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

Strategic Partnership
Erasmus + Youth

The Recognition Players

Different perspectives on the volunteers competences and their recognition and validation, from the different sectors and geographical perspectives

Report on Field Research

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Credits

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1 Aims of the field research

The desk research identified that youngsters in workcamps commonly gained the following competences:

- Personal competences: self-organisation, self-management, personal efficiency, learning to learn, taking or carrying out responsibilities, entrepreneurship and innovation and taking initiative
- Social competences: management and organisational skills, teamwork and relationship competences, communication, participation and civic competences
- Intercultural competences: cultural awareness, understanding diversity, openness and tolerance and skills in their native and foreign languages[1]

The aim of the field research was to obtain perspectives on these competences as well as information on their recognition and validation by different stakeholders. The most relevant stakeholders were administered a survey to clarify and compare their perceptions. These results allows us to draw conclusions regarding how assessment and recognition tools for competences gained by youngsters in workcamps should be designed to meet the expectations of the actors involved.

To achieve this goal, the main questions to be answered are as follows:

- Which competences are considered relevant by the different stakeholders?
- To what extent and in which contexts are these competences gained by volunteers in workcamps?
- How can competences be reliably assessed within the setting of a workcamp, considering the limited human and financial resources and the informal characteristic of the learning experiences?
- How can competences be certified to ensure that youngsters derive maximum benefits?

This report describes the survey and characteristics of the involved stakeholder groups as well as answers the abovementioned research questions. This is followed by a summary of the results for the interview of stakeholders, who assessed the objectives and strategy of the I'VE project, at the European and international level. The final chapter is a conclusion and presents further working steps.

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[1] For the complete list of competences and their definitions, see the desk research report.

2 Methodology

2.1 Definition of stakeholders, research topics and methods

Stakeholders to be included in the survey and specific research topics were determined in a two-day Steering Committee Meeting. Drawing on the desk research results, the perceptions of following stakeholders appeared to be most relevant in answering the research questions:

- Volunteers
- Workcamp leaders
- Workcamp organisers
- Local partners
- Employers
- Youth workers as youngsters with fewer opportunities

European and international organisations were also considered of utmost importance, but less than those listed, owing to the research perspective. The stakeholders were sent a written letter informing them about the I'VE project, followed by telephone interviews. These interviews focused on their assessment of the I'VE objectives and strategy as well as potentials in support of the project. This way, the interviews served as a means of dissemination and advocacy.

It was intended that other experts in the field—for example, researchers, educators, school coordinators, youth NGOs as well as national authorities and councils—also be included in the assessment of the pilot post-camp event as a broad coverage of the areas under study is given through the direct target groups of research.

Volunteers from previous workcamps were asked about the competences gained during the workcamp as well as their relevance to personal development, further education and career. Further, the questions covered the usefulness of the certificates and their readiness to participate in post-camp events to assess newly gained competences. In addition, they were asked for suggestions regarding the planned validation and recognition tool. Workcamp organisers generally maintain the previous volunteers' email addresses; thus, an invite to participate in an online survey was sent via email, which is an easy and successful means to achieve a high response rate. To ensure that we satisfy all legal regulations concerning the involvement of minors in the survey, only volunteers above the age of 18 years were included in the target group.

To compare the answers of the volunteers, workcamp organisers and umbrella organisations (IVS project partners and their networks) as well as workcamp leaders were asked about the competences gained by youngsters during their workcamp and perceived future importance. In addition, the questionnaire covered assessment and certification practices as well as suggestions to develop the validation and recognition tool. Both groups were also asked to answer the online questionnaires. To ensure that we receive informed answers, only

workcamp leaders who experiences more than two workcamps were planned to be involved in the survey.

Local partners, that is, associations running voluntary service projects, received the same key questions on competences, assessment and certification methods, with the additional question if they were ready to provide testimonials for individuals or groups of volunteers. Such a testimonial would serve as a personal reference by a foreign organisation. Local partners were contacted by the project partners via the telephone and the answers were fed into the online survey.

As for the employers, it seemed desirable to acquire opinions from those across different sectors: the service, production, social and public sector. Questions on competences referred to specific demands when hiring employees—this was also reflected how competences gained in a workcamp are presented and certificates influence candidate selection. The employers were contacted by project partners via the telephone and their answers were updated on online.

Youth workers dealing with youngsters with fewer opportunities generally have clear expectations from competences gained in workcamps when involving youngsters in such a learning experience. Here, the questions focus on the extent to which their expectations were met, if the effects were desired or undesired and were competences other than those expected developed. Project partners, with a focus on youngsters with fewer opportunities, conducted telephone interviews with youth workers.

In addition to socio-demographic characteristics in organisations' structural data, the questionnaires contained a final question on the respondent's interest in the work and the outcomes of the I'VE project. They were offered the option to share their email addresses for further information. Responses to the latter two open questions were not analysed for research, but forwarded to the responsible project partners.

Questions with compulsory answers were restricted to a minimum in all questionnaires, accounting for persons who may be concerned about confidentiality and in turn deterred from participating in the survey entirely. Ethical guidelines for research and data protection in line with European regulations were elaborated on by the European coordinators of the I'VE project and disseminated to all project partners involved in this work phase.

The questionnaires were designed in close coordination with the I'VE Steering Committee and revised as per to their suggestions. After consultations with the European IMPACT/Changing Perspectives projects, final adaptations were made to ensure synergy[2].

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[2] For individual questionnaires, see Annex 1

2.2 Organisation of the survey and feedback control

Numerous partners and organisations supported the I'VE project and this number continued to grow even after the cooperation agreement with the IMPACT project. Against this background, guidelines were elaborated on, specifying the aims, topics and methods of the I'VE project. As part of a structured schedule, each partner received an overview on the tasks and deadlines for performance[3].

Deadline monitoring was performed by the European coordination on the basis of regular feedback controls by the research partner. At the end of the active phase of the survey, the following results were achieved:

Project partners and their associates—e.g. workcamp organisers and umbrella organisations—engaged their networks, creating a snowball effect. The organisations invited their volunteers (aged 18 years and above) from past workcamps and workcamp leaders to participate in the survey. The exact number of such organisations, volunteers and workcamp leaders in the target groups is unknown.

In total, 2.479 volunteers responded to the written invitation for the survey. However, many decided to drop out from the survey after answering the first question. A total of 1.889 questionnaires, some of which incomplete, were considered valid. They were complemented by 219 questionnaires from workcamp leaders and 53 questionnaires from workcamp organisers. In line with the initial plans of the Steering Committee, telephone interviews were also performed with 17 local partners, 8 youth workers and 14 employers.

The survey results provided a solid data basis for research and the next working step, that is, the development of a validation and recognition tool for competences gained by youngsters in workcamps. The results cannot be considered representative but are strongly indicative.

The documentation of the survey results in the following chapters refers to data available in the form of univariate and selected bivariate analyses (Annex 3).

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[3] See Annex 2

3 Survey results

3.1 Stakeholders participation

3.1.1 Countries represented in the survey

Given the composition of the project partnership, cooperation between projects as well as the strategy to disseminate information on the survey, stakeholders were addressed from around the world. Table 1 indicates the involvement of volunteers (VOL), workcamp leaders (WCL), workcamp organisers (WCO), local partners (LOP), youth workers for youngsters with fewer opportunities (YOW) and employers (EMP) by continent and country.

Notwithstanding the scope of countries, the list is far from being complete. Of the total, 23% volunteers and 22% workcamp leaders did not provide information on their country of residence.

Table 1: Participation of stakeholders from European countries

	VOL	WCL	WCO	LOP	YOW	EMP	In total
EUROPE							
Albania	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Austria	2	1	-	-	-	-	3
Belarus	7	-	1	-	-	-	8
Belgium	58	7	1	3	4	3	76
Bosnia Herzegovina	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Croatia	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Czech Republic	231	9	1	-	-	-	241
Denmark	4	-	-	-	-	-	4
Estonia	8	1	1	-	-	-	10
Finland	31	14	1	-	-	-	46
France	79	9	1	-	-	-	89
Germany	197	4	3	-	-	-	204
Greece	10	37	1	-	-	-	48
Iceland	12	-	-	-	-	-	12
Ireland	4	-	-	-	-	-	4
Italy	170	18	4	5	1	5	203
Latvia	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Lithuania	4	-	-	-	-	-	4
Luxembourg	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Netherlands	4	-	-	-	-	-	4
Poland	1	4	-	-	-	-	5
Portugal	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
San Marino	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Serbia	89	18	12	-	3	-	122

	VOL	WCL	WCO	LOP	YOW	EMP	In total
Slovakia	15	4	1	-	-	-	20
Slovenia	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Spain	185	6	1	-	-	-	192
Sweden	6	-	-	-	-	-	6
Switzerland	7	-	1	-	-	-	8
Ukraine	10	3	2	-	-	-	15
United Kingdom	15	1	-	-	-	-	16
EUROPE AND ASIA							
Kazakhstan	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Russian Federation	192	9	3	-	-	-	204
Turkey	31	14	2	-	-	-	47
ASIA							
Armenia	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
India	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Indonesia	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Japan	4	-	1	-	-	-	5
Korea South	25	3	1	4	-	4	37
Kyrgyzstan	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Taiwan	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Thailand	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
AMERICA							
Argentina	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Canada	6	-	-	-	-	-	6
Colombia	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Dominican Republic	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
Mexico	15	5	3	4	-	2	29
United States	7	1	-	-	-	-	8
AFRICA							
Morocco	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Togo	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
AUSTRALIA							
Australia	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
In total	1.455	170	42	16	8	14	1.705

All stakeholder groups are for Europe, whereas the volunteers span across all countries mentioned in Table 1. Workcamp leaders and organisers represented most continents, while local partners and employers from countries outside Europe hailed from, for example, South Korea and Mexico.

