



Project 526187-LLP-1-2012-FR-Comenius CMP



Final publication-Part 1- Volunteering

Volunteering- an alternative pedagogical strategy to combat Early School leaving. The added value of the Success at school project

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Introduction

The Success at School through Volunteering project (SAS) is a Comenius project implemented in the framework of the Lifelong Learning programme, in the context of secondary school. It aims to design an alternative training approach combining volunteering and mentoring to support young people facing difficulties at school. The two main audiences/stakeholders of the SAS are young people aged 14 to 20 years and educators understood in a broad sense of teachers, social workers, and any professional or volunteer working with youngsters in the field of education.

In this chapter we will focus on the pedagogical approach, specifically, the training about volunteering offered to youngsters. After a first part reviewing the nature of volunteering in the European and national contexts, we will explain the pedagogical strategy implemented through the SAS training programme (second part). This will be followed by a third part explaining/detailing/listing the school and workplace related skills and competences to be acquired by the youngsters in relation to the key competences to be acquired/developed by European citizens (EU, 2006).

The educational input of the Success at school project is to explain how far a voluntary experience for youngsters might support their skills and competences as a pupil (at school) and as a future worker (on the labour market) but also as a citizen (role in society). As a result, the volunteering approach might be used by educators as an alternative approach to re-engage in education pupils at risk of dropping out.

1. Volunteering in a European and national contexts (macro-level approach) - the SAS environment

The European Year of Volunteering in 2011 provided a new step towards the recognition of volunteering as a non-formal and informal approach to learning. The final publication, states that (European Commission, 2011a)

"Volunteering is a creator of human and social capital. It is a pathway to integration and employment and a key factor for improving social cohesion. Above all, volunteering translates the fundamental values of justice, solidarity, inclusion and citizenship upon which Europe is founded into action."

1.1 Definition of volunteering

Depending on the languages, there are many different terms used for volunteering. In the English language the term is relatively straight forward but still there are quite different views of what volunteering encompasses and many different meanings connected with the word (Halba B., Strümpel C. and Schumacher J., 2001)

Generally, five dimensions of volunteering are referred to in definitions (Halba, 2003):

- The activity must be carried out of one's own free choice (idea of freedom),
- It is unremunerated, it means it doesn't include any remuneration (idea of gratuity, disinterest),
- It must not only be for the benefit of the individual or his/her family, this is a "gift to foreigner" (idea of altruism, otherness)
- It is usually taking place in an organized or formal frame (in a nonprofit organization)
- The action is for the general purpose and not for the interest of a small group of people (idea of general good/general purpose)

It is important to stress that a voluntary activity that takes place in an isolated, sporadic or individual way, outside the framework of public or private non-profit organisations, or motivated by family relations or friendship, is expressively excluded from the concept of voluntary work (GHK, 2010b).

According to Helmut K. Anheier (Anheier, 2005), volunteering is "the donation of time for a wide range of community and public benefit purposes, such as helping the needy, distributing food, serving on boards, visiting the sick or cleaning up local parks". His main reference is the United States of America.

In France, there are two words for volunteering: "bénévolat" and "volontariat" (Halba, 2003). They both include the five dimensions given in the general definition above (free activity, unpaid, for others, for the general good, usually in an NGO). The difference between "bénévolat" and "volontariat" lies in the full-

time activity of the "volontariat" and the status attached to it which allows some remuneration (which is not a salary). There are five "kinds" of volunteers:

- international volunteers in international NGOs (Act of 2005, *loi n°2005-159 du 23 février 2005*),
- firemen volunteers -as opposed to professional ones (Act of 1996, *Loi n° 96-370 du 3 mai 1996 relative au développement du volontariat dans les corps de sapeurs-pompiers*),
- volunteers abroad generally in French firms (*Volontariat International en Entreprises - V.I.E, loi du 14 mars 2000*),
- volunteers in France any age, since 2006 (*Loi n° 2006-586 du 23 mai 2006 relative au volontariat associatif et à l'engagement éducatif*),
- civil service volunteers (18-25 years) with a National Agency created in 2006) very close in the spirit to the European Voluntary Service (EVS) operating in the EU since 1996 (Agence nationale du Service civique - <http://www.service-civique.gouv.fr/>).

