



Train4Coordinators

Online training for youth volunteering coordinators on the
validation of competencies, skills and qualifications

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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PROJECT PARTNERS



PROMEA



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Introduction

Volunteering is an excellent example of non-formal learning for young people.

The EU Youth Strategy promotes:

- Greater recognition of the value of voluntary activities and the skills it promotes
- Good working conditions for young volunteers and opportunities for enriching work
- Intergenerational solidarity
- Transnational volunteering

The European Union offers such an opportunity to young people because volunteering is valued as a non-formal learning experience enhancing volunteers' professional skills and competencies, thus contributing to their employability. At the same time, it increases their sense of solidarity, develops their social skills, and promotes active participation in society. It is a win - win situation, where both the volunteer and the community benefit. The Commission has held a long commitment to supporting volunteering opportunities for young people.

Starting in 1996, the European Voluntary Service has allowed more than 100.000 young people to gain a life-changing experience as a volunteer. During the Erasmus+ programme, many more will get the same opportunity. Youth volunteering 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 young people engage in the process on a voluntary basis. The educational aims of youth volunteering 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. Youth volunteering 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. In order to provide an effective, sustainable environment for volunteering, the EC recommends that the EU institutions and Member States take steps to ensure that national and EU legislation enables and encourages volunteering, protects volunteers and removes legal impediments to their activities. A volunteer-based/centred approach towards youth volunteering will be implemented to ensure the quality, recognition, and competence development of young people.

The rights, dignity and responsibilities of youth volunteers should be recognised and respected and volunteers and their organisations should be aware of them. Specific attention is given to youth volunteering recognising it as a tool for achieving the EU 2020 targets. It is therefore vital that youth volunteering is also included in the national reform programs in Spain, Austria, Turkey, Slovenia, Cyprus, and Greece to ensure its support.

The Train4Coordinators Project
Project Consortium





Project goals

- Greater understanding of the recent situation and individual needs of youth workers and young volunteers
- Greater understanding of the training needs and gaps in recognition and assessment of competencies.
- Increased knowledge on good examples of youth volunteering with relevant methodologies, pedagogical approaches, reached goals around Europe.
- Increased knowledge on the volunteering benchmark to compare youth volunteering organizations' practices, processes, and products.

Purpose of the volunteer benchmarking

Volunteering benchmark (Result-1) is part of an Erasmus+ funded project Train4Coordinators that is developed findings of individual needs, training needs and gaps in recognition and assessment of competencies.



This summary includes brief information about followings:

- Consolidated survey findings of individual needs, training needs and gaps in recognition and assessment of competencies.
- Good examples of youth volunteering with relevant methodologies, pedagogical approaches, reached goals around Europe.

No research has been found on the skills and characteristics that youth coordinators should have. In this respect, research and studies on this subject are important in determining the individuals' characteristics and for the youth coordinator candidates to obtain information on this subject. For this reason, this study aimed to determine the skillset expected to be found in youth coordinators. The findings to be obtained because of the study can provide a "preliminary idea" about the "desired skill set in volunteer management" for youth coordinators. Working together, getting support in project management, etc. Although the basic criteria needed for each job are stated in the job requirements forms, it is difficult to say that the personality traits and general behavioural skills expected from the employees, in general, can be fully specified. In this respect, we should state that the studies on the determination of the skills, equipment and behavioural characteristics expected from qualified employees in today's dynamic working life will contribute to the project owners, youth coordinator candidates and decision-makers.

Innovative elements

Improvement of the youth workers, coordinators and volunteers' knowledge with volunteering benchmark that will include comparative analysis of the youth volunteering 6 organizations practices, processes, and products.

Target groups

- Youth workers
- Youth volunteering coordinators
- Young people who would like to work as a volunteer
- Young people with physical disabilities
- Young people who are refugee or immigrant in partner countries

Scope of volunteering benchmarking

Project result-1 was developed with survey analysis and good practices in Spain, Austria, Turkey, Slovenia, Cyprus, and Greece.





Analysis and reporting

There were 2 different surveys for young volunteers and youth workers.