Although the number of responding volunteers allowed for differentiating between cultural backgrounds, the size of other stakeholders' samples was too small for this approach. We, therefore, analyse the questions under study (What are the learning derived from work camps? How can they be measured and testified?) by comparing the perspectives of different stakeholders.

3.1.2 Characteristics of respondents

3.1.2.1 Volunteers

Of the total, 74,8% of the responding volunteers are women, accounting for almost three-quarters and surpassing even the share of volunteers in workcamps. According to the workcamp organisers, this ratio generally ranges between 60% and 70%. The share of male respondents is 24,4%. The gender of 11 respondents (0,7%) is unknown. Optional comments to indicate a third alternative range from being amused or annoyed about gender questions playing a role in society.

A majority of the responding volunteers, approximately 68%, are born between 1989 and 1995. Thus, the age ranged from 20 to 26 years at the time of the survey. A higher share was observed of those older than 26 years. Male respondents tended to be marginally older than female respondents (Table 2).

Table 2: Volunteers' age by sex

	Female		Male		Undecided		In total	
Year of birth	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
after 1995	7,5%	83	8,2%	29	0,0%	0	7,6%	112
1995 - 1993	30,1%	331	28,4%	101	45,5%	5	29,8%	437
1992 - 1990	31,9%	351	27,7%	99	27,3%	3	30,9%	453
1989 - 1987	16,3%	179	17,9%	64	9,1%	1	16,6%	244
1986 - 1984	7,5%	83	10,7%	38	9,1%	1	8,3%	122
before 1984	6,6%	72	7,3%	26	9,1%	1	6,7%	99
In total	100,0%	1.099	100,0%	357	100,0%	11	100,0%	1.467

Roughly half of the respondents attended at least one workcamp, one-quarter attended two. Compared to the 4,4% of young women, 7,8% of young men attended more than five workcamps and thus became regulars.

The most recent workcamp attended by almost three-quarter respondents was held in 2013 or 2014, with no significant difference between women and men. Approximately 18% attended their last workcamp in 2012 or 2011, and only about 6% reported an earlier year.

Workcamps offer a wide range of activities for both male and female youngsters (Table 3). The I'VE survey respondents mostly engaged in environmental work, renovation, manual work, construction, cultural projects, projects with children, festivals, social projects and agriculture. The least attractive activities were translation, family and yoga projects, work with the elderly, sports and projects with animal (Table 3).

Table 3: Type of work performed by volunteers by sex (multiple answers possible)

	VOL	
	Percent	**N**
Agriculture	11,2%	166
Language	7,2%	107
Archaeology	7,5%	111
Camp leader	9,3%	138
Art	7,7%	114
Manual work	28,3%	418
Construction	23,4%	346
Renovation	36,0%	532
Cultural projects	16,5%	243
Social project	11,3%	167
Work with people with disabilities	6,7%	99
Sport	1,6%	24
Educational	7,5%	110
Study theme project	4,3%	63
Work with elderly	1,6%	24
Teenagers	5,1%	76
Environmental	42,8%	632
Translation project	0,7%	11
Family	0,8%	12
Yoga project	0,9%	13
Festival	12,1%	179
Work with animals	2,2%	33
Work with kids	15,7%	232

Statistically significant differences were found between male and female respondents in some areas. For example, 34,9% young men engaged in manual work (women: 26%), 32,4% in construction (women: 20,4%) and 40,7% in renovation (women: 34,5%). Young women were found to be more inclined towards arts (women: 8,7%; men: 4,7%) and working with children (women: 17,4%; men: 10,8%) than young men. No valid results are found for youngsters who were undecided about their sex.

3.1.2.2 Workcamp leaders

Among workcamp leaders, the number of women (67,4%) were significantly greater than those of men (32,0%). One person chose the option of being undecided about sex.

By contrast, the camp leaders' age widely varied. The youngest workcamp leader was 18 years old and female. In this group as well, a higher number of male camp leaders were found to be among the older age groups. More than a quarter were born before 1984, whereas this was the case for only about 13% of their female colleagues (Table 4).

Table 4: Workcamp leaders' age by sex

	Female		Male		Undecided		In total	
Year of birth	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
after 1996	2,6%	3	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	1,8%	3
1995 - 1993	9,5%	11	5,4%	3	0,0%	0	8,1%	14
1992 - 1990	32,7%	38	21,8%	12	0,0%	0	29,1%	50
1989 - 1987	26,8%	31	27,3%	15	100,0%	1	27,3%	47
1986 - 1984	15,5%	18	18,2%	10	0,0%	0	16,3%	28
before 1984	12,9%	15	27,3%	15	0,0%	0	17,4%	30
In total	100,0%	116	100,0%	55	100,0%	1	100,0%	172

Almost two-third of the respondents was camp leaders for 1–2 workcamps and a fifth in 3–4 workcamps. About 16% reported to have led five or more.

The comparatively high share of workcamp leaders, who were in charge for only 1–2 workcamps, disagreed with the initial plan of focusing on experienced persons. A comparison of the answers across sub-groups, however, reveals no significant deviations between the response behaviour and the number of workcamps led in the past. Thus, to gain as many ideas and suggestions as possible concerning the tools of assessment and certification, the inclusion of less experienced workcamp leaders appears to be justified.

3.1.2.3 Workcamp organisers

Among the 42 responding workcamp organisers, three were associated with umbrella networks (Table 5). For further analysis, they are jointly considered as organisations and networks involved in the International Voluntary Services (IVS).

Table 5: Status of IVS organization

	WCO	
	Percent	N
Umbrella network	7,1%	3
Workcamp organizer	92,9%	39
In total	100,0%	42

3.1.2.4 Local partners

Local partners run onsite voluntary service projects and offer a range of activities, as reported by the volunteers on the respective competences gain. The 17 local partners involved in the I'VE survey through telephone interviews focus on environmental tasks, renovation projects, manual work, construction, social projects and work with teenagers (Table 6).

Table 6: Type of work with volunteers by local partners (multiple answers possible)

	Percent	N
Agriculture	8,3%	1
Language	0,0%	0
Archaeology	16,7%	2
Camp leader	0,0%	0
Art	33,3%	4
Manual work	50,0%	6
Construction	41,7%	5
Renovation	58,3%	7
Cultural projects	33,3%	4
Social projects	41,7%	5
Work with people with disabilities	33,3%	4
Sport	8,3%	1
Educational	16,7%	2
Study theme project	8,3%	1
Work with elderly	8,3%	1
Teenagers	41,7%	5
Environmental	66,7%	8
Translation project	0,0%	0
Family	8,3%	1
Yoga project	0,0%	0
Festival	25,0%	3
Work with animals	8,3%	1
Work with kids	16,7%	2

A majority of the local partners base their assessments of the topics under study on experiences from more than five workcamps conducted in the past.

3.1.2.5 Youth workers

Eight youth workers were questioned about their motives when sending youngsters with fewer opportunities to a workcamp to gain specific competence. All predefined competence areas—personal, social and intercultural—receive a high degree of approval, with social competences being unanimously considered the most important. The results of a rating on a scale of 1–4, with 1 being 'unimportant' and 4 being 'very important' are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Competence gain for youngsters with fewer opportunities intended by youth workers

	Very important	Rather important	Less important	Unimpor- tant	Rating Average	In total
Personal competences	5	3	0	0	3,63	8
Social competences	8	0	0	0	4,00	8
Intercultural competences	4	4	0	0	3,50	8

All interviewed youth workers have involved at least three youngsters with fewer opportunities in workcamps. Five of them reported to have gained experiences for more than 10 young people.

One youth worker, who involved more than ten youngsters, states that the expectations in terms of competence gain are always met; this holds true for most other youth workers as well.

3.1.2.6 Employers

With four organisations each, the 14 interviewed employers represented the production and service sector, and with three organisations each, they represented the third sector (non-profit organisations) and the public sectors. Half of them belonged to small enterprises with less than 20 employees. One organisation reported between 21 and 100 persons, two organisations between 101 and 500 persons and four organisations more than 1.000. Eight employers reported that their staff attended a workcamp in the past (table 8).