1.2 Institutional background in Europe (European Year of Volunteering 2011) & some national examples of best practices in the field of volunteering

Volunteering is not a marginal phenomenon. In 2011, there were between 92 and 94 million adults involved in volunteering in the 27 EU countries. This represents 22% to 23% of Europeans aged over 15 years who are engaged in voluntary work (GHK, 2009a).

One early and pioneering example of a project focused on volunteering across Europe was the VAEB project (iriv & alii, 2003-2006). Implemented in the framework of the Lifelong Learning programme, this Leonardo da Vinci project drew together 7 countries (France, leader, Germany, Austria, Italy, UK, Hungary and Poland) in order to design a tool, in the form of a portfolio, including a method and a guide for users, so as to identify and assess a voluntary experience.

This is a three step approach:

- 1st step: identification of a voluntary experience (providing all the evidences of work),
- 2nd step: expression of the experience in terms of competences (on the basis of a table of 20 selected competences directly acquired/developed thanks to a voluntary experience)
- 3rd step: proposal of an action plan . It includes either a formal training to assess the skills & competences, or an improvement of the voluntary experience (if it is not relevant enough for a professional experience), or an application on the labour market (if both the skills& competences and voluntary experience were relevant enough to be a candidate for an employment).

The portfolio addressed mainly youngsters without any professional experience,

parents having left their employment to raise their children and long term unemployed people. This project was awarded in Helsinki in 2006 (CIMO, Helsinki awards, 2006) for excellent practice in addressing the priorities of the Copenhagen process (European Commission, 2002) and promoting an enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training (VET). By combining countries with different backgrounds and histories of volunteering and lifelong learning, the project was the first attempt to identify and value volunteering as an example of formal, non-formal and informal learning, at a European level.

The project had a further impact in France where the portfolio was used in 2010 by Iriv and AnimaFac (iriv & alii, 2011) to design a portfolio to identify and assess students' voluntary experience attending the College Blaise Pascal. The redesigned portfolio aimed to facilitate their access to the labour market (first option), or to apply for further education (second option), or to improve their voluntary involvement (third option). This "simplified" portfolio more focussed on students was used in France in the framework of the experimentation of the SAS project among youngsters of the College Blaise Pascal.

2. The SAS training for youngsters (meso level)

The training designed for the framework of the Success at School project aimed to highlight, touch on and engage young people in the following areas (iriv, 2013):

- adding value to a voluntary involvement and the values linked to it (solidarity, altruism, and exchange);
- emphasizing the educational dimension of a voluntary involvement (informal and non-formal learning);
- highlighting the social dimension of associative engagement (learning life values, resisting exclusion as a vehicle of integration);
- underlining the professional dimension of a voluntary experience (being recognized as a "real" professional experience);
- promoting the cultural dimension of a voluntary experience (intercultural exchanges and dialogue);
- and enhancing a voluntary experience as a way to learn citizenship (rights of the association, procedure of the democratic vote).

During the experimentation, the theoretical approach had to be combined together with a very practical approach to involve concretely youngsters who were not used to either work in small groups or with the notion and practice of volunteering itself ("something for nothing"). Each area is explained in more details below.

2.1 Volunteering and altruism

Altruism may be defined as "the principle or practice of unselfish concern for or devotion to the welfare of others as opposed to egoism" (Larousse, 2011). The term is of French origin and it was coined by the philosopher Auguste Comte, who derived it from the Latin 'alter'(1850-1855).

