form of definition by negation is generally used. The very term *non-formal learning* distinguishes the learning that takes place outside the formal system. One way of defining non-formal learning sees it as a type of learning that takes place at home, at work or in the community. It is organised, but it generally does not lead to a certificate, degree or diploma (Peters 2011, 226). These types of definitions emphasise that non-formal learning does not happen accidentally, and that there is an organised environment where the learning takes place. Other definitions might add that while learning is organised or planned, the process is highly adaptable. From the learner's perspective, the motivation is thought to differ from formal learning: while taking part in an activity is intrinsic

in non-formal learning (the learner takes part voluntarily, and the motivation to participate springs from within the person), in formal learning the motivation (i.e. to get a diploma) is extrinsic (Eshach 2006). What these definitions share is that the hierarchies, structures and forms of learning are less stable in non-formal learning, and usually change during the process. Predicting the exact outcomes of non-formal learning therefore is difficult, because the aim of the activity is not to produce a certain type of learning.

The planned (but adaptable) nature of non-formal learning is sometimes seen as an efficient way of promoting active citizenship. Institutions often emphasise existing social roles and expect the participants to fit into the status quo. The social roles, expectations and power structures are usually rather stable. In contrast, non-formal learning is seen as a more emancipatory form of learning; one that is better capable of emphasising criticism towards society and the world beyond (Zepke & Leach 2006). For this reason, non-formal learning is seen as an efficient way of promoting active citizenship. Lasse Siurala, a distinguished scholar of youth policy, summarises:

A specificity of non-formal learning is that it is an efficient way to develop social, political and moral identities and competences, and to empower (young people) to take action, in short, to promote active citizenship. (Siurala 2012, 108.)

The perspective of active citizenship has been important in European lifelong learning policy. Citizens should be able to face the challenges of knowledge-based societies and economies. While the connections of active citizenship and employability are not always explicit, the aim is to provide European citizens with capabilities of actualising their potentiality as critical citizens, and also to help them to find jobs or pursue entrepreneurial activities (Jarvis 2011, 275-279). In order to achieve this, a network of non-formal and formal learning is needed.

1.3. Learning in youth work

Youth work is usually thought of as a typical form of non-formal learning: the processes and the learning environment are usually organised according to professional principles, learning outcomes are not evaluated using top-down methods and the young people engage in the process on a voluntary basis (Kiilakoski & Kivijärvi 2015). The learning outcomes are not clear. The educational aims of youth work are broad rather than specific; they are grounded in responses to the needs, cultures and interests of young people rather than being pre-set; the emphasis is on the process instead of the learning outcomes (Ord 2014). Youth work can be seen as an alternative to the education that takes place at home and in schools. Because of the open-ended nature of such work, the outcomes are to some extent unpredictable. Youth work is not about producing learning results; it is more about providing an environment where different young people are able to engage in groups and are able to communicate and share ideas.

International voluntary services can be seen as examples of youth work. One important necessary condition of youth work is voluntary participation in the process, activity or session by the young people themselves (Ord 2007). This is one of the most important elements in youth work. Voluntary participation is among the factors that define any form of non-formal learning. When young people take part because they have deliberately decided to do so, their motivation to engage in activities that lead to learning is intrinsic. Voluntary participation is an important principle of youth work. It also means that the activities themselves have to feel meaningful and important for the young people. It is not about disciplinary power; rather, it is about cooperation and working (and even playing) together.

Other features of youth work that are relevant in the context of international voluntary services can be classified as follows. First, youth work is an age-specific activity. The needs, cultures and living conditions of young people are respected. These conditions are met by providing opportunities to engage in peer groups, to have fun and be active, and to mature as a person and as a citizen. Second, the value of peer relations in learning is recognised. Third, as the youth work theorist Josephine Brew has noted (cited in Müller 2006, 21), youth work combines recreation, social fellowship and education. The educative aspect is one of the core elements of

youth work. The idea is to help young people to become independent and able to lead good lives worth living. Finally, youth work recognises the impact of youth cultures on young people as an important aspect of contemporary society; it develops methods through which young people can engage in cultural activities and, if necessary, they can question cultural norms and expectations (Kiilakoski 2015).