Table 8: Experiences of employers with staff having attended a workcamp

	Percent	N
Yes	57,1%	8
No	35,7%	5
I don't know	7,1%	1
In total	100%	14

3.1.2.7 European and international organisations

During the research phase, six interviews were conducted with persons in lead roles in European and international organisations. They belonged to the following bodies:

- European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe (EYF)
- European Volunteer Centre (CEV)
- Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS)
- South Eastern European Youth Network (SEEYN)
- Service Civil International (SCI)
- Network for Voluntary Development in Asia (NVDA)

They were particularly asked to assess the objectives and strategy of the I'VE project and discuss potential support measures. The interview results will be summarised in chapter 3.2.4.

3.2 Comparison of stakeholder perspectives

3.2.1 Learning topics and contexts of workcamps

3.2.1.1 Learning situations

The IVS workcamp, an international community of volunteers working on a local project in a foreign country, is a continuous learning experience. Although the work topics tend to vary, the common framework conditions are basic accommodation, joint self-catering and a leisure programme, which includes educational aspects such as insights on the host country's culture. Guidance, for example, support in travelling to and from the project, and supervision is reduced to a strictly necessary degree: self-responsibility—both individually and within groups—is enhanced. Against this background, camp leaders, workcamp organisers and local partners hosting the projects were asked to describe situations in which volunteers learn the most.

Some respondents mentioned the 'entire project' and daily chores, referring to the above-described complex learning contexts in general:

- *'In our opinion, the entire project is a source of learning'. (Workcamp organiser)*
- *Every day, all the time! The learning happens during the most incredible situations'. (Camp leader)*
- *'Important are the situations related to the management of the camp such as cooking, free time, shared accommodation, where the social skills and intercultural learning improve'. (Workcamp organiser)*
- *'Understanding of each other; during the evening times because this is the place where they talk the most about themselves and their culture. Learn practical skills during the work part. Learn also to manage resources during the shopping and cooking, etc. Learn also when they live a conflict situation'. (Local partner)*

As for particular activities, according to other respondents, both hard work and free time served as best learning conditions. Some respondents focused on the importance of meaningful activities.

- *'The work is hard, so participants can learn from their limits'. (Camp leader)*
- *'During the evening times because this is the place where they talk the most about themselves and their culture'. (Local partner)*
- *'When they understand the impact and importance of their work and presence in the community'. (Camp leader)*

A majority of respondents considered challenges, responsibilities, interaction, teamwork, and joint decision making as most important learning situations. Some camp leaders mentioned that positive feedback and recognition of achieved results enhance this effect.

- *'When there is a problem, then volunteers unite to solve it and the learning from such an experience is extremely important'. (Camp leader)*
- *'Volunteers learn most if they are given a space to make own decisions during the camp and be responsible for their results'. (Workcamp organiser)*
- *'Youth from different background don't know each other and have to find commons*
- *rules and strategies to work together, sharing rules and taking roles in the group'. (Local partner)*
- *'In teamwork. They learn how to share responsibility, how to help each other and to make work easier and more funny'. (Camp leader)*

Structured education and educational trips were considered especially effective by workcamp leaders.

- *'Educational parts like language and culture courses, excursions and museum visits'. (Camp leader)*
- *'When we visited a centre of eco-construction techniques and saw them in real'. (Camp leader)*

Finally, internal and external intercultural relationships, both within the group of volunteers and the local community, are learning situations favoured by many respondents.

- *'Interaction with the local people to learn about the local culture and concepts'. (Camp leader)*
- *'They have a different background and opinions among members and find a solution together. It brings great experiences to them'. (Local partner)*
- *'Preparing cultural events, such as the "Nations Night"'. (Workcamp organiser)*

3.2.1.2 Competences gained in workcamps

Drawing on the results and definitions of desk research, personal, social and intercultural competences commonly gained in workcamps were identified through questionnaires for volunteers, workcamp leaders, workcamp organisers and local partners.

To this effect, personal competences comprise the following:

1. Self-organisation, self-management, and personal management is particularly the ability to envision the goals of one's life to achieve them;
2. Learning to learn is the ability to pursue and organise one's own learning, either individually or in groups, in accordance with one's own needs;
3. Taking and carrying out responsibilities, namely a sense of purpose and responsibility, and the ability to act in accordance with these responsibilities;
4. Entrepreneurship, innovation and taking initiative is the ability to turn ideas into actions, confidence to take on new challenges and not giving up irrespective of the task difficulty;
5. Mathematical competences include the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking to solve a range of problems in everyday situations;
6. Digital learning is the ability to use digital technologies to aid the learning of knowledge, skills and attitudes; and
7. ICT competences in terms of basic skills in information and communication technology and the ability to work and communicate with them.

Social competences encompass the following:

1. Participation and civic competences is the ability to form opinions about social issues and share with others knowledge of the participation structures and willingness to use them;
2. Leadership competences denote a sense of purpose and responsibility and the capacity to respect the opinions of others and lead them in a life situation;
3. Management and organisational skills are ability to use one's resources and time and encourage others to achieve common goals;
4. Teamwork and relationship competences comprise the appreciation and support of the team, despite differing viewpoints and the ability to work with others to accomplish goals and tasks; and
5. Communication competences denote that willingness and ability to talk to people who one is unfamiliar with and consider the thoughts and feelings of other persons.

Intercultural competences include:

1. Cultural awareness competences are namely the awareness of diverse cultures and backgrounds, understanding the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experience and emotions in music, performing arts, literature and the visual arts, and the ability to use them for one's purposes;
2. Intercultural competences, global understanding and understanding diversity, which include the ability to understand other's cultures and interests in international issues;
3. Openness and tolerance, that is, an understanding of people with different sociocultural backgrounds and lack of prejudices;
4. Skills and foreign language denote the ability to use languages other than the naive language for oral and written communication and the ability to understand the role of language in understanding other cultures; and
5. Skills in the native language are the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form.

Each stakeholder was asked to assess if the above-mentioned competences are often, sometimes, seldom or not at all gained during the workcamps in which they are or were involved. As volunteers are generally uncertain in assessing their competence gain, they were asked to assess the degree to which these competences were 'needed'. This implied that competences needed in a certain context are further developed and thus gained. For the analysis of the results, the answers were ranked on a quantitative scale of 1–4, 1 indicating that the competences were not at all gained and 4 indicating that they were often gained.

Table 9 demonstrates the extent to which competences were gained in the workcamps, the most frequent being teamwork and relationship competencies, followed by openness and tolerance, intercultural competences, global understanding, understanding diversity, communication competences, skills in foreign languages and cultural awareness competences. Skills in mother tongue, ICT competences, digital learning and mathematical competences were attributed a minor role by the respondents.

Table 9: Assessment of competence gain by stakeholder groups

	VOL	WCL	WCO	LOP
Teamwork and relationship competencies	3,8	3,9	3,9	3,8
Openness and tolerance	3,8	3,8	3,8	3,8
Intercultural competencies, global understanding, understanding diversity	3,7	3,9	3,9	3,8
Communication competencies	3,8	3,8	3,8	3,8
Skills in foreign languages	3,7	3,7	3,8	3,7
Cultural awareness and competencies	3,5	3,9	3,8	3,5
Taking and carrying out responsibility	3,3	3,6	3,7	3,7
Self-organisation, self-management, personal efficiency	3,3	3,5	3,7	3,7
Learning to learn	3,2	3,3	3,3	3,7
Participation and civic competencies	3,1	3,5	3,5	3,4
Management and organizational skills	3,0	3,5	3,4	3,4
Entrepreneurship, innovation, taking initiative	3,0	3,3	3,1	3,8
Leadership competencies	2,8	3,4	3,2	3,5
Skills in mother tongue	2,1	2,5	2,6	2,8
ICT competences	1,6	2,1	2,2	2,2
Digital learning	1,6	1,9	2,1	1,9
Mathematical competences	1,6	2,0	1,9	1,9

There were minor deviations in the assessment of stakeholders; however, they do not affect the overall ranking. In many respects, volunteers, and even the more pronounced male respondents, were less positive in their assessment than workcamp organisers, camp leaders and local partners. This applied especially to soft skills such as taking and carrying out responsibilities; self-organisation, self-management and personal efficiency; learning to learn, management and organisational skills; and participation and civic competences. They showed even more reservation than the other stakeholders in 'hard' skills such as those in the native language, ICT competences, digital learning and mathematical competences.

Local partners shared the volunteers' more reluctant view on gains in cultural awareness competences and partly on participation and civic competences. However, local partners laid

more emphasis than other stakeholders on increased entrepreneurship, innovation and leadership competences. Workcamp organisers and camp leaders strongly agreed to their assessment of newly gained competences, which can be attributed to a common discourse on the topic. The assessments of workcamp leaders do not significantly deviate per the number of workcamps led by them in the past.