The volunteers are the touchstone of the not-for-profit organisations since they are not paid in money or kind for their work. However, there is an immaterial reward or the expectation of such reward; this is the Latin "*do ut des*" motto which means I give to make you (or someone else) give. Even though volunteering is not done in order to get something back (at least a material thing), a reward is expected which can be one's place in paradise (religious expectation), positive image in society (social recognition)... so the gift is not done "for nothing". This is the difference between "pure altruism" and "quasi-altruism" (Halba, 1997 & 2003). The theory of gift has been defined as a series of "gift" (don) and "gift back" (contre-don) (Mauss, 1950).

According to David A. Kennett (Kennett, 1980), "pure altruism" means a gift of time or money without any reward of any kind (material, immaterial...). In practice, however, volunteering implies that there is a reward and so we can speak of quasi-altruism. As far as volunteering is concerned, the Kennett proposes six different types of quasi-altruism that correspond to immaterial goals:

- quasi-altruism with intangible compensation : you give your time to obtain respect from the person who benefits from your gift or from the people who witness this gift ;
- quasi-altruism in the Theory of Games perspective : you give to impress a third person or to make things be positive for you in the future,
- quasi-altruism in the sociobiological context: you give because your parents or your family have shown you the way, you have received some kind of "altruistic gene" or biological predestination,
- quasi-altruism and the Rotten Kid Theorem: in a group, there is a social income which is bigger than all the incomes gathered, and if you want to benefit by this synergy you had better act as a volunteer,
- quasi-altruism and social pressure: to avoid social costs and psychological guilt, you prefer being a volunteer,
- quasi-altruism and sponsorship: you give to promote a positive image of yourself and so a complementary profit in the near future in your profession, social life.

Consequently, volunteers' motivations are often mixed and unconscious.. This is a combination of altruistic/interested/utilitarian motivations. Some of them are very linked to religious beliefs, other ones are more neutral (social awareness and responsibility). Some motivations are private (personal events usually linked to a change or a failure in one's life), other ones are more social or public oriented (defence of rights, active citizenship).

2.2 Volunteering and citizenship

Volunteering is to be considered as one of the main civil and civic rights. In the *Charter of Fundamental Rights* of the European Union, adopted in 2000 by all the members of the European Union, the EU recalls in the Preamble (European Commission, 2000):

- The “indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity”;
- The principles of democracy and the rule of the law
- It places the individual at the heart of its activities by establishing the “citizenship of the Union”

In particular, three freedoms, listed in Chapter II of the Charter, are directly linked to volunteering and association (European Commission, 2000):

- Article 10- Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- Article 11- Freedom of expression and information
- Article 12- freedom of assembly and of association- “everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association at all levels, in particular in political, trade union and civic matters, which implies the right of everyone to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his or her interests”.

Most of the associations in Europe and France do not have any link either with political parties or with religious groups as the most numerous are in sports, youth and culture; social services; culture; environment.

Volunteering has been closely linked to the notion of “active citizenship” in the past years, especially in the occasion of the European Year of Citizens where many voluntary initiatives have been highlighted (European Commission, 2014). It was closely linked to the European Year of Volunteering (European Commission, 2011)

2.3 Volunteering and education

The link between volunteering and education is at the heart of the SAS project. It has to be understood in two ways: volunteering as an example of non-formal and informal learning (VAEB project 2003-2006 & Year of Volunteering 2011); and the skills and competences acquired/developed through volunteering linking to the key competences (EU 2006).

First and foremost, volunteering is to be considered as an example of non-formal and informal learning as opposed to formal learning. The definitions of these different kinds of learning are given in the glossary published by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop, 2010)

1. **Formal learning is the kind of learning acquired at school** – “Learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.”
2. **Informal learning** - This is the kind of learning acquired in an association. Volunteering is mostly considered as a leisure activity – “learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or

