



VOL+.
Skills
acquired
through
volunteering



PLATAFORMA
DEL VOLUNTARIADO
DE ESPAÑA

JUSTIFICATION

2011 was declared the European Year for Volunteering, which represents an important drive by valuing the practice of solidarity and social participation through the volunteering formula. To promote volunteering there were many projects, initiatives and declarations of intent made. Perhaps one of the main documents since it made guidelines on various aspects was the Policy Agenda on Volunteering in Europe (PAVE). Issues such as the legal framework, recommended policies and the importance of the quality of volunteering were discussed. In addition, the learning that we acquire through volunteering was referenced, putting a special emphasis on its recognition.

Some European countries have followed this last recommendation and passed from theory to practice. Volunteering experiences such as Volunteer Pass in Germany, VSkills in Scotland or ACTIVOL and Vol+ in Spain, are clear examples.

Vol+ as we will explain below, represents a change of direction from previous experiences by involving different organizations, giving them a protagonist and accomplice role throughout the process.

CONTEXT

As entities, every day we value our ability to adapt. We manage financial and human resources, adapting them to the moment's reality, which forces us to adjust our internal balance.

These changes do not only have to do with the internal management of the organization, but also with the needs of the people who volunteer in our organizations.

The document *Hechos y Cifras del Voluntariado*, edited by the Volunteering Observatory in 2014, goes over what these changes are. The study lists the main reasons that people have when deciding to volunteer. Taking this study as reference, a change in direction in this regard is highlighted. In the first place is solidarity with 31%, followed with 26% for learning something new. 16% of people approach organizations to gain work experience or professional skills. While the two main figures are not new, the third represents a new incentive to approach the practice of solidarity.

Social organizations must collect these new trends and promote initiatives that fit these new profiles. For this reason, Vol+ was born.

WHAT IS VOL+?

VOL+ is a certification program of the skills acquired while volunteering, in order to promote, among other things, improvement of employability of those who volunteer.

This acquisition is the result of specific situations and actual experiences acquired over time, really necessary for someone to develop or strengthen a certain competence.

WHICH SKILLS ARE CERTIFIED?

Seeking broadly useful skills, 7 have been selected that can appear in any type of voluntary activity and, moreover, are closely related to those that anyone can implement in a job¹.



¹ However, we do not rule out the possibility of including others that definitely show the peculiarities of our organizations and the environment in which they are experts

To help assessment and maintenance of common standards, each competence has a stipulated definition and a series of significant experiences that will serve to collect, compose and evaluate the collected information. In Vol+, three possible range levels are considered.

{ A volunteer may have had to use a particular competence in voluntary work in a timely manner, without a minimum of continuity or, having used it more frequently, its use has been residual. }

LOW

**INTER
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DIATE** { The volunteer has been exposed to significant suggested experiences on a more regular basis, in situations of importance or intermediate complexity, assuming also intermediate levels of responsibility in the management of the situation. }

{ The situation experienced by the volunteer was common or usual, of high importance and assuming the highest levels of responsibility for both their own performance and that of others. }

**AD
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It's worth noting that to certify the skills, at least an intermediate level must be achieved.

PHASES AND WORK CONTENT

Vol+ is a collaborative project with three interrelated agents: institutions, volunteers and tutors, who join through the volunteer program promoted by the involved companies. The heart of the action are the volunteers, but what makes the difference is this triangular partnership.

The certification process we follow is structured as follows:

- I** The Spanish Volunteering Platform (PVE) extends this project among its entities. When an entity decides to participate, we work on two aspects at the same time:
 - The entity selects volunteers who can benefit from this initiative. To do so it takes into account criteria such as time spent in the organization, the type of volunteering he/she performs, or the need to improve their employability.
 - A company in the same area that wants to collaborate with volunteering is sought. He/She must be an expert in HR, for him/her to know about skills firsthand. Their role (as tutor) is essential as they accompany the volunteers throughout the course of certification.

PHASES AND WORK CONTENT

The certification process we follow is structured as follows:



Each volunteer is assigned a tutor that accompanies them throughout the process. The organization in turn, decides whether to join to this accompaniment (by actively participating in meetings, verifying the information, clarifying possible doubts of volunteering activities etc.) or if they prefer to stay on the sidelines. At PVE we prefer the first option as it gives visibility and adds value to the work of the organization.



Once this process is completed, the volunteers receive a report identifying the competencies endorsed by the Spanish Volunteering Platform.

In general, this would be the certification process, but it is important to dissect it and know its peculiarities. We propose that two meetings are held (one to sign a contract and another one to analyze), that there is a phase of reflection and form filling and that there is a proposal for identifying competencies. The details appear below:



1

INITIAL CONTACT MEETING AND INTRODUCTION

It can be done through a group work session, in which a presentation is made to a group of volunteers, or in individual interviews.

The Vol+ Tutor has to make sure that the volunteer:

- Has a good understanding of the process and of each of the steps.
- Has clear objectives (reason for doing this)
- Understands the time and effort they have to spend.
- What it means and how to use a Competence profile.
- What it means and how to make a realistic, honest and truthful self-assessment.

2

FORM PROCESSING STEP

After the first meeting, the volunteer has a number of specific forms (provided by the tutor) for each of the competencies. The volunteer must select the skills that he/she deems to have acquired through the volunteering and do some reflection before starting to fill them out. During that time, there may be some questions that need attention from the tutor: it isn't easy to quickly become familiar with concepts such as skills, meaningful experiences, validation, etc.

Once the volunteer fills them out, he/she shall inform the tutor and will agree on a date to hold the analysis meeting or critical incidents interview.

ANALYSIS MEETING AND INTRODUCTION

3

The tutor reviews these forms and meets with the volunteer to analyze and discuss the skills that may have been developed.

A working method for the tutoring session could be:

- Asking questions that have arisen during the process.
- Debate on the overall volunteering experience.
- Analyze each competency in the documentation submitted by the volunteer. It will be necessary to analyze this information together, taking into account the volunteer's role in situations that may have arisen, the coincidence in the vision or lack thereof, for both, or even resolve any possible discrepancies and make the necessary changes in the forms.

SKILLS IDENTIFICATION PROPOSAL

4

Once the competencies are analyzed and necessary form modifications have been made, the Vol+ Tutor completes and signs the Competency Identification Proposal. The PVE reviews the information, validates it, and issues the Vol+ certificate.

HOW DO WE ORGANIZE OURSELVES?

At PVE we coordinate our work to offer different services:

- **To the organizations/volunteering entities:** Advisory services and implementation of the project among its volunteers, training of Vol+ methodology, constant feedback about the tutoring etc.
- **To companies:** promoting volunteering by the company, tutor training in Vol+ methodology, knowledge sharing through a specific Moodle platform, etc.
- **To the volunteers:** support and monitoring of its certification process, project briefing to address any questions and/or suggestions etc.

CURRENT SITUATION

We started working on this project in 2014 with two PVE entities: Federación de Mujeres Progresistas (Federation of Progressive Women) and Coordinadora Aragonesa de Voluntariado (Aragonese Volunteer Coordinator), who served as "pilots". Thanks to them and the companies, and to the involved administrations, we were able to move forward, modify, enhance and provide the first certifications.

This initiative is intended to make visible and highlight the value of social practice from different points of views. During 2015 we continued to expand the number of institutions and companies that have joined Vol+. Our intention is that the certification of skills acquired through the development of voluntary activities becomes a national reference.

If you find it interesting and need more
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