In addition, youth workers were asked about the degree to which the competences under study were gained by youngsters with fewer opportunities on a quantitative scale of 1–4, with 4 indicating a very high degree, 3 a considerable degree, 2 a low degree and 1 not at all.

In general, the level of competence gain seemed to be somewhat lower for youngsters with fewer opportunities. Openness and tolerance was the highest rated (3,5), followed by intercultural competences, global understanding and understanding diversity (3,4); teamwork and relationship competences (3,3); and communication competences, taking and carrying out responsibilities, self-organisation, self-management, personal efficiency and learning to learn (3,0). However, youngsters with fewer opportunities seemed to benefit more than other volunteers in native language skills (2,8) and digital learning (2,4).

All stakeholders had the opportunity to add other important competences gained at the workcamps. Technical skills—such as cooking and gardening, presentation and self-assessment techniques—were mentioned by a significant number of volunteers, camp leaders and local partners. In addition, volunteers and camp leaders referred to in-depth knowledge on certain topics such as arts and historical knowledge, sports and other physical skills. Respondents across all stakeholder groups mentioned that soft skills played a major role in additional competences, which had not been referred to by the predefined answers. These include patience, flexibility, creativity, political awareness, social relationships and, in general, survival skills; 'growing into adulthood' was especially raised by youth workers.

3.2.1.3 Importance of competences gained in workcamps

To benchmark the competences gained in workcamps against different backgrounds, the stakeholders were asked to assess their value with particular reference to further studies and career, regardless of whether they gained from the workcamp. The same methods as described above were applied for the result analysis.

For both assessment areas, there is a far-reaching general consent across stakeholders, with deviations only in particular realms. The assessment of the importance of particular competences across stakeholder groups is shown in Tables 10 and 11.

Table 10: Importance of competences for further studies

	VOL	WCL	WCO	LOP
Teamwork and relationship competencies	3,8	3,9	3,9	3,8
Self-organisation, self-management, personal efficiency	3,6	3,8	3,9	4,0
Taking and carrying out responsibility	3,6	3,8	3,8	3,8
Communication competencies	3,8	3,8	3,8	3,6
Learning to learn	3,5	3,7	3,7	3,9
Openness and tolerance	3,7	3,8	3,7	3,6
Intercultural competencies, global understanding, under-standing diversity	3,6	3,8	3,7	3,4

Table 11: Importance of competences for further career

	VOL	WCL	WCO	LOP
Self-organisation, self-management, personal efficiency	3,8	3,9	3,9	3,9
Teamwork and relationship competencies	3,8	3,9	3,9	3,8
Taking and carrying out responsibility	3,7	3,9	3,9	3,8
Communication competencies	3,8	3,9	3,8	3,7
Management and organizational skills	3,6	3,7	3,9	3,8
Learning to learn	3,6	3,7	3,8	3,7
Openness and tolerance	3,6	3,7	3,5	3,7
Entrepreneurship, innovation, taking initiative	3,5	3,7	3,7	3,6
Skills in foreign languages	3,7	3,7	3,9	3,1
Leadership competencies	3,3	3,5	3,6	3,6
Intercultural competencies, global understanding, under-standing diversity	3,5	3,6	3,6	3,3
Cultural awareness and competencies	3,4	3,5	3,5	3,5
Skills in mother tongue	3,2	3,4	3,4	3,3
Participation and civic competencies	3,1	3,5	3,3	3,2
ICT competences	2,7	3,2	3,3	3,3
Digital learning	2,7	3,2	3,1	3,3
Mathematical competences	2,3	2,8	2,9	2,8

From the perspective of volunteers, workcamp organisers, camp leaders and local partners, the most important competences gained by youngsters with reference to further studies and/or career are as follows:

- Teamwork and relationship competences
- Self-organisation, self-management and personal efficiency
- Taking and carrying out responsibility
- Communication competences
- Learning to learn
- Openness and tolerance
- Management and organisational skills
- Intercultural competencies, global understanding and understanding diversity

The mentioned competences are acquired to a considerable extent in learning situations provided at workcamps. Their specific strengths can be primarily found in not only personal competences but also the realms of social and intercultural competences.

Employers were asked about the importance of the competences under study in their own organisation. The responses confirmed the general findings but also presented slightly different perceptions when it came to the details. Openness and tolerance is given highest priority (3,7), followed by self-organisation, self-management and personal efficiency; teamwork and relationship competences; communication competencies; taking and carrying out responsibility; and entrepreneurship, innovation and taking initiative (each 3,6). Finally is learning to learn (3,5). It is noteworthy that mathematical competences are more important to them (3,0) than those recognised by the other stakeholders. By contrast, participation and civic competences (2,9) are less favoured by employers than assumed. Also less important, and not often gained in workcamps, is digital learning (2,9).

Since the sample of 14 employers is small, a comparison between different sectors is treated with caution. Nevertheless, participation and civic competences seem to be of no special importance in the production and service sector, while it ranks high in the third sector. Communication competences are much appreciated among all employers but considered of less importance in government institutions. Skills in the native language are especially welcome in the service sector.

Eight employers reported their experiences with staff who attended a workcamp in the past. Four of them noted that these experiences were more positive than average, whereas the others noticed no such difference.

3.2.2 Methods and tools for competence assessment

3.2.2.1 Current practice

Most workcamp organisers had either not followed or not heard methods and tools for the assessment of competences gained by youngsters; this was due to scarce time and financial resources. Only 15 out of 52 responding workcamp organisers reported the certification of competences and thus the assessment tools were applied.

Relatively common methods and tools for competence assessments according to the results of the desk research and their application are shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Current practice in applying assessment tools (multiple answers possible)

	WCO	
	Percent	N
Self-assessment tools	66,7%	10
Diaries	6,7%	1
Performance monitoring	26,7%	4
Written tests	26,7%	4
Discussion groups	93,3%	14
Biographical interviews	13,3%	2
Formal education tools	13,3%	2
Other assessment means	46,7%	7

Discussion groups were the most popular tool, followed by self-assessment tools. Performance monitoring and written tests were seldom used. Formal education tools, biographical interviews and diaries in which volunteers note their experiences are few exceptions.

Although some comments on other assessments tools were too fragmented to provide concrete evidence, few workcamp organisers applied structured evaluation techniques and describe them in detail.

- *'We have developed an online learning platform that complements self-assessment through questionnaires and gives opportunity to volunteers to learn about communication techniques and skills (and to recognise their own) about what motivates us for volunteering, about different team roles, their general characteristics, strengths and risks etc'.*

- *'We developed last year a series of questionnaires to assess social competencies of volunteers before and after the workcamp, or only after. We have based them on the RIVER methodology'.*

- *'Evaluations at the beginning of the camp, intermediate evaluation and final evaluation of the camp Clinic History that each volunteer has to fill'.*

- *'Evaluation in the end of the workcamp, collecting feedbacks'.*

Other workcamp organisers highlighted the importance of the passage of time before a solid evaluation should take place and favour a follow-up of former volunteers.

- *'Normally, you need time to assess efficiently the skills gained by the volunteers (usually volunteers can make a more precise reflection about the skills and the knowledge gained in a workcamp years after it took place when they are working in other areas where this skills turned up to be useful)'.*

An experienced workcamp organiser recommended a mix of methods on the basis of techniques that stimulate situations in which integration, trust, partnership, teamwork, discovering skills, problem solving, decision making, discovering personalities, views and group organisation as well as managing resources are needed. The competence assessment produces a result by applying a mix of methods:

- *'To confront and jointly analyse complex situations and practices, e.g. different types of crises and conflicts between people;*
- *To practise intermediate and final initial assessments, and organise group meetings to exchange ideas, comments, observations during the project;*
- *To apply surveys to discover skills, abilities, personality, values'.*

3.2.2.2 Suggestions for further development

To learn whether certain assessment tools are universally acceptable, both volunteers and workcamp leaders were asked about ways to how assess competences gained in workcamps.

Table 13 provides an overview of the workcamp leaders and volunteers' preferences for existing tools and methods.

Table 13: Preferences for already practised assessment tools and methods (multiple answers possible)

	VOL		WCL	
	Percent	N	Percent	N
Self-assessment tools	57,9%	863	72,1%	129
Diaries	24,7%	369	30,2%	54
Performance monitoring	29,6%	442	30,7%	55
Written tests	11,3%	169	13,4%	24
Discussion groups	76,7%	1144	84,9%	152
Biographical interviews	29,6%	441	24,0%	43
Others	4,6%	68	10,1%	18

The responses of volunteers and camp leaders in many instances reflect the current practices. Discussion groups and self-assessment tools were ranked the highest on the list for suggestions, followed by performance monitoring. While diaries and biographical interviews were also much appreciated by the volunteers and workcamp leaders, they

played a minor role in the procedures of workcamp organisers. Written tests seemed to be least attractive for both workcamp leaders and volunteers.