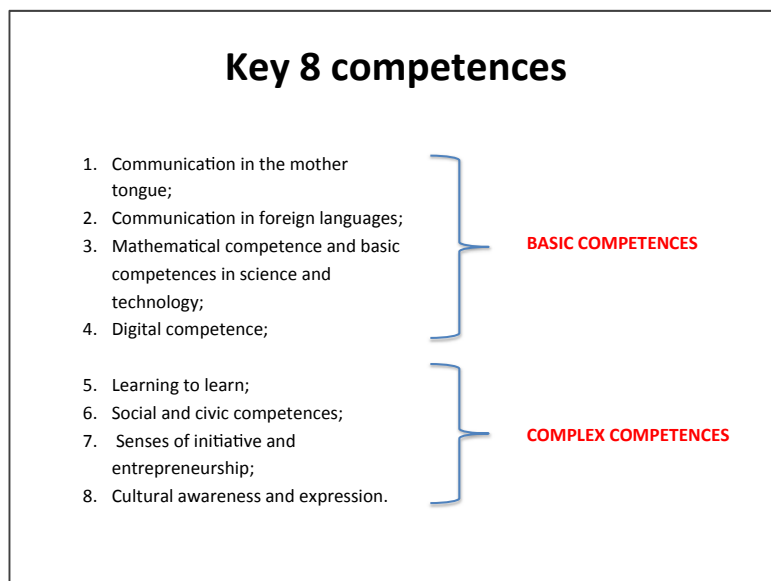
leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional or non-intentional (or incidental/random)."

3. **Non formal learning** - This is the kind of learning acquired in an association for instance when training is offered to volunteers – "learning which is embedded in planned activities that are not explicitly designated as learning, but which contain an important learning element (something described as semi-structured learning). It is intentional from the learner's perspective . Non formal learning does not lead to certification."

Secondly, a link must be made between volunteering and the key competences (EU, 2006) enhanced by the European Union since 2006 (European Union & European Parliament 2006). The European Commission published in 2007 the "Key competences for Lifelong Learning- European reference Framework"¹ in order to explain the theoretical background of such key competences. The key competences are considered equally important, because each of them can contribute to a successful life in a knowledge society. (European Commission, 2006)

Competences are defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitude appropriate to the context. Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfillment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment. On this basis, the reference Framework sets out 8 key competences: Communication in the mother tongue; Communication in foreign languages; Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; Digital competence; Learning to learn; Social and civic competences; Senses of initiative and entrepreneurship; Cultural awareness and expression. The four first competences may be considered as "basic" or "traditional competences". They are defined or updated taking into account the needs of modern society. The four other competences are more "complex" competences and a combination of social and professional ones (see fig below).

1.



Source: European Commission (2006), *Key competences for lifelong learning*, Brussels.

2.4 Volunteering and the labour market

A main reference of the SAS project was the pioneer project "Assessing a Voluntary experience" (iriv & alii, 2006) as this was the first attempt to make a bridge between a voluntary experience and the labour market. As already mentioned in this article (section 1.2), the project designed a portfolio in order to identify a voluntary experience, to express it in terms of skills and competences in order to offer an action plan, in a professional perspective.

This is precisely the link with the labour market. Thanks to the VAEB project, volunteers but also associations could use a tool to value their voluntary experience which has been considered since 2002 in France as a real "professional experience". The link between volunteering and the labour market has been developed in a book on *Managing Volunteering and voluntary human resources* (Halba, 2006).

In particular, the European team could detail a list of skills/competences (26) which may be considered as transversal competences to be acquired or developed by volunteers. We have tried to organize them in the following table. We have gathered the competences in 3 parts:

- Communication oriented competences
- Project oriented competences
- Human resources oriented competences