Based on the above factors, the implications for youth work as a learning environment can be analysed. The learning process in youth work tends to be open-ended. That is, there are no pre-set goals one should achieve when taking part in youth work. The *process* itself is more important than the end result. In fact, it can be said that the most important part of youth work is precisely the process: engaging in activities is likely to produce beneficial results. The results are more likely to *emerge* in the process. They are not produced. In addition, the impact of peer relations is quite important in the process; most of the processes are done *together*. Taking part in activities means learning by doing. The impact of *peer relations* has always been important to youth work; many methods that in use aim to enable youth to work together as a group and to learn from each other (Nieminen 2014). In most of the processes, *participation of the young* is seen as both the goal of the work and as a method to be used. If young people are able to participate—to have an impact on what and how things are done—the process is likely to be more youth-oriented, and therefore will more likely be acceptable to the young people themselves.

The learning of competences in youth work settings is also based on these features. The projects are pre-planned and do not happen randomly. Their nature is open-ended, however, and will likely be affected by the motivations, wishes, ideas and interactions of the participants themselves. The exact competences that participants will learn is therefore difficult to predict. If the process is based on imaginative and lived experience (Pinar 2012) as an individual and as a member of the group, the exact outcomes will be hard to calculate. Therefore, any recognition of competences in youth work will require respecting the multiplicity of possible experiences, and thus all the directions an individual's learning may take during the process.

1.4. Recognising and evaluating competences

Non-formal learning is not usually formally evaluated nor credited. It does not follow curricula. In the past it has r led to certification of learning experiences. As the importance of non-formal learning has been recognised throughout Europe, however, the need to spell out the learning that is actually taking place in activities in workplace- or community-based settings has increased. The practice of ‘recognition of prior learning’ (RPL) has meant that non-formal learning can also lead to qualifications and other forms of recognition (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] Guidelines 2012). This also means that the connections between different arenas of learning are becoming more intense. One could say that non-formal learning is becoming more formal than before: the formal qualifications, certificates and evaluations have traditionally been features of non-formal learning.

The process of recognising the learning that has taken place means, according to the UNESCO definition, *‘granting official status to learning outcomes and/or competences, which can lead to the acknowledgement of their value of society’* (UNESCO Guidelines 2012, 8). Recognising this type of learning means that the status of non-formal learning increases, and it becomes recognised as a relevant learning environment.

Validation is a more formal process. The UNESCO definition states that it is *‘the confirmation by an officially approved body that learning outcomes or competences acquired by an individual have been assessed against reference points or standards through pre-defined assessment methodologies’* (UNESCO Guidelines 2012, 8). According to this conception of validation, the existence of defined standards against which to judge individual’s competences is necessary. The existence of an official body that is in a legitimate position is also necessary. This of course means that the organisations themselves are not able to validate the competences. They may, however, be responsible for evaluating and recognising them.

As is clear from above, what we are currently witnessing is the convergence of formal and non-formal learning. Taking evaluation and recognition as inherent features of non-formal learning means adapting the procedures of the formal learning system. Validation also means that learning

becomes evaluated according to the principles of the formal learning system. This is an example of the current trend in Europe, where different processes will likely lead to the blurring of the borders between the formal and the non-formal. The Finnish researchers Hannu Heikkinen, Hannu Jokinen and Päivi Tynjälä (2013, 6) have estimated that *'as a joint consequence of these interconnected and parallel processes, formal, informal and non-formal types of learning are verging on each other'*. They talk about the dialectics of learning, where the different learning systems are not as distant from each other than before, and are in fact moving towards one another.