A large number of the female camp leaders favoured self-assessment tools (80,1% vs. 53,7%), while their male colleagues preferred the straightforward approach of written tests (25,9% vs. 7,9%). No such differences, however, were found among volunteers.

Comments on the current practices often indicated that the benefits of assessing competences gained in workcamps are clear but difficult to implement. In particular, the practice of maintaining diaries received mixed reviews. The present form is obviously in need of further development, for example, structure was key. There was also basic resistance against diaries.

- *'Personal diaries are unethical to use, and obligation for the camp leader to write daily diaries is overloading, and not really effective. Performance monitoring is good, but hard to conduct as it should be done during a long period of time. Written tests could be good in forms of questionnaire or evaluation forms done soon after the end of the workcamp. My idea of a biographical interview or biography review is one of the self-assessment tools'. (Camp leader)*

Volunteers and workcamp leaders were asked for recommendations and suggestions on how to further develop approaches. This opportunity was seldom used but revealed, in case of an answer, some interesting responses.

An indirect form of assessment—in line with the hypothesis that the assessment tools in a workcamp need further development—is performed by listing workcamp activities.

- *'The description of the workcamp on a certificate—theme, activities etc—will imply the competencies gained there'. (Volunteer)*

Regardless of the specific assessment method—written tests or discussion groups—the process during which competences are developed is an important issue for some respondents. A few detailed reflections were provided on ex ante and ex post evaluations.

- *'By supporting volunteers to be aware of their own competences, their learning needs and their learning process during the project and by offering them a variety of tools they can use to assess these competences and encouraging them to do it before, during and after the camp. Maybe also by mentoring, but mainly a mentor who has the role of a facilitator of a self-awareness process in terms of needs and self-development'. (Volunteer)*
- *'A questionnaire at the beginning of the camp asking whether volunteers expect to gain anything during the project, what and to which degree, then at the end of the camp checking what they have learned and if expectations were reached or not or under estimated. A mid-term and end-of-project self evaluation form to assess gained competences. Assessing peers, evaluating what they think they have gained during the project'. (Camp leader)*

Follow-up measures that allow passage of time to become aware of lasting effects were proposed by few volunteers and one camp leader. These post-camp events, either in the origin country or the destination location, can be used not only for competence assessment but also to create synergy effects:

- *'Post-workcamp events or retreats with those who are going on workcamps—a great opportunity to share with "newbies"'. (Volunteer)*

- *'Discussions in small groups in homeland after the workcamp. Share thoughts and ideas about the workcamp experience'. (Volunteer)*

Assessments by camp leaders were favoured by a comparably high number of volunteers when suggesting future procedures. Some of them found it useful to include local partners and workcamp organisers. Camp leaders did not emphasise their role of judging new competences. By contrast, few arguments indicated a distinct warning, which is worth considering.

- *'References, recommendations or some other feedback from camp leaders may be useful'. (Volunteer)*

- *'I think the leaders and the people from the organisation should evaluate the competences gained in function of the developed skills'. (Volunteer)*

- *'SHOULD competences gained in a workcamp be assessed? I don't think workcamps are about gaining valuable skills on the labour market. I'm quite confused about this emphasis on competences gained. While I truly value what can be learned in a workcamp, and think this is one of the primary reasons to engage in one, I would certainly not like workcamps to become internships (in which students engage voluntarily but with a perspective of personal profit). Workcamps are not a tool for the labour market, they are a tool for life. It is about giving, not about gaining fitness. Some things can't be measured. So I would leave it to volunteers to try or not to assess the outcome of their experience. If a skill-orientated evaluation must be done, then a self-assessment form can be handled and volunteers can choose to use it, and then use those arguments later on in any appropriate situation. I don't think it is nice to ask the camp leader to evaluate volunteers: it would change the whole experience and the social dynamics. I would never accept to lead a workcamp again if this was the case'. (Camp leader)*

Only one comment detailed a peer assessment technique. It includes a structured technique with trained peer volunteers and a built-in guarantee that no 'sweetheart reports' are delivered.

- *'There is something called "Kompetenznachweis International," that is German for "international proof for competences." Here, volunteers are trained to give peers (be it other volunteers or other friends) a constructive feedback about one's skills for a certain time, action or project. This is often encouraging for people getting feedback, regardless of what the feedback tackles. The fact that someone is interested in what friends are capable of is a great experience for oneself. If people have done a training on this, they are entitled to verify certificates for the person who received feedback. I think it should be promoted to write constructive and honest letters of references for*

anyone. The question is whether people verifying the letter/certificate would need some sort of license or simply tell what they have done with the person. This may be called "peer feedback and evaluation of competences"'. (Volunteer)

Few unconventional suggestions include role play, online tools, the world café method, videos and a jointly developed evaluation tool.

- *'Common video taken among the participants (not too personal things.) The video could take place before the camp, during the camp and post camp. And it could be voluntary to do this or not'. (Volunteer)*
- *'Business games and cases, imitating conflict situations'. (Camp leader)*
- *'Team-building exercises in which their new knowledge is tested'. (Camp leader)*
- *'Online discussion groups matched with self-assessment tool or diary'. (Camp leader)*
- *'Something like the world cafè methodology, at the end of the camp, in which each table is one of the key competences, in which one participant encourages the others to reflect about their own learning outcomes during the camp in that specific area, to be shared with the others at the end of the session. To make the volunteers more acquainted with the concept, the leaders can also prepare some game, in which participants have to perform one task for each competence'. (Camp leader)*
- *'Evaluation tool written by camp leaders and the other volunteers for each others'. (Camp leader)*

While testing a potential approach to applying the assessment tool to be newly developed, volunteers were asked if they had joined a post-camp event to recognise competences gained in the workcamp. With no significant differences between male and female respondents, 47,4% agreed without reservation and 44,5% were unsure. A minority of 8,1% were not interested.

In parallel to identifying the interest of volunteers in a post-camp events, workcamp leaders were asked if they were willing to facilitate such an event. Again without significant differences between male and female workcamp leaders, 59% agreed, 36% were undecided and 5,1% rejected the request.

The workcamp leaders' approval was even more distinct than that of volunteers.

- *'I would really like something like that to happen, and I would definitely go'.*
- *'Definitely, this is such a good initiative. I gained some experience in this during my EVS'.*
- *'Yes, I would like to participate in a camp event depending my studying schedule. But, nonetheless, I would support such an action by informing my peers and social circle of the event'.*

Some camp leaders gave suggestion on how to run post-camp events or base their involvement on certain conditions.

- *'My opinion is that this could be a good idea and they should be thematic. Each post-camp event would focus on the issue that the whole group expressed as important and relevant during the workcamp'.*

- *'If it's rather informal and in the work camp mood'.*

- *'Depends on what is meant by this Post Camp Event. It is not a bad idea but makes me wonder if people would attend it and to whom it would be useful. It is true that you gain many competences during a work camp but these skills are not recognised'.*

- *'I would facilitate it, but I don't understand who this post-camp event would involve. If it involved participants from different countries, it could be difficult to organise'.*

- *'BUT everything should be done before the end! Otherwise, it is always so hard to have a paper or anything. Some associations are really not well organised and can't afford to organise something right after'.*

Few camp leaders and volunteers were sceptical.

- *'We already do it in my organisation but we only have a few participants who come'.*

- *'These are competences for life, and might be recognised much later. I don't see the point of such an event'.*

- *'I think that the beauty of the workcamps is that the people that participate in it don't really care to do it in order to put it in the CV, but because they love it without asking for "paying back"!'.*

3.2.3 Methods and tools to recognise competences

3.2.3.1 Current practices

Of the 52 responding workcamp organisers, 15 reported that they validate competences gained by youngsters. Generally, there is no regular practice and such validation is conducted in case of a specific request. A confirmation is usually provided in the form of a certificate, diploma, recommendation or evaluation letter.

- *'We give a diploma to the volunteers. It contains the name of the volunteer, the type of work the volunteer did, the dates of the camp, the name of our organisation, the signature of the President and Vice President of the organisation, the location of the camp and country'.*

- *'We are issuing a certificate of participation and short description of the workcamp tasks, but we do not go into personal details of the gained skills and knowledge'.*

- *'The participants receive a confirmation of their participation, in which describes the project type, their language skills, their social skills (fitting in the international group)'.*

- *'The volunteers receive a general certificate of attendance, mentioning that they have participated in the voluntary experience, improving their intercultural skills and social skills'.*

- *'We issue a certificate signed and stamped by our organisation. The volunteers are requesting this document for the sake of their studies and job search. Also, there is a competence Learning Journal mobile application in progress—this one will allow the volunteers to be aware and follow their competence and personal development'.*

- *'We make a brief certificate. Sometimes if they come through EVS, we give them a Youth Pass'.*

One-third of the volunteers were offered, at least once in the case of more than one workcamp attendance, a certificate. About 51% stated they did not receive such an offer, and 15,9% did not remember. Relating these answers to the respondents' last participation year, it seems that certification documents are being more frequently issued as of 2009.