Communication oriented Competences	Project oriented competences	Human resources oriented competences
Interpersonal Communication - Being able to communicate ideas and information to others and work with a variety of people in multi-cultural environments (volunteers, clients, staff members...)	Administration - General office work e.g. filing, typing, organising meetings, purchasing supplies)	Foreign languages - Understanding spoken and written language/s; translating and interpreting; using language for business purposes
External Communication - Managing public relations; lobbying and advocacy; promotion of your work / organisation through presentations, media contact etc.	Accounting - preparing accounts and managing budgets; listing income / expenditure, preparing balance sheets etc.	Human Resources Management - Recruiting, training, supervising volunteers, organising responsibilities and roles between staff and volunteers
Written Communication- Being able to present information in written form, e.g. reports, articles, minutes of meetings	Fundraising / Marketing - Raising money; writing funding applications; increasing membership; developing sponsorship; publicising / advertising	Stress management - management of conflicts, facing any human or practical problem
	Event Organising - Organising events such as seminars, conferences, general assemblies, exhibitions, competitions, shows etc.	Active Listening - Being receptive to what others say, showing empathy, responding to requests for help
	Managing information (documentation)- Selecting and organising useful and appropriate information and data to better understand situations and identify needs and/or resources	Being Proactive – Showing initiative and creativity, responding to changing situations; being flexible
	Research (analytic approach)- Looking for appropriate information ; desk or field research; using qualitative or quantitative approaches; presenting findings to different audiences	Advice Giving - Specialist or general consultancy; counselling)

	IT - <i>Using computer programmes, e.g. Word, Excel, Access; using internet and e-mail; using databases; designing websites; programming</i>	Negotiation / Mediation - <i>Facilitating constructive debate; finding compromises; finding satisfactory solutions to conflicts)</i>
	Project management - <i>Planning and developing programmes, defining scope, objectives, activities, resources and evaluation steps</i>	Problem Solving - <i>Finding appropriate solutions to specific situations; management of stress</i>
		Decision Making - <i>Identifying possible options and assuming responsibility for choosing best outcome</i>
		Leadership - <i>Being able to take a lead, make strategic decisions to move forward; representing your organisation externally</i>
		Team working - <i>Contributing to a collaborative climate; cooperating to reach common goals, accepting others points of view</i>
		Networking - <i>Creating and developing partnerships with individuals or organisations</i>
		Motivating Others - <i>Encouraging others to get involved</i>
		Training / Teaching - <i>Teaching / training on an individual basis or in a group; in an informal or formal environment</i>
		Personal Responsibility - <i>Showing commitment and reliability; being able to organise your time and manage your work; motivating yourself)</i>

Following the Vaeb spirit, the Success at school project in the training offered to youngsters was focused on this point in its module 4 (link between volunteering and a professional future). The VAEB portfolio may be considered as too difficult to be used by youngsters. Nevertheless, the portfolio process together with concrete examples of competences to be acquired/developed thanks to a voluntary experience have been quite meaningful for educators to illustrate the SAS strategy (making a link between association, school and labour market).

2.5 Volunteering and social inclusion

Through volunteering, various aspects of social exclusion are being addressed, as underlined by a team of researchers at the Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (Davis Smith and alii, 2004). Detailed the following points to be taken into account to explain how volunteering could enhance social inclusion.:

1. Volunteering helps to combat feelings of personal isolation, which for some people can be a key factor in their experience of social exclusion;
2. Volunteering empowers individuals, giving them the confidence and the skills to change their environment and themselves
3. Volunteering enhances people's sense of self-worth in getting involved and making a contribution to society
4. Thanks to volunteering, people acquire a range of hard (vocational) and soft (interpersonal) skills and so they enhance their opportunities to find a job (impact on employability)
5. For some people volunteering provides a route to employment, for others it provides an alternative to employment with a professional experience (impact on unemployment)
6. Volunteering has a wider impact on the symptoms and causes of social exclusion by providing services, in many cases to socially excluded groups, by challenging stereotypes and by bringing people from different backgrounds together

Nevertheless, the researchers pointed out that volunteering could be seen as too exclusive (Davis Smith and *alii*, 2004). Several psychological barriers have to be overcome:

1. Myths exist that equate volunteering with activities undertaken by certain "mainstream" groups within society and a narrow range of activities within formal organizational settings. If there are still under-represented groups in volunteers (migrants and ethnic minorities, disabled people, ex-offenders...), this stereotypical image of volunteering has been challenged as alternatives (often informal) forms of volunteering gain in visibility and recognition and as organisations succeeded in involving volunteers from previously under-represented groups
2. People's perception of time both the amount of their "spare time" available and the time demands of volunteering may create other barriers to involvement. In under-represented groups, some of them (disabled

people, ex-offenders...) were reluctant to regular schedules. They found hard to sign up in regimented activities.

