

## Youth sector interim report

### **Why should third sector and youth sector organisations be part of the life long learning process?**

The School system has not the monopoly of Education. Many non-formal and informal actors participate in the construction of one's character, the education of an individual is the results of many influences among which youth and popular education associations as well as all kinds of third sector associations have an important role to play. As a matter of fact third sector organisations could be identified as *schools of Democracy*<sup>1</sup>, where solidarity and civic values can be taught to all and above all to volunteers actively involved in their action.

Moreover, *third sector* organisations as underlined in their name, find an hybrid definition between public and private sectors. Their legitimacy is sometimes still to be recognised.

Therefore our participation in such a project aside with vocational training structures, adult education organisations and universities is a great opportunity to put a highlight on the educational work we develop and provide an alternative point of view on life long learning thanks to the experience of our volunteers.

### **Same goal, different needs**

After reading the national reports and finding out more information about each partner during the interim meeting in Kaunas, it comes out that our main common goal through the project REFINE is to support the recognition of non-formal education and especially learning through voluntary engagement. The aim of REFINE is to create bridges between formal, non-formal and informal education and promote mobility increasing the transparency of competencies. Therefore, we will have to work on the taking into account of the skills and competencies developed by volunteers involved in our associations not only at a geographical level (national or European) but also among other sectors by partners such as, for instance, Universities in their process of Accreditation for Prior Experiential Learning.

In spite of this common aspiration, our associations have different intermediary expectations according to their specific activities, their cultural background and their national context. However most of these expectations could be commonly shared at the European level. Here is a non-exhaustive list :

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<sup>1</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville.

- Make volunteer activities more visible and put an emphasis on their educational role using various tools that have been worked out at the national level and combine them with European tools of the Europass
- Recognise youth leaders ' "Knows" even though they are not officially considered as professional competencies
- Work on the compilation of competencies in third sector volunteer activities and give accreditation to voluntary experience as part of the prior learning education for national diplomas
- Identify competencies of youth leaders to help create a national or European diploma for youth leaders
- Increase exchanges of youth leaders within Europe and provide a harmonised training to promote mobility
- Consider young people not only as formal learners (students) but also as non-formal learners
- Create a Volunteer European Portfolio
- Give a real value to solidarity and social actions
- Legitimate third sector activities for their recognition in other sectors
- ...

### **Why did candidates participate in the project?**

The main reason was to evaluate personal competencies and skills. Most of the candidates were at a state where they needed to self-evaluate the competencies and skills they had gained whether in the formal sector or in the non-formal sector. Some of them were searching for a job. However the candidates evoked seldom European mobility in their projects.

### **Experimentation's results and tools**

#### **EuroCV**

According to us, the form and the substance of the EuroCV is not adapted to everyone. As a matter of fact, it results most of the time difficult to understand "competencies" and "skills" and to translate an experience into a competence. A counsellor is needed in most of the case to follow the candidate all along the process of self-assessment.

It is also necessary to promote the EuroCV in front of employers. We found out that in most of our countries the EuroCV could not be presented for a job interview. In addition it is not very flexible. However it seems to be a relevant basic tool (a sophisticated brainstorming) to fill in a national type of CV or a CV adapted to the person, the context and the needs of everyone.

Some partners underlined the fact that it was essential to realise an analysis of the various types of CVs existing all over Europe.

Moreover Voluntary experience needs to be put forward

Use for the APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) process :

- The EuroCV could be a first draft to evaluate competencies and be a medium for the first interview between the candidate and the counsellor. Could be a tool to estimate the chance of getting to the end of the process but not decide for the validation jury. Could also be an outline to redact the whole validation dossier.

### **Supplement for Diploma**

Soma Italians partners (ASVI and the CNOS) tested the Supplement for Diploma. They concluded after experimentation (3 candidates) that the tool was easy to use, well-detailed and that it could improve the transparency of qualifications at the European level. This tool can also be directly used by training centres. In Italy such a document already exists but it has no legal value.

### **The Estonian portfolio**

The Estonian partners are currently testing a general portfolio consisting of 4 chapters

- Personal Data
- Education
- Work experience
- Other activities

Up to now, they have received no contributions from the candidate. In parallel to this experimentation, they are comparing their own portfolio with a French one (from the University of Haute Alsace) and with an English Portfolio User Guide (from the University of East London).

### **The Finnish Recreational Study book**

The Finnish Youth Academy is testing a Recreational Study Book. The Recreational Activity Study Book gives the reader a broad view of the young person's skills and learning experiences. The Study Book serves as a non-formal and informal learning CV, as participation in all forms of recreational activities can be recorded in it.

In Jyväskylä Vocational Institute there's a project aiming at prevention of dropping out of vocational education. As a part of the project, the Institute organises free-time activities for the students. The students participating in those free-time activities are testing the Recreational Activity Study Book and they are promised to get study credits from the entries in the study book at the end of the term. Some 30 students will test the

study book, 5 of which have been interviewed for this report (week 40/2004). The results were as expected. It is a conscious choice that the point of departure in the Study Book is voluntary freetime activity of young people and the learning that takes place in it. That is why the book is constructed according to the nature of the activity rather than skills, knowledge or competencies acquired in those activities. According to preliminary feedback from the teaching staff, the Study Book functions "well enough" in assessing and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning. In the Study Book, young people are encouraged to record also activities prior to the purchasing of the book. It appears necessary to instruct the use of the Study Book "on the spot" – this far only an information event (2 hrs) has been arranged.

It is good that one can benefit from one's freetime and voluntary activities. It could encourage other young people to participate in the activities.

Candidates require the possibility to record previous activity

### **The French booklet on voluntary commitments**

It is a tool developed by les Francas with the aim of establishing a procedure to welcome and support its volunteers with a view to enhancing their associative experience within the movement in order to promote social, personal and professional recognition. The booklet on voluntary commitments, developed during the course of 2004, will not be tested until 2005. The French Red Cross will join forces with les Francas to test this tool focusing on the recognition of experience outside traditional academic and professional contexts so that it can be put forward, after consultation with our European partners in the third sector and youth sectors, as an example of tool to supplement the Europass Kit.

### **Some ideas and goals for our working plan for year 2**

1. Keep on working on the EuroCV, try to adapt it to our audience and our sector
2. Make more visible and legitimate volunteer experience using tools such as the Recreational Study Book as a first path to compile and evaluate voluntary experiences
3. Compare and adapt volunteer portfolios in our respective countries
4. ...