Of the volunteers who had been offered a certificate, 62,5% made use of it, with no significant differences between men and women. Also, 31,1% declined and 6,4% did not remember.

Finally, 57,1% of those who were not offered a certificate appreciated such an offer. 31,8% were unsure if they would have liked it and 11% did not appreciate it. Again, no difference was found on the basis of respondents' sex.

3.2.3.2 Benefits of certification measures

The benefits of certification means cannot be naturally assumed, as suggested by the relatively high share of volunteers who declined the offer of a certificate as well as those who could not remember if it was offered in the first place. To avoid such an overestimation and tailor the I'VE tool to realistic standards, different stakeholders were questioned in context. Table 14 shows that the workcamp leader shared quite a positive view of the benefits: 44,6% of workcamp leaders believed that it provides academic advantages, for example, as credits for school or university, and 70,1% saw it as a professional advantage, for example, job applications.

Table 14: Benefits of certificates from the perspective of camp leaders (multiple answers possible)

	WCL	
	Percent	N
Advantages in studies	44,6%	79
Advantages in job applications	70,1%	124
Increase in self-esteem	89,8%	159
Other advantages	16,4%	29

The share of volunteers who reported actual advantages in these realms are, however, lower (Table 15).

Table 15: Benefits of certificates from the perspective of volunteers (multiple answers possible)

	VOL	
	Percent	N
Advantages in studies	30,2%	94
Advantages in job applications	47,6%	148
Other advantages	17,7%	55
No advantages	29,6%	92

However, of the volunteers, only 30,2% and 47,6% mentioned academic and professional advantages. Also, 29,6% of the volunteers reported no advantage. On the one hand, the age of the responding volunteers was high enough to have experienced at least academic advantages. On the other hand, advantages of the certification can still unfold in job applications or other realms.

- *'It hasn't been necessary for me to use it in a job application by the moment. My university doesn't give me any advantage'. (Volunteer)*

- *'I guess I haven't quite yet used them. My employers in my home country have ignored my experience'. (Volunteer)*

- *'I have not used it for the time being, but I am quite positive it can be helpful in job'. (Volunteer)*

Since the competence certifications awarded at the workcamps are still in the nascent stage, the existing means may not completely fulfil their purpose. In some cases, volunteers mentioned that the certificate mostly served as a memory.

- *'Not sure yet. … The certification I got is kind of a diploma saying I was a participant in those workcamp, place and date, besides the title of the project. However, it does not explain the content of the project, main topic and activities and competences we developed. Also, I think we could do a lot more that we actually do when we attend to work in a workcamp'. (Volunteer)*

- *'I actually never used the certificate, mentioning the workcamps in my curriculum was enough. But the certificates are nice souvenirs'. (Volunteer)*

According to three volunteers, the certificates were helpful when applying for an internship, for voluntary work, a position as a camp leader or other related functions. Four volunteers reported that the certificates helped receive a scholarship.

Many respondents did not restrict the advantages of certificates to further education and their career: 89,9% of the camp leaders noted that the certification of gained competences increased the self-esteem of the youngsters. In particular, female camp leaders and volunteers see manifold additional benefits of the certificates for personal development and social networks.

- *'It provided self-respect and the respect of my surroundings'. (Volunteer)*

- *'It provides a new horizon for people, new ways to see the world, it may or may not be useful for your job or studies, but it is definitely very important for your life, personal relationships and the way your personality is formed'. (Camp leader)*

- *'It is a crucial experience that many young people don't have the opportunity to take part in. You become instantly "wiser" and create really important memories that follow you forever. Plus it looks good in your CV'. (Camp leader)*

- *'It can increase the value of the workcamp experience towards the family and friends environment of the volunteer that might not understand clearly why their son or friend wants to go to workcamps'. (Camp leader)*

Particular cases reported a fundamental disapproval.

- *'Not a benefit: If youngsters learn that their self-esteem has to be related to certificates, they are going to be disappointed in life. I certainly don't feel this is the way to go'. (Camp leader)*

- *'I do feel that you're trying to institutionalise, proceduralise, rationalise something that was "off-road" and I certainly don't appreciate that'. (Camp leader)*

- *'I like the idea that it is not about "my educational level is this and this degree" but about "I know, I am competent do this particular thing and I can apply it globally"'. (Camp leader)*

Divided opinions about the benefits, especially if they contain only general information, do not seem to be unjustified.

- *'The advantages in job application and in studies REALLY DEPEND ON the specific position that you apply for'. (Camp leader)*

Also employers' positions differ on how relevant a certificate on competences resulting from voluntary work is in the selection of new employees. Four employers out of 14 certificates were an important selection criterion, six consider them nice to have but playing a minor role and four others believed it did not play a role. The latter is most pronounced in governmental organisations, while service companies seem to value certificates more than others.

3.2.3.3 Suggestions for further development

Employers were undecided about competences that should be mentioned on a workcamp certificate to facilitate their selection of the best candidate. All three competence realms—personal, social and intercultural competences—are ranked between 'important' and 'very important' (3,4 - 3,6 on a scale with 1 indicating unimportant and 4 indicating important).

Here as well, the sample is too small to arrive at a solid conclusion for the employers' preferences by sector. However, it seems that all competence realms are most appreciated in the third sector and least in government institutions. If this result is considered valid, the categories as such may express a bias for the third sector and do not necessarily meet employers' needs in the competence certification in other sectors. Three employers referred to concepts that allow for better recognition of candidates who may fit well into their companies.

- *'Usually, they divide the competences in two: behavioural competences (is s/he absent often, is s/he good at teamwork, etc) and technical competences (those required by the employer). The competences listed above can motivate us to interview somebody but won't be determining'.*

- *'To check on a "guide" of generic competences (like DDI known internationally) which are more directly understandable by the professional field. We use it to make a candidate selection, and we choose 8 of this generic competences out of 32. You also should be aware about the SCAR methods used to demonstrate the existence of a competence in a concrete way. … Two questionnaires can also be useful: TMS and IE5'.*

- *'Better focus in the number of competences. I mean: reading the report of the desk research I saw that listed many competences and also here. In my opinion, it would be better to choose 5-6 strategic competences and work on those'.*

Nonetheless, some employers explicitly valued the role of voluntary work and soft skills acquired in the process.

- *'In our selection of new talents, the previous voluntary work experience plays a role: between two candidates with the same score, the previous voluntary work experience makes the difference in motivational dimension, innovation, creativity, relationship ability, understanding diversity, openness and tolerance'.*

- *'Normally, our employees have been volunteers in National Civil Service or EVS, work camp or alike. When we launch open completion announcement for recruitment the previous volunteering experience is an important selection criterion'.*

Workcamp organisers' suggestions focused on individual actions, encouraging youngsters to make use of the certificates in their CVs and applications and cooperation with public institutions to increase the value of their certificates.

- *'Collaboration with state authorities and universities (e.g. a ministry can give a quality certificate to the IVS organisation that can then put this information into the official certificate to be issued to the volunteer). The IVS organisations need to participate in shaping the policy of the ministries'.*

Also, the volunteers, camp leaders and local partners were asked on how the newly gained competences should be presented on certificates and through other means. With a couple of hundred recommendations, these stakeholders turned out to be both supportive and imaginative.

In most comments, a plain certificate mentioning the acquired competences is favoured. Other respondents recommended a more accredited format, for example, one as per European standards.

- *'An international standard certificate that confirms the fact of working abroad (contribution to international diversity, to bridge the gap between mono- and multi cultural countries, etc). Signatures of local administrations are appreciated'. (Volunteer)*

- *'In my opinion, a certificate would be the best option, but the most important thing is that it was given through European institutions because it would be recognised across European countries, and also would empower the workcamps as a way to improve skills for the youth'. (Volunteer)*

- *'The Youth Pass certification is a good idea to present skills and knowledge gained by volunteers. People could define by themselves with the organisers' support, what they have learnt in the workcamp, which could be a great feedback to us on what we should improve to make people better skilled and content'. (Camp leader)*

- *'I think that at the end of all project, a volunteers and the LEADER should receive a paper (Which should be international! At least European!) to prove what they did. It should be better prepared than the Youth Pass (for example). I did two training courses and I never received my Youth Pass, so it is difficult to prove it one my CV'. (Camp leader)*

- *'I believe that volunteer workcamps should be embedded and recognised by universities in every country. This way the certificate would have more power'. (Camp leader)*

Many volunteers and workcamp leaders suggested to simply listing the competences on the certificate and some even provided wording suggestions. A few respondents favoured charts or scales, implying a more in-depth evaluation.