3. Lack of confidence is a key barrier. It is exacerbated for individuals who have experienced exclusion in other areas of life and when volunteering takes place in unfamiliar environments
4. Prejudices and stereotypes held by staff, other volunteers and service users put some people off staying involved.
5. The fear of losing welfare benefits may be a significant barrier

The link between volunteering and social exclusion is quite meaningful especially among youngsters faced to difficulties at school as they are quite aware that the first way to combat social exclusion is precisely to succeed at school to prepare a professional future.

2.6 Volunteering and diversity

Last but not least, volunteering may be considered as a means of integration for youngsters with migrant background. Several European projects have been implemented in the past years to enhance volunteering among under-represented groups such as migrants and ethnic minorities.

One of them was quite a pioneer, the Involve project - Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration (CEV and alii, 2006) was initiated by the European Center for Volunteering in 7 countries and on a European level. It proposed 10 criteria for good practice that have to be taken into account to enhance volunteering among publics under-represented in volunteering such as youngsters facing difficulties at school. In particular, it proposed a grid in order to identify examples of good practice to enhance volunteering under under-represented target groups (in the case of the Involve, migrants and ethnic minorities).

This point was developed in the module 6 of the SAS training offered to youngsters (Iriv, 2013). It is of special interest for the target group of the SAS as many pupils facing difficulties at school may have a migratory background (or their family) and may be less familiar with the volunteering issue as the most usual way to be involved is among their family or their community. We couldn't collect precise data during the SAS project on the ethnic background. Nevertheless, the areas where the experimentation was implemented in the different partners countries were characterised with these criteria.

The pedagogical approach is the same as for point 2.4. Educators might find too difficult to use in a systematic way these 10 criteria. Nevertheless, they might find in this basis some concrete illustrations to be provided to youngsters.

Criteria for good practice	Ways to enhance the involvement of youngsters in mainstream organisations
1 Accessibility- Volunteering needs to be easily accessible for youngsters with migrant background	1. Informing them on the youngsters' attitudes towards volunteering
2 Diversity- recruiting migrant volunteers	2. insisting on the win-win situation for both sides: organisations learn from their new young volunteers and benefit from the creativity they bring
3 Clarity and quality of the volunteer placements for both organisation and the volunteers	3. Proposing an individual attention and guidance to match volunteers' needs and association's' expectations to explain what volunteering is about (in general) and about the objectives of the volunteer placement
4 Skills development- the Human Resources approach	4. Insisting on the very special skills attached to a migrant background especially for youngsters
5 Valuing – ceremonies, awards...	5. Asking for the acknowledgement of the role and the achievements of young migrant volunteers by the organisation and the general public
6 Visibility- information	6. Implementing information campaign, publishing articles in local papers showing the involvement of young volunteers
7 Community empowerment link with local community	7. Facilitating direct contact between the local community and the youngsters can enable them to make a real difference to the place in which they live
8 Networking- building, bonding and bridging social capital	8. Networking with the youngsters' community and between youngsters and mainstream organisations
9 Sustainability- long term strategy	9. It can't be a "one shot" strategy but a long term one. Thinking of a time schedule
10 Transferability	10. Preparing the transfer of good practice to other associations.

Source: Involve project, CEV & alii, 2005-2006

3. The competence approach (a microeconomic level)

One of the main goals of the SAS project was to encourage among students facing difficulties at school a new motivation for school thanks to the “detour” or “alternative pedagogical approach” offered by a voluntary experience. The skills acquired through taking part in volunteering would have been useful for both succeeding at school but also as a future employee and last but not least citizen.