According to the results of the survey for young volunteers:

- 284 young volunteers participated in the survey and 65% of them were female and 35% of them were male.
- Examination of age groups shows that young people show a lot of interest in volunteering activities. This situation shows a positive youth approach to volunteering activities. Young people participating in volunteering activities are generally students, depending on their age, ability to spare time, gaining experience, meeting new people, etc. For this reason, it is essential to design "Train4Coordinator" training units that are directly related to the level of interest of the youth. For the training content development, each training group can provide a healthy functioning in deciding and making needs, solutions, curriculum creation, and target groups.
- Young people have participated in a volunteering activity with any institution or group of friends. Those volunteers are intensely engaged in individual volunteering activities before. According to the needs analysis results, the content of the training to be offered to these young people who have volunteering experience in many different fields, especially in social services, education, and the environment, should be comprehensive.
- Almost half of the young people participate in local volunteer group activities at least once a month. This ensures the continuity which is one of the critical success factors of voluntary organizations. Especially in the Covid process, which affects the whole world, it is an admirable effort that volunteer activities are carried out independently or with an NGO at a high rate. Considering the covid process is just getting out of the way, the rate of participation in volunteer activities in less than one year can evaluate together. In this case, it can say that the participants continue their volunteering activities intensively. For this reason, it is important to design the contents of the unit in accordance with the post-Covid process by addressing the effective use of digital technologies.
- Young volunteers can provide high-quality service with a limited budget. Thanks to the volunteer's knowledge, skills, and experience, they can deliver better service to society. The essential qualities of an ideal volunteer include individual responsibility, social responsibility, predisposition to teamwork, communication skills, adaptability to different cultures, ability to apply the mechanism of criticism-self-criticism, openness to innovations, and being a sharer, etc. It will be essential to contribute to developing these skills in the training units to be prepared within the scope of PR2 (volunteer training management toolkit for volunteer coordinators).





- The main reasons to become a volunteer are altruism, desire to help, gaining knowledge & experience and learning something new. For this reason, it is evident that the participants' level of readiness is at a high level, and they will use the knowledge, skills, and competencies they will acquire in "Train4Coordinator" training by transferring them to different volunteer activities.
- Only 1 of 3 volunteers received certificates for their volunteering activities and only half of them added their volunteering experience documents to their CVs. One of the aims of our project is to develop systems to recognize the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired through volunteering and establish methods of volunteer management that also create and sustain a culture of recognition within the organization. It is necessary to raise the awareness of everyone who meets under the umbrella of volunteering, including organizations that organize other volunteering activities.
- The rate of having attended subject-specific training before starting the volunteer work is not high, so it is essential to arrange more on-the-job activities by volunteering organizations and support volunteers' non-formal education through induction training and online learning. For these reasons, youth self-planning, self-learning and self-assessment by developing the PR4 (self-assessment mobile application for monitoring competencies in voluntary civil service) will be very appropriate.
- Young volunteers are very willing to participate in training on volunteer management to increase their success with volunteering activities. For effective volunteer management, they mostly would like to increase their capacity and improve their public communication skills, conflict resolution skills, positive public relations towards disadvantaged people, time management, social media campaigns management, and corporate partnerships development.
- Young volunteers' preferences for the training material formats are practical examples/cases, online courses, and videos. Presentations documents/manuals/handbooks are not preferred too much. Therefore, following the training units on the online learning platform would be appropriate, including practical examples/cases and videos.
- Volunteers also emphasized the importance of certification after receiving the training. So automatic certification at the end of the training activity after developing the online learning platform for volunteer coordinators has gained even more reputation.





According to the results of the survey for youth workers:

- 243 youth workers participated in the survey and 62% of them were female and 38% of them were male.
- Information on the professions of youth coordinators has a similar appearance to the indicators of age and educational status in 6 partner countries. Considering the current professional positions of youth coordinators, most of them are youth workers and NGO workers or representatives. However, it is seen that youth coordinators have adopted the concept of "Youth Worker - Youth Coordinator" as a job description, although it has not been established as a professional concept in many countries. For this reason, having a "Youth Worker - Youth Coordinator" in organizations that carry out volunteering activities in the local community is the most crucial element of durable volunteer management.
- Most of the people participating in our research are individuals with higher education. It is seen that 1 of 3 youth coordinators has BSc or PhD degrees. This ratio shows that the education level of the people participating in the research, scientific approaches in youth work, presenting different perspectives for target groups and determining competence is essential. Their education level and professional qualifications can provide different perspectives on needs, solutions, curriculum creation and target groups.
- When the services provided by the youth coordinators are examined, the first four ranks are social services, education, youth activities and culture & recreation. It should not overlook that youth coordinators are experienced and do essential work in non-formal education (e.g., tutoring for underprivileged communities) and youth (e.g., leisure, extracurricular organisations).
- The experience period of the participants working in the field of youth shows that they have experienced staff and trained workforce in their areas. 2 of 5 youth coordinators in our research working for more than three years, while only 1 of 5 have been working for 1-3 years. It is also the same for the experience periods between 6 months and one year. It shows that after the periods of having a dense youth coordinator portfolio, there was a contraction period and an increase observed again. If this situation is repeated, we can say that the number of youth coordinators and youth workers will increase again in the following years.
- No research has been found on the skills and characteristics that youth coordinators should have. In this respect, research and studies on this subject are essential in determining the individuals' characteristics and obtaining information for the youth coordinator candidates. The following skills and abilities can improve for the youth coordinators by prepared training units in the PR2 (volunteer training management toolkit for volunteer coordinators):
 - communicate comfortably with people from other countries,
 - know people who need help,
 - good verbal expression,
 - talk clearly,
 - know how to recognize body language.





- The main reasons to become a youth coordinator are altruism, desire to help, gain knowledge & experience, support the realisation of a mission or case, and learn something new. For this reason, it is evident that the participants' level of readiness is at a high level, and they will use the knowledge, skills, and competencies they will acquire in “Train4Coordinator” training by transferring them to different volunteer activities.
- The most crucial support in the financial resources of the institutions where the youth coordinators work comes from the donors and funded projects. Their fields of activity are both at local and national/European levels.
- Youth coordinators work with a substantial number of volunteers in the institutions where they work. This situation is one of the most critical factors in carrying out volunteer projects with high added value. The volunteer selection method's essential detail is about their significant effort in the competition to be a volunteer. Along with campaigns and announcements, agreements with educational institutions are essential.
- The most crucial resource of youth work is people. One of the positive aspects of receiving volunteer support is that it can provide quality service with a limited budget. The volunteer's knowledge, skills, and experience can provide better service to society. When working with volunteers, their motivation about the subject is strong. Also, their awareness of the issue, their timely participation in activities, and their social skills are the most important factors to involve volunteers.
- Nearly half of the youth coordinators regularly participate in activities at least once a month. One of three youth coordinators experiences whenever they have the opportunity. It can say that youth coordinators want to do something for the benefit of society at every opportunity or those who participate in activities to spend their spare time.
- There is no generation gap, but not being able to manage the time correctly is a significant problem! Youth coordinators state that the most crucial difficulty they face in their work with others is time management problems. The organization-related challenges are considerable, but there are no issues due to the age difference in the studies.
- Public awareness about volunteering in the society and methodology for recognising skills and competencies deriving from volunteer services are the most faced barriers that youth coordinators face, so those areas need improvement regarding volunteering management services.
- Youth coordinators state that the most necessary qualification they look for in volunteers is the tendency for teamwork and cooperation. Time management skills in planning/organization are the second critical problem they see in volunteers and organizations.
- More than half of the youth coordinators stated that they received training before starting the volunteer management work. They completed informal training by NGO specialised in the area or induction training organised by the voluntary organisation that facilitates their work. They are willing to participate in special training on





volunteering management of the "Train4Coordinators" project to increase the success in their volunteer activities. For effective volunteer management, they mostly would like to increase their capacity and improve their skills in the management of social media campaigns, public communication, digital design & creativity, positive public relations towards disadvantaged people, and conflict resolution.

- Youth coordinators say, "Learn First, Teach Later!". They are mainly provided informal training by other volunteers. Also, induction training and non-formal education provide volunteers with training and guidance. Youth coordinators' preferences for the training material formats are practical examples/cases, videos, and online courses. Presentations documents/manuals/handbooks are not preferred too much. Therefore, following the training units on the online learning platform would be appropriate, including practical examples/cases and videos. For these reasons, youth self-planning, self-learning, and self-assessment by developing the PR4 (self-assessment mobile application for monitoring competencies in voluntary civil service) will be very appropriate.
- Youth coordinators also emphasized the importance of certification after receiving the training. So automatic certification at the end of the training activity after developing the online learning platform for volunteer coordinators has gained even more reputation.



Access links to the full reports

- Young Volunteers Research Analysis (PDF in English)
<http://www.train4coordinators.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/T4C-SurveyReport-YV-EN.pdf>
- Youth Workers Research Analysis (PDF in English)
<http://www.train4coordinators.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/T4C-SurveyReport-YW-EN.pdf>
- Youth Volunteering Good Examples (PDF in English)
http://www.train4coordinators.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/T4C_R1_GoodExamples.pdf
- E-brochure of the project result (PDF in national language)
http://www.train4coordinators.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/T4C_PR1_eBrochure_EN.pdf



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