- *'A "Personal Growth Certificate" for various areas'. (Volunteer)*

- *'A certificate with a general list of competences, on which the ones gained at the workcamp can be ticked off. This could be done by the camp leader and could be verified by a signature. Also, there should be a short description of the tasks that were done in the camp. Not just the workcamp number like it is done now'. (Volunteer)*

- *'She/He has been participating in a voluntary project, where she/he was part of an international group, the language of the group was xx, other languages ... The project has been focused on xx, participants did especially xxx'. (Volunteer)*

- *'Certificates proving the experience: the work, the responsibilities, the languages ... That says something like "this guy has been working for a month in a Russian botanical garden, so he has acquired knowledge of that work, he has developed a basic understanding of Russian culture and language, he has proved to be good working in teams and to be very able to communicate and socialise with foreign people ..."'. (Volunteer)*

- *'The certificate could include a rubric named "special competence" for example. This would contain any competences the person gives him/herself if the camp leaders conform. Therefore, a discussion or short self-assessment would be helpful to check which competences are actually existing and to what extent'. (Volunteer)*

- *'Creating a certificate in which are listed the most important skills that could be achieved during a workcamp. The number and the period of the workcamps performed by the volunteer. To give a percentage maybe we should compare a self-evaluation test, an evaluation test made by the camp leader and once compiled by the other volunteers'. (Camp leader)*

- *'The certificate should be in English and also in the mother tongue of every participant'. (Volunteer)*

For 30 volunteers and camp leaders, personal recommendation letters, in written form or via LinkedIn, appeared to hold far more value than conventional certificates. Photos of the concerned person were also recommended to enhance the impression that could be created in the readers' mind. Awards were suggested by both workcamp leaders and volunteers.

- *'Recommendation letters would be most beneficial in my opinion'. (Camp leader)*

- *'I think it is okay when they give you a certificate of the dates that you participated, how many people you had during your projects and the work that you did, however, what is really relevant is if they make you a cover letter or some argumentative letter or evaluative letter of the boss/leader/coordinator that explain how you work, your skills, if you are recommended. Nowadays, many jobs ask for the resolute, and not for where it was'". (Volunteer)*

- *'Report what has the individual (or the team as a whole) achieved/done during the workcamp (e.g. photos or tangible outcomes). These reports can be distributed to the volunteers in the form of a reference letter'. (Camp leaders)*

- *'Not certificates, but try to produce a document that will have information what the local community gained after the workcamp and to point out each volunteer and how he contributed the work or the group. And also, it is good to have at the end of the camp awards for everyone, "the best ... of the camp"'. (Camp leader)*

Accounting for more personal recommendations, the survey contained a question for local partners to provide testimonials. Almost two-third of the responding local partners agreed to describe the knowledge and skills gained by youngsters in their workcamps. Most of them, however, would rather do this for the entire group of volunteers instead for individuals.

A number of comments by volunteers, camp leaders and local partners referred to making use of online tools. They suggested special project webpages or other sites to publish articles about the workcamps, photos, videos or the participants list to document the names of volunteers when they are searched for. In particular, LinkedIn was mentioned a couple of times: volunteers would publish their competences and workcamp organisers would directly endorse online.

- *'Synthetic certificate is the best means. Why not a recommendation on LinkedIn in the "competencies" section'. (Volunteer)*

- *'Publishing a list of participants with skillset gained on specific workcamps online, so it can be found by web search of their names... could be of help for the volunteers if potential employer searches for them online'. (Camp leader)*

- *'Through a presentation of goals and outcomes, through videos and photos on social media, even online certificate that could be uploaded on LinkedIn'. (Camp leader)*

- *'Focus on key points and make an easy transposition of the moment and the situation they lived. Play their competences, showing the gained attitudes. Storytelling could be a method!'. (Camp leader)*

In some comments, enlarged public relations by workcamp organisers were considered an important accompanying measure to raise awareness about the general aims, contents and outcomes of workcamps.

- *'Better to spread in public some basic knowledge what are workcamps in general about'. (Volunteer)*

- *'Testimony of previous volunteers that are now working. Enterprises' presentations which show the skills required for new century jobs. NGOs presentations about global needs and the importance of international cooperation. Entrepreneurs' testimony about global vision for new sustainable business and skills required for entrepreneurship. Academic testimony about motivation that youngsters gain through workcamps'. (Local partner)*

- *'Create a foundation, federation that has worldwide branches etc. so the certificate that is given after workcamps may be more effective'. (Camp leader)*

3.2.4 Assessments by European and international organisations

The interviews with persons in lead roles within the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe (EYF), the European Volunteer Centre (CEV), the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS), the South Eastern European Youth Network (SEEYN), the Service Civil International (SCI) and the Network for Voluntary Development in Asia (NVDA) addressed the following issues and considerations.

All of the organisations considered the I'VE's objectives interesting, important to both volunteers and organisations and necessary to pursue. As a topic of the current debate, it fits the Council of Europe's youth sector priorities for 2016 and 2017, one of them being the recognition of youth work, volunteering and non-formal education as models of youth participation. NVDA points out that the networks of workcamp organisations either do not dispose tools for the assessment and recognition of gained competences or, if they have access to such tools, the results are not shared. A tool available to all of them would solve these problems and be highly welcomed.

The issue of learning is given specific accents by the interview partners. CCIVS considers workcamps as a non-formal rather than informal learning experience: learning is intended, and specific aims and results are expected to be achieved. Organisations and camp leaders consciously design workcamps as learning environments. As for recognition, CCIVS appreciates that gained competences are regarded not only as individual development but also academic and professional advantages.

SCI widely agrees on this position. Against the background of formal education increasingly striving to integrate non-formal experiences, structured and validated learning in workcamps can become an important part of one's portfolio. Workcamp leaders are a perfect example of how workcamps can have a long-term impact, foster professional development and sometimes, be a life-changing experience. Some SCI branches issue certificates of participation, but without the validation of gained competencies. Moreover, this certificate has been recognised by universities as an extracurricular involvement, serving as a bonus when applying for, for example, internships.

For SEEYN as well, it is essential to perceiving workcamps not only as voluntary contributions to the local development but also as learning opportunities. However, it should be understood as 'learning' in its pure form and not a part of non-formal or informal categories. EVS has become structured and formalised. But boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal learning are increasingly blurring—learning in workcamps should be regarded rather as a process than a methodology.

In addition, CEV suggests that volunteering primarily benefit the target groups of the action. Clearly, volunteers also gain from the experience. Tools to recognise newly gained skills and competencies are also important. However, care must be taken that the need to acquire skills and competencies and have them recognised does not become more important than the

needs that the actions were designed for. Nonetheless, it is important that organisations and volunteers are assisted in identifying gained competences and adequately and appropriately describing them. Also, it should be ensured that third parties, for example, employers, understand and value them. Further, it should also be considered that not all volunteers will want their skills and gained competences recognised. It should always be a personal choice but the option should be available and the process to do it clearly explained.

Adding to the assessment of the I'VE objectives, various recommendations were given to optimise the benefits of the tool for all stakeholders involved as well as its sustainability.

First, CCIVS points out that focus must be on competences considered important by IVS and development during the workcamps for two main reasons. On one hand, if IVS organisations intend to develop specific competences in workcamps, but young people do not respond as planned, the educational approach requires adaptations. The survey results should be used to improve the quality of the projects by enhancing efforts for the development of theses competences. On the other hand, youth employability has become a priority in EU-funded projects in the last few years. Although IVS contributes to this aims, this is not its primary objective. There is a risk to be exploited regarding objectives not primarily inherent to IVS. Competences that are not exclusively related to the professional sphere should stay in the centre.

According to SCI, the employability of youngsters should not be the only factor considered. Equally important is that volunteers develop their personalities to the effect of lifelong learning. CEV underlines this position. There is no reason why a tool for the assessment and recognition of competences should be used just for young people and not all ages. Volunteers across all age groups should be able to apply the tool.

SEEYN considers it important that volunteers understand from the very beginning the type of competences that are most likely to be gained in a workcamp. This way, they can plan the development of these competences and practice them accordingly. It would turn attending a workcamp into a more structured learning process, although unintended learning could still take place.

CEV suggests that the assessment and recognition tool should comply with standards created at the EU level: a) the European Qualifications Framework b) CEDEFOP recommendations for the validation of formal and non-formal learning since 2012 and c) the Europass CV. SEEYN agrees that anything newly developed should build on what already exists. For example, the methods for self-assessment from the Youth Pass could be adapted and implemented before and after attending a workcamp. During the workcamp, methods used at mid-term evaluations of EVS volunteers can be used. These evaluation meetings focus on do not only fixing logistical problems and practical conflict solving but also on the learning process itself. The 'super hero' methodology may be of specific interest here.

EYF refers to the potential aspect of putting monetary value on the time and experience of young volunteers. This would give provide an understanding regarding the extent of benefits created for both the volunteer and organisation running the project. NVDA suggests that the

tool also serves to collect data from member organisations and other networks and analyse them at an international level. Guidelines should be created to facilitate the procedures.