In this perspective, we have tried to summarize in the following table the skills and competences required for being a volunteer and a pupil taking into account

- the key competences have been enhanced by the European Commission since 2006 in order to promote the competence approach in the framework of the Lifelong Learning approach
- the competences acquired in the association are the ones identified in the portfolio for voluntary competences designed by a European team (VAEB, www.europeassociations.net, iriv and alii, 2003-2006).
- the competences at school have been identified by French researchers in the French report on Education which is the main reference in France for the “Common basis of knowledge and competences to be acquired by French pupils at school” (Thelot, 2005) If the French framework couldn’t be used by other partners of the SAS project, equivalent strategies inspired by the Key competences are used in other EU countries ;.
- the competence approach is also most enhanced in the international programme of evaluation The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), is known as the “world’s global metric for quality, equity and efficiency in school education” Since 2000, it has been an attempt to answer the question “What is important for citizens to know and be able to do?” PISA assesses the extent to which 15-year-old students have acquired key knowledge and skills that are essential for full participation in modern societies. The assessment focuses on reading, mathematics, science and problem-solving (OECD, 2013).

Key competences (EU, 2006)	Competences at school (Thelot, 2005)	Competence in the association (iriv & alii, 2006)
Communication in the mother tongue	Fundamental basic skill : literacy Learning the national language/the mother tongue may be different (for pupils with migrant background)	To be able to answer the questions asked by the public of the association both in an oral way and in a written way
Communication in foreign languages	Fundamental basic skill : language Learning foreign language (English for most of the European countries) it should begin in primary school)	To be able to explain to foreign people the main aim of the association, its activities, its outcomes....

Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology	Fundamental basic skill : numeracy Mathematics since primary school	To be able to build a budget, a balance sheet, to collect the financial data concerning the association (resources/expenses)
Digital competence	Fundamental basic skills in information and communication technologies (ICT) Access to computer since the primary school	To be able to develop the website of the association, a weblog to enhance communication with its public
Learning to learn	Learning to learn supports All learning activities	To be able to explain to other volunteers the tasks to be fulfilled, to develop any support to explain the content of the mission
Social and civic competences	Some "optional" activities meant to enhance a collective work or "civic learning"	To be able to raise awareness on a specific problem in society among the general public To be able to defend a cause
Senses of initiative and entrepreneurship	Any activity meant to develop critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem-solving, risk assessment, decision-taking and constructive management	To be able to create and implement an activity among the association To be able to create its own association
Cultural awareness and expression	Most of creative activities such as painting, drawing, theatre,	To be able to express a different perspective considering a given context To be able to involve different cultures

Source: Halba B (2014)

Conclusion

Volunteering is not a marginal phenomenon. It has been celebrated for the past 15 years both an international level (International Year of Volunteering- 2001) and on a European level (European Year of Volunteering- 2011). This is not by chance as a voluntary experience may be considered as an emblematic example of non-formal and informal learning.

In this perspective the Success at school project has highlighted the link between Volunteering and Education. It has offered an alternative pedagogical strategy for pupils facing difficulties at school or having already dropped up to renew with school on the basis of a positive experience which both improves their self-confidence but also allows them to acquire skills and competences needed at school but also for their future professional career.

The SAS project first designed a training programme in order to explain the main value of a voluntary experience and the concrete ways to promote such an involvement among youngsters, taking into account the skills and competences youngsters could be able to develop, making the link between school, association and the labour market. In complement, the SAS offered a tutoring for educators, understood in the broad sense of teachers, social workers, volunteers... in order

to support pupils to bridge the gap between “places” of learning (school, association...).

This might be the next step for the Success at school project, and a crucial recommendation to be made to policy makers: to integrate in the pedagogical strategies to combat Early School Leaving (ESL) Volunteering as an “official” alternative pedagogical approach to re-engage in education pupils at risk of dropping out. Learning by doing has already been promoted in innovative pedagogical strategies. Learning by contributing to the Community might be tomorrow’s main goal in education: being prepared to be a future worker (on the labour market) but also being an active citizen (in society).

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