As the UNESCO definitions quoted above make clear, there is a trend in educational policy that emphasises making the learning that takes place in different fields of human activity visible; this means that certification of non-formal learning is becoming more common. Recognising prior learning may require explicit learning situations and the need to give diplomas; it may also prepare learners for skill demonstrations. All of these factors will spell out the concrete skills, knowledge and competences people will gain. The formal learning system, however, is currently adapting to the new requirements of mobile societies, as well. When formal education offers learning situations where learners are able to activate their pre-conceptions, experiences and knowledge, the learning processes become a link between people's background experiences and the demands set by the curricula. New ideas, such as work-based learning, place-based education or the use of social media, all contribute to re-organising pedagogical practices inside formal institutions. Placing emphasis on the recognition of prior learning and portfolios also means that the content of formal learning takes into account both informal and non-formal learning. From the viewpoint of formal education, this means informalisation, while from the viewpoint of non-formal learning this means formalisation. Together the simultaneous processes of formalisation and informalisation mean that the landscape of education is becoming more blurred and convergent.

2 Competences in international voluntary service

The desk research phase of the I'VE project aims to conduct preparatory research on clarifying the competences gained in participating in international voluntary service, both on the national and international level, and also what types of methods for recognising and evaluating the competences are currently used. The aims are to collect the *definitions of the main competences of volunteers in the different countries and at the EU level*, to identify the best practices in recognising and validating competences in volunteering in Europe, to analyse *points of improvement* and to identify the *stakeholders involved*. The analysis was done by Dr. Tomi Kiilakoski, from the Finnish Youth Research Network. The partners involved in the process were asked to provide information on how competences are recognised, validated or evaluated in their countries, as well as other countries they might have knowledge of. The following dimensions were emphasised:

- *Conceptual definitions* (if available): what is meant by competences? If another concept is used, please define it as well;
- *Competences evaluated*: what kinds of competences are evaluated? *The means of recognising competences*: what tools are used to evaluate competences?
- *The time needed to evaluate competences*;
- *Stakeholders*: institutions / non-governmental organisations (NGOs) / governmental agencies / people who are responsible for evaluating competences;
- *Experienced points of improvement*: documented and /or experienced difficulties and challenges;
- *Participation of volunteers*: how is the participation of volunteers ensured in the process?
- *Future plans*: if there are plans to improve the process, the nature of the plans should be clarified.

All of the partners replied to the I've organisers. This means that answers were given from the viewpoints of Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, Italy, Mexico, Russia, Serbia, South Korea, Spain and Turkey. The EU-level documents were also analysed; special emphasis was put on the competences gained in international voluntary services, rather than on competences in general.

Analysing the answers provided made it clear that the recognition of competences is clearly dependent upon the longer history of educational policy in the participating countries. The answers were dependent on the evaluative culture of countries analysed. To mention one example, in Finland only user feedback surveys were used to evaluate the work camps, and no particular effort was made to spell out the competences. This is clearly connected to the existing evaluation culture of Finland. There are no national exams, and the national curriculum gives only a general framework for education. In addition, the evaluative culture of non-formal learning has been relatively loose. There are no national guidelines on how to measure the quality of non-formal learning. Given this background, it is not surprising that the efforts to recognise, let alone validate, competences were not given. Of course, the same types of situation exist in the Czech Republic and in Turkey, which both represent different traditions in educational policy (Sahlberg 2011). Perhaps one can interpret this by saying that there are differences in the willingness of different countries to evaluate the non-formal sector of education.

There were no common definitions of competences to be found. Some answers were clearly influenced by the Europass or European Union definition of key competences for lifelong learning; these countries provided the answers according to the theoretical framework set by these definitions. Some papers had a different conception of competences, and were influenced by the national development instead of by the European level development. For example, the South Korean answer was influenced by an ongoing scientific study conducted by Myongji University and the University of Illinois. The Spanish answer was based on the Spanish legislation's recognition of professional competences. This background makes it evident that the classifications and definitions of competences were quite varied. There is no overall, shared framework of competences to be found in the answers. In practical terms, this means that when analysing and evaluating the competences that are gained in international voluntary service, a common framework is needed.

Given the differences in defining competences and the existing legislation in some countries, it is probably not possible to come up with a definition that would satisfy every partner. For the design of evaluative tools, this means asking if the model should be *generic* (so that it would offer only a framework to be applied differently in different situations, according to

common principles) or *customised* (i.e. the model could be applied to all contexts in a similar manner regardless of the cultural, ethnic, social or historical context of the participants).

2.1 Competences and their definitions

All the papers emphasised the importance of knowledge and skills, while the role of attitudes in competences was left open. Not all of the papers mentioned that dimension of competences. Some papers relied on the narrow conception of competences, which referred to knowledge and skills only. They were seen from the perspective of coping in the activities required for taking part in international voluntary service.

[The] word ‘competences’ is used in terms of knowledge and skills required from volunteers to allow them to carry out specific tasks.

Some papers had a wider sense of competences. One respondent was particularly critical about viewing competences only from the perspective of employability. It emphasised the importance of civic competences as well. The broadest definition emphasised the wide nature of competences, and thought that competences referred to all of the situations in life that the individual may meet:

Competences are the result from the mobilization of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values as well as their skills and experiences that makes an individual in a specific context, to solve a problem or situation that presents itself in different arenas of their life.

In analysing and categorising competences, a wide definition was used. Competences were taken to refer to the skills, attitudes and knowledge. In essence, a KSA model described in chapter I.1. was used to analyse the answers. Some of the country reports emphasised validating employment competences. This perspective, however, can be seen as being limited to a social situation where the European youth policy aims at increasing mobility, employability and active citizenship. *Personal* and *social or civic* competences were also analysed. Referring back to Honneth’s social theory (2005), the ability to act as a member of society requires, in the private sphere, having a role and capabilities in one’s primary relationships (love, friendship); in the political sphere to have

a role as a citizen (state politics and civil society); and at the level of the economy to have a role as a worker or an entrepreneur. These different spheres require different abilities and competences. On a more practical level, some of the country reports also emphasised citizenship competences. Youth Pass recognises these three distinct spheres of competences, as well.

Each report provided a unique list of competences. They were also categorised differently. For example, the Russian case used the threefold category of leadership, social and professional competences, and the South Korean case used a two-fold category of personal development and global competences. Some classifications were based on the demands of the labour market.

Some of the reports provided an additional list of specific skills. Some provided subcategories of frames of analysis as well. The answers were analysed by using content analysis. The different lists of competences were analysed to find common features and themes. Only the competences that were mentioned more than once were taken into account for further analysis.

The competences mentioned in the reports were grouped into three categories. The first category of personal competences referred to skills on the individual level. These included personal ways of *relating* to the social situation (entrepreneurship) or specific abilities (mathematical or linguistic capabilities). The second category of social competences referred to the socio- psychological dynamics: to working in a group, finding a role for oneself and being able to engage with peers. These included, for example, leadership, teamwork abilities and organisational skills. A third category of intercultural or global competences referred to an understanding of wider cultural and economic contexts of society, and the ability to understand 'otherness' and diversity in a global and interconnected world.

If there were even the slightest doubt in categorising competences that two separate competences were taken synonymously, all variations were indicated (such as self-organisation / self-management / personal efficiency). Some of the competences did not easily fall into the above-mentioned categories. Perhaps the most difficult one to categorise was digital learning and information and communications technology (ICT) competences. Digital learning was interpreted to be a personal matter, and ICT competences were classified as social competences (the ability of

a person to use ICT to communicate, to work in a team, to manage affairs, etc.). The concept of *competences* was used instead of *skills* (which was the term used in some of the reports).

The definitions of competences were given to ensure that the survey conducted in the field result phase could use common definitions. Definitions were provided by the researcher. They were based on existing literature on competences. Special effort was made so that there were as many similarities as possible with the research that was conducted simultaneously in South Korea.

Personal competences included a few competences that were mentioned in the key lifelong learning competences, such as mathematical competences, digital learning, learning to learn and entrepreneurship. Besides this, other competences, such as self-organisation or self-management, were mentioned in the reports. They also mentioned task-oriented capabilities, such as taking responsibility. As can be seen, the reports adopted the idea of competences as clusters of knowledge, attitudes and skills rather well. All of the competences mentioned can be interpreted according to the KSA model of competences.

Personal Competences

Personal competences were categorised as follows:

- *Self-organisation / self-management / personal efficiency*: having the ability to envision the purpose and goals of one's life in order to achieve them;
- *Learning to learn* (meta-cognitive competences): having the ability to pursue and organise one's own learning, either individually or in groups, in accordance with one's own needs;
- *Taking responsibility / carrying out responsibility*: having a sense of purpose and responsibility, and the ability to act in accordance with the same;
- *Entrepreneurship and innovation / taking initiative*: having the ability to turn ideas into action; having the confidence to take on new challenges and not give up, no matter how difficult the task;
- *Mathematical competences*: having the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking in order to solve a range of problems in everyday situations;

- *Digital learning*: having the ability to use digital technologies to aid the learning of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Social Competences

Social competences are related to working in group. This relates well to the general learning environment in international voluntary service, which usually requires working with people with whom one is not yet familiar. In the key competences of lifelong learning frameworks, social competences all fall into one category; they refer to the ability to engage in both social and working life. Compared to this perspective, the lists and definitions by the respondents reflected a more detailed picture of the competences needed to work in groups.

- *ICT competence*: having basic skills in information and communication technology, and the ability to work and communicate by using them;
- *Participation / civic competences*: having the ability to form opinions about social issues and share with others; having knowledge of participation structures and the willingness to use them;
- *Leadership competences*: having a sense of purpose and responsibility, and the capacity of respecting the opinions of others, and leading them in different life situations;
- *Management skills / organisational skills*: having the ability to use one's resources and time and encouraging others to achieve common goals;
- *Teamwork / relationship competences*: having the appreciation and support of the team despite different points of view, and having the ability to work with others in order to accomplish goals and tasks;
- *Communication competences*: having the willingness and ability to talk to people with whom one is not familiar, and having consideration for the thoughts and feelings of others.

Global/Intercultural Competences

In addition to individual and group-level properties, international voluntary services develop an understanding about different cultures and how to deal with cultural differences in a tolerant and open way. Like the two categories above, intercultural or global competences are important, both

from the perspectives of employability and citizenship. The globalising economy means working with people from different backgrounds; citizenship is becoming more transnational, and global questions are important for the citizenship of the youth in different political arenas and agoras (Laine 2011). Global competences refer to being able to communicate, and also being able to analyse the impact of different backgrounds, and having the ability to respect the cultural variances that are inherently part of modern, multi-voiced interaction, both in work and leisure time in the lives of the young.

- *Cultural awareness*: having awareness of diverse cultures and backgrounds, and understanding the history and socio-cultural factors that influence the international community;
- *Intercultural competences / global understanding/ understanding diversity*: having the ability to understand other cultures, and having an interest in international issues;
- *Openness and tolerance / tolerant behaviour*: having an understanding of people from different societal and cultural backgrounds, and a lack of prejudices;
- *Cultural competences*: appreciating the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experience and emotions in a range of media (music, performing arts, literature and the visual arts), and the ability to use this expression for one's purposes;
- *Foreign language skills*: having the ability to use languages other than one's mother tongue in oral and written form, and the ability to understand the role of language in understanding other cultures;
- *Language skills in one's mother tongue*: having the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form.

2.2 Evaluating, recognising and validating competences

Using the UNESCO definitions above, the main portion of the procedures for recognition and validation of the answers mentioned above can be classified as forms of either evaluating or

recognising the competences. This is largely because there is no official body that could assess and validate learning according to pre-set principles.

As is the case with recognising competences in general, the tools for validating vary greatly depending on cultural background. The role of ministries and/or national-level organisations seems to be rather significant in creating a validation culture in different countries and providing methods for recognising learning outcomes and/or competences. If widespread validation is the goal of an organisation, this will likely require cooperation with the official bodies.

The answers were classified to indicate the depth of the recognition or validation. It is noteworthy, however, that not all the participants actually had procedures for recognition or validation. Some of the respondents stated that in general they do not evaluate the competences after the voluntary service is over. Instead, they evaluate the competences before service commences.

There are no competences acknowledged on the national level ... the competences most of the time mean the skills and knowledge asked from volunteers before engaging in voluntary work, not what they gained afterwards.

The question about tools for recognition is also the question of who recognises and validates, and according to whose principles. This in itself is a question of power and participation: the role of the young people themselves tends to be quite limited in the papers. There seem to be at least five categories for recognition if one accepts the combination of recognition by the non-formal learning programmes set by national agencies to promote the recognition of non-formal learning outcomes and experiences. The analysis of categories that follows is based on classifying those stakeholders who are mainly responsible for providing the evaluation.

1. *Recognition by the volunteers themselves.* Some of the papers relied on asking the volunteers to evaluate themselves. This can take the form of a pure self-assessment, where the aim is to make learners aware of the things they may have learnt during the project. This does not lead to certification or validation of the learning taking place. Organisations use different methods, both open and structured, and both oral and written, to achieve this. In fact, some of the

organisations use pre-set standards set by the administration of their native countries. The following is a list of tools used by different countries.

- The simplest tool is the self-evaluation question in the questionnaire (What did you learn from your voluntary experience?) (Russia);
- Volunteer diary reflecting on experiences during the volunteering (Russia);
- Self-evaluation against outside standards (Italy);
- E-portfolio (Italy);
- A web-based self-assessment tool to map, formalise and value the knowledge of adult learners / volunteers (Italy);
- Assessment by others ('360° feedback'); (Italy)
- 'Le portefeuille des compétences bénévoles': a paper document comprised of many questions of self-assessment, promoted by the French Ministry of Sports, Youth, Popular Education and Community Life (France);
- The scout leader's skills tool: an on-line assessment tool that assesses twenty competences. The results are accessible only to the one answering (Belgium).

2. *Recognition and validation provided by organisations* (can be done together with participants).

In addition to self-assessment, where learners evaluate the learning according to their own conceptions, the recognition can be done by relying on pre-set aims and methods. In this case, the list of competences or the qualifications evaluated exist before the project, and are (at least in some sense) independent of the specific context of volunteering. In this case, the methods of recognition and evaluation range from the relatively learner-centred peer meetings to more structured methods, such as performance monitoring and tests. The following list includes some of the methods used by various countries to recognise and evaluate volunteers; the items without a country listed are used by multiple countries.

- Evaluation surveys;
- Face-to-face meetings, which might take several hours (Gençlik Servisleri Merkezi [GSM, Youth Services Centre], Turkey);
- Evaluation brainstorming (Italy);
- Focus groups (Italy);

- Youth Pass and consequent activities based on eight competences;
- Certification;
- Performance monitoring, projects, tests (Mexico);
- The 'passeport benevole' (volunteer passport) (France);
- Kompetenznachweis International (international competence certificate) (Germany);
- Kompetenznachweis International Kultur (culture competence certificate) (Germany);
- Kompetenznachweis Freiwilligendienste (voluntary services competence certificate): biographical interviews, written surveys, group discussions and experiential education methods are applied (Germany);
- Youthpass, Europass Mobility.

3. *Recognition and validation conducted by research organisations.* Some of the respondents mentioned scientific studies made by universities to study the non-formal learning that was actually taking place in voluntary service. While these reports are not made to evaluate the individual learning or a learner, they offer conceptual tools to analyse the competences that are gained. The academic institutions mentioned were Bilgi University in Istanbul, and cooperation between the University of Myongji in South Korea and the University of Illinois in the United States.

4. *Recognition and validation by employers.* The South Korean respondents mentioned written tests by multinational companies, which provided questions about global competences. The cooperation between the employment sector and non-formal learning can be seen as an example of entrepreneurial learning, as well; here, the aim is to provide learners with entrepreneurial spirit regardless of the career that the young people may pursue in the future (Kiilakoski 2014).

5. *Recognition and validation by formal education or national-level agencies.* The examples of Spain and France referred to programmes set by the respective governments to validate the non-formal learning that was currently taking place. The following programmes rely on pre-set methods of assessment, and can also be linked to the formal sector as well.

- Ministry of Education; Ministry of Employment (Spain): National System of Qualifications and VET (vocational education and training);
- The Spanish state system: 'All people have access to free and personal orientation by a professional counselor ... who provides the evaluation committee with a report on the candidate'. This can lead to VET Certificates and Certificates of Professionality
- 'La livret de competences': launched by the French Ministry of Education, this is an assessment tool to assess the learning outcomes in and out of school (France).

To summarise the methods of recognising, evaluating and validating the learning that takes place, one can first look at the formality and non-formality of evaluation. The methods range from purely learner-centred ways of self-assessment to standardised procedures organised by the government. This is an example of dialectics of formal and non-formal learning mentioned in the first chapter. The participating countries seem to differ quite drastically in the methods they use to recognise learning, and perhaps also in their overall attitude towards recognising non-formal learning. One can also analyse the answers by looking at the methods of recognition that use the learner-centred or organisation-centred approaches. The third way of looking at the answers could be using the dimension of who are the experts doing the evaluation. One answer to the question who the experts are would be looking at the evaluation methods where the power is given to the participants themselves. Another perspective is looking at methods where the experts are the people doing the assessment guidelines, outside the volunteering process itself.

3 Conclusion and points of improvement

According to the answers given by the participating countries, there are vast differences in the methods of recognising and evaluating learning; in addition, the evaluation culture itself is different. While in some countries, the evaluation is integrated into the volunteering experience itself, other countries do not integrate evaluations into the process itself. The first point of improvement would be to find a common understanding of how (and why) to evaluate learning, and to spell out different methods of doing this that respect the nature of the process itself.

The question of formative and summative evaluation also has to be raised. Formative evaluation relates to assessment that is done simultaneously with the process. Summative evaluation refers to the evaluation that is done after a project is completed. There seem to be relatively few ways of actually conducting formative evaluation; most of the methods are summative. As was argued earlier in this paper, a great deal of the youth work done with young people is process-oriented. Given this, we should question if the emphasis on summative evaluation is actually desirable, since it can carry a lot of weight in formal learning. In addition, creating methods for integrating the evaluation of learning to the process itself might mean that the evaluation is better integrated into the activities and phenomena that take place in volunteering.

The most critical point to make is the participation of the participants. Many recognition methods are non-participatory, and young people have to fit into existing structures provided by adult society. If respecting and promoting agency by the young is one of the goals of the action itself, this principle should also manifest itself in the methods and conduct of evaluation, recognition and validation.

Finally, when developing a common method for evaluating and recognising competences, a compromise between different systems is needed. Professor Sandra Bohlinger states that if the system for recognising competences is too broad and generous, it might lack market credibility and may fail to reflect the validity of learning. At the other end of the spectrum is the complex and formal system of recognition, which obviously requires resources in personnel, time and funding (Bohlinger 2007). This is the tension between non-formal and formal ways of recognising

competences. Finding a way to offer an evaluative tool that is both credible from the point of view of employment and civic activity, and that at the same time is able to fit in the relatively short period of international volunteering, is one of the key challenges in the latter stages of the I'VE project.

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