Most interview partners offer practical support to the I'VE project to increase the probability of its success.

- CCIVS suggests the organisation of meetings in autumn among those actively involved in the IMPACT and I'VE projects and the arrangement of meeting between the European Commission and the IVS networks to advocate for workcamps.
- NVDA will connect their vice president and the Alliance for the purpose of the project.
- SEEYN will focus on creating a synergy between the I'VE project and their 'Milestones of Learning Development' project.
- It will be possible to apply for an EYF grant to support one or more activities in 2016 through an annual work plan or a one-off international activity.
- The content and outputs of the I'VE project can be shared in the CEV media and communication tools.

4 Summary and conclusions

The I'VE survey strived to answer the lead questions: What does one learn in workcamps? How can these learnings be measured? How can it be testified to ensure maximum benefited for the youngsters? In particular, the comparison of different stakeholders' perspective and accounting it in the design of a digital tool were of importance. Peer assessment methods were especially favoured in the assessment of newly gained competences.

The efforts within and outside the I'VE partnership in addressing and inviting stakeholders to participate in the survey have led to impressive results: 1.889 volunteers, 219 workcamp leaders, 53 workcamp organisers, 17 local partners, 8 youth workers and 14 employers invested their time and efforts in sharing their opinions.

The aims of the I'VE project was key topic of discussion in the surveys and an overwhelming majority of respondents explicitly or implicitly welcomed it through open or predefined answers. Here, the voices of volunteers and camp leaders should not be ignored. Although their number cannot be defined, a relatively strong scepticism can be estimated for 15% of the volunteers and 5% of the camp leaders. This scepticism was made visible in responses about the appreciation of a certification and whether it was offered and the readiness to attend or facilitate a post-camp event to recognise gained competences

According to these particularly sceptical respondents, the spirit of workcamps may be endangered by the conceptualisation and implementation of a tool for the structured assessment and recognition of competences. They fear that the mission of workcamps, which contributes to making the world a better place, is replaced by training youngsters, resulting in measurable and marketable outcomes. There is little doubt that competences are gained during workcamps. However, from a holistic viewpoint on learning, these competences result in a more ethical development, enrich volunteers' personality and are an end in themselves. Using them strategically for personal benefits and advantages is considered contradictory and does harm more important gains.

To add some complexity, such tensions between humanistic principles and a market perspective are reinforced by another stakeholder group. Although the recognition of soft skills, which are usually gained in voluntary work, is increasing among employers, for a considerable number of them, the conceptual gaps need to be bridged if the I'VE tool intends to exert more influence: 'certificates are nice to have but not basically important in the decision for job candidates'.

With reference to the lead questions, the following conclusions are considered not only as mainstream opinions but also for approaches that may reconcile arguments of opposing positions. Also, the results of the interviews with European and international organisations present differentiations. Specific gains and risks are at stake for all actors involved, including the mission of workcamp organisers and the further development of their work.

4.1 Competences gained in workcamps

A large number of volunteers, camp leaders, workcamp organisers and local partners agree on the extent to which competences are gained in workcamps. The most important competences are teamwork and relationship competencies; openness and tolerance; inter-cultural competences, global understanding and understanding diversity; communication competences; skills in a foreign languages; and cultural awareness and competences. Skills in the native language, ICT competences, digital learning and mathematical competences are attributed a minor role. Youth workers confirm a competence gain for youngsters with fewer opportunities, although at a slightly lower level.

Additionally gained skills in workcamps, which were not included in the predefined answers, are soft skills such as patience, flexibility, creativity and political awareness. Further technical and theme-related skills were noted by many respondents.

Volunteers, workcamp leaders and organisers as well as local partners agree that among the abovementioned top skills, teamwork and relationship competences, openness and tolerance and communication skills play a prominent role in further studies and career. Also important for further studies and career are self-organisation, self-management and personal efficiency; taking and carrying out responsibility; learning to learn; management and organisational skills; as well as intercultural competences, global understanding and understanding diversity. All of these are frequently gained at workcamps.

Finally, youngsters with fewer opportunities significantly gained from workcamps, especially soft skills as well as skills in their native language and digital learning. They should be considered an important target group in the portfolio of workcamp organisers.

In general, the assessment of these stakeholders is confirmed by employers, with openness and tolerance being rated as most important. They also add entrepreneurship, innovation and taking initiative to the list of especially important competences for a career. Participation and civic competences as well as digital learning are less favoured by employers in our sample than generally assumed. On the other hand, mathematical competences may be more important to employers than other stakeholders; there is development potential, if desired, both in raising awareness and broadening respective fields of activities.

The tool may, thus, not only applied for the sake of individual volunteers from the viewpoint of academic and professional advantages, the assured protection of individual data and forming a basis for an internationally comparative analysis of competence gain in different types of workcamps. Also, the idea to apply the tool under a lifelong learning perspective can add to its value.

4.2 Measuring competence gain

Answers about competences gained in workcamps reveal that overestimates and underestimates can easily be caused by sharing or not sharing a common discourse. For example, volunteers and local partners are less positive about competence gains in specific areas than workcamp organisers and leaders. Thus, the identification of the degree to which competences are gained poses a special challenge.

As for peer assessment methods, high levels of acceptance were expressed by volunteers, camp leaders and workcamp organisers for discussion groups. Peers being 'witnesses' of competence gains were considered an important function. An existing method of peer assessment, the 'Kompetenznachweis International' can provide conceptual orientation but needs to be slimmed to be applicable in the context of workcamps. The basic idea of the 'Kompetenznachweis International' is that peers identify competences gained through voluntary work. Training measures are applied for quality assurance, providing trained peers with a licence and the right to validate the new competences.

The I'VE digital assessment tool can make use of the idea in general, but incorporating other means for quality assurance is also needed. If, for example, a quantitative approach was used, competences could be given a certain threshold in the number of peer endorsements. Another option would be to combine the methods of self-assessment and peer assessment, making newly gained competences aware in discussion groups and having them endorsed by peers.

Multiple aspects were especially raised by camp leaders, which could become a part of the assessment. They range from team-building exercises, role plays and world café sessions to jointly developed tools and methods, including the evaluation of the camp leader. All these aspects could be, if seeming desirable, assisted by the I'VE assessment tool.

Participation in the assessment and recognition process should in no way be compulsory. The decisions of volunteers and camp leaders to not make use of the offer should be treated with respect. It can be assumed that their refusals are founded on values that cannot be removed with a hint of proven personal advantages when applying for scholarships, internships or other voluntary work.

For volunteers who are undecided, sceptical about the process but open to getting involved, discussion groups—at the end of the workcamps, in post-camp events or even online as proposed by a camp leader—should foresee the possibility that concerns are raised and thoroughly discussed.

In general, the answers indicate the need to recognise the learning that takes place through international volunteering. The proposed methods of evaluation tend to be summative methodologies that are executed when the project is completed. This means that methods of formal learning are used to evaluate the process of non-formal learning. The question regarding the desirability or possibility of conducting formative evaluation—evaluation methods that would be integrated in the process and conducted during the process—remains open.

4.3 Validating gained competences

The online approach of the I'VE tool in validating the gained competences is much appreciated by the responding volunteers, camp leaders and local partners. A manifold of aspects are proposed for the design of the digital certificates: they should be colourful, include photos and charts, accredited by universities, acknowledged by employers and written in both English and the native language of the participant. Recommendations letters signed by camp leaders and/or organisers as well as by the local authority of the host location are considered more valuable than certificates. As for the local community being represented in the documents, local partners seem to be open to providing testimonials on gained competences for the entire group of volunteers and some even agreed to doing so for individual participants.

A number of accompanying measures encourage, for example, the volunteers to cite the recognition in their CVs, both in written form and online. Actions on LinkedIn can ensure that the competences are endorsed. Movies, participant lists (of those who agree to be published) and articles about the individual workcamp on a designated website would inform employers searching the internet for candidates. Raising public awareness about workcamps and their goals and outcomes would provide a better understanding of the learning experiences to educational institutions and companies. A foundation, similar to that in the realm of social entrepreneurship, would be desirable to raise interest in workcamps and their reputation.

There are no easy answers regarding which competences should be accounted for in the assessment and certification and the extent to which employers' specific wants and needs should be considered. For employers, the already comprehensive list of personal, social and intercultural competences would have to be complemented at least by technical and theme-related competences. Flexibility gains are often mentioned by youngsters and highlighted as a crucial need by employers. Flexibility in terms of adaptability to dynamic situations should, therefore, be added as a category of personal competences.

Also, the identified competences can be checked against formats from the market sector; thus, the common basis with companies and employers can be increased. Finally, although the range of potentially gained competences needs to be narrowed down, employers expressed the need for a manageable numbers of competences and favoured the mention of particularly important ones.

More insights into the perspective of employers can be gained by a cooperation with the currently running European project 'GREAT' by the European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning.