

EUROPASS CERTIFICATE FOR VOLUNTEERS

Guide for Volunteer Involving Organizations



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1. Introduction

Volunteers want to do meaningful work, they can enjoy and love. Sincere appreciation by the organization of the work they conduct is important for them. In addition, some volunteers work because they want to expand their knowledge and skills and pave their way to a paid job.

The Europass Certificate for volunteers can help to explain what volunteers have learned during a period of voluntary activities. It gives a clear and objective description of the work carried out. The organization appoints the experience gained by the volunteers, and highlights their qualities. The volunteers are then able to present themselves better and increase their position on the labour market.

The partners of the Roads to Recognition – project have noted that organizations are highly motivated to issue Europass Certificates for volunteers. They see the added value of the document as an opportunity to put the volunteers in the spotlight, and to appreciate them. When a person already holds a Europass document, a voluntary organization can estimate their talents for the next voluntary job.

2. Europass Certificate for Volunteers

The Europass Certificate for Volunteers gives information about:

- The volunteer involving organization
- Type of work
- The period of voluntary work
- The skills and competences gained

The Europass Certificate for Volunteers is a unique document for individuals to earn in recognition of their volunteering commitment. It is very important for volunteers to clearly articulate and explain what they have learned during a period of voluntary activities. For example, when volunteers apply for a job or further education they can refer to their Europass Certificate for Volunteers. This Certificate document gives a clear and objective description of the work carried out by the individual.

The organization appoints the experience gained by the volunteer and highlights his or her qualities. The volunteer is then able to present himself better and increase his position within the labour market.

By issuing the Europass Certificate for Volunteers the organization shows the appreciation of the work the volunteer has done. Organisations will see an increase in volunteer numbers when recruiting because volunteers will receive an official Europass document.

Minimum Requirements

The duration of the experience may vary from three to six months. It depends on the entry level of the volunteer, and on the possibilities of the voluntary work in which the volunteer can grow his competences. The volunteer involving organization expects that the volunteer does voluntary work for at least half a day a week.

The volunteer involving organization should offer the volunteer the possibility to develop their skills. This guide will support volunteer organisations and volunteers to identify learning goals and outcomes to successfully track progress.

3. Benefits for the volunteer

Volunteers not only bring something to an organization, they can also gain something with the Certificate. The volunteer is aware that doing voluntary work for another person also benefits themselves as an individual.

The volunteer records their competences leading to a greater understanding of the voluntary role, increased motivation within that role and a deeper sense of confidence.

Recognition of competences can be a stepping stone to a paid job and the Certificate can help volunteers accumulate a portfolio of accomplishments and skills for job interviews and applications. In addition to recording competences acquired in voluntary work, the Certificate is also a great way to demonstrate appreciation for the volunteer.

4. Benefits for the volunteer involving organization

When a volunteer asks for a reference, the organization does not have to develop an extra document. The Certificate can take the place of a reference and be developed with the volunteer.

The Europass Certificate is a framework to support and supervise volunteers. The voluntary organization and the volunteer create an agreement outlining the voluntary work and the guidance that will take place. Together they also record the competences and skills which are important for the role.

Using this framework can make an organization more attractive to potential volunteers.

5. Quality criteria

There are four quality criteria to ensure consistency of the award:

1. The voluntary role is socially useful and improves the community;
2. The duration of the voluntary work is significant (the Certificate will not be issued for experiences of one day duration);
3. The organization ensures that appropriate preparation is provided to the volunteer, and identifies a mentor to assist, inform, guide and monitor the volunteer. The organization is responsible for a written agreement about the content, the objectives and the duration of voluntary work;
4. The organization is responsible for the preparation and the evaluation of the voluntary work experience to which the Certificate is connected.



6. Useful documents to support the process

On the next pages you will find:

- 6.1 Action plan example
- 6.2 Format for an introductory conversation
- 6.3 Contract example
- 6.4 Competency model for volunteers
- 6.5 Explanation of the STAR interview
- 6.6 Tips based on experiences so far
- 6.7 Example Europass Certificate for Volunteers

6.1 Action plan example

1. Participation

Inform the volunteers in your organization about the Europass Certificate and the opportunity to participate.

2. Determine competences

Talk with the volunteer to discuss what competencies should be listed in the Europass Certificate. You might use the competences model in this guide.

3. Timeframe

Decide with the volunteer after which period of time the competences will be evaluated.

4. Monitoring

Make appointments with the volunteer to monitor changes, progress and opportunities for the volunteer to realise their competency goals. Monitoring can be done by an agreed supervisor of the volunteer or a mentor.

5. Create a Europass account for the volunteer

Go to www.mijneuropassmobiliteit.nl

6. Progression

Plan several moments in the timeframe to discuss the progress with the volunteer. If necessary the listed competences, the work, or the timeframe can be adjusted. Allow the volunteer time and space to reflect on their achievements.

7. Final evaluation

Decide together with the volunteer whether the list of competences that appear in the Europass Certificate is complete. Also assess if the competences the volunteer sought to develop are actually present now.

8. Fill in the Europass Certificate

Fill in the Europass Certificate for the volunteer, and organize a festive ceremony to celebrate the growth and development of your volunteers as well as the investment your organisation has made.

6.2 Format for an introductory conversation

Name of the volunteer		Starting date	
Name of the supervisor		Timeframe	

Mark the competences that you would like to work on in the agreed period:

- Working systematically
- Demonstrating reliability
- Dealing with time and pace
- Solving problems
- Working in accordance with health & safety regulations
- Communication
- Presentation
- Contributing to good work relations
- Cooperation
- Accepting praise and criticism
- Application of language and maths skills
- Learning while doing

Organization:

Contact person:

Email address:

Name of the volunteer:

Address:

Email address:

Starting date:

Expected end date:

When will the person perform his voluntary work:

	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Sun</i>
<i>Morning</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Afternoon</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Evening</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

What are the learning goals of the volunteer? Which competences have been identified as learning goals?

For which goal does the volunteer want to use his Europass Certificate?

How will the organisation support the volunteer to achieve this goal?

Place and date:

Place and date:

Signature of the volunteer:

Signature on behalf of the organization:

6.4 Competency model for volunteers

<p>Working systematically this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ establishing a correct order of work▪ working in accordance with the applicable policy or approach▪ checking completed work
<p>Demonstrating reliability this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ doing what I promised▪ treating information confidentially▪ helping out when pressure of work requires this
<p>Dealing with time and pace this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ planning work in the time available▪ sticking to deadlines for a particular activity▪ adapting the pace of work to the situation
<p>Solving problems this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ finding solutions for practical and day-to-day issues at work▪ weighing up the benefits and disadvantages of a solution▪ asking for help when an activity stagnates
<p>Working in accordance with Health & Safety regulations this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ complying with current health and safety regulations▪ preventing unhealthy and unsafe situations▪ taking steps whilst considering your physical possibilities
<p>Communication this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ consulting about tasks and implementation▪ putting across what I want, either verbally or non-verbally▪ communicating information to other people
<p>Presentation this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ conducting myself in a way which befits the situation▪ taking care of my appearance in a way which befits the situation▪ propagating the organizational philosophy
<p>Contributing to good work relations this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ requesting attention from the line-manager in a pleasant manner▪ taking the welfare of team members and other persons involved into account▪ dealing with other customs, standards and values

Cooperation

this means:

- actively contributing to the division of work
- actively taking part in activities in relation to which agreement is required
- responding to other people's work problems

Accepting praise and criticism

This means:

- motivating myself again after a blow or disappointment
- dealing with compliments and criticism
- modifying my expectations when circumstances demand this

Application of Language and Maths skills

This means:

- compiling a memo, short letter, report or form
- establishing the size, scope or ratio required
- using a list, table or schedule

Learning while doing

This means:

- experimenting with difficult tasks or new situations
- learning from other people's examples
- being able to find information

Source: This list of volunteer competences has been developed by Movisie, the Dutch centre for social development.

Note: Depending on the aims and personal development of the volunteer, it might be useful to use another model, e.g. the national qualifications framework of your country, or the European Qualifications Framework.



6.5 Explanation of a STAR interview

STAR stands for **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction and **R**esult. It is an interview technique to determine on the basis of a concrete situation whether someone has a particular competence. The STAR method is also known as Criterion-based Interview. It is a method to assess the volunteer's learning.

A STAR interview focuses on a particular criterion, in this case a competence. It is never about two or three competences at the same time. The objective is to test whether the competence is present. The duration of a STAR interview is generally 2 – 5 minutes per competence.

When can the STAR method be applied?

Case 1: The volunteer states that he has a particular competence, either fully or to some extent. As the facilitator, you are not familiar with this person's level of competence. The objective is certainty and objective proof.

Case 2: The volunteer cannot find evidence for a competence. The volunteer claims to have experience and to have a proficient level of competence. The objective is to provide proof.

The STAR method is therefore useful

- if you doubt whether a competence is actually present, as stated
- if there is no evidence for a competence and you suspect that the competence is present

Step 1 Define the competence

Explain the accompanying aspects of conduct.

Check whether the volunteer identifies the aspects of conduct.

State why you want to conduct the STAR interview.

Step 2 Initial question

Ask about a concrete situation in the past in which the competence was applied.

Ask for a moment, an example.

Step 3 Continue questioning

Continue questioning about this single concrete situation.

Do this rigorously and remain in control:

SITUATION	Where, when, with whom, with which etc. Arrive at a picture of the actual circumstances.
TASK	What was expected from the volunteer at that moment? What did they have to do which relates to this competence?
ACTION	What did the volunteer actually do? Continue asking about actions demonstrating the three aspects of conduct.
RESULT	Did the action have the desired effect? (see Task)

Step 4 Determination

Determine whether the example relates to the competence. If you are not sure, enquire about another example from the past. Establish that you are convinced: the presence of the competence has been demonstrated by this example.

6.6 Tips

1. Let the volunteer describe the competences that he already has developed. This can be the start of an awareness process, which can support the Europass-process.
2. Combine the Europass process with the mentoring / support that already is offered to the volunteer; do not consider the Europass process as something on top of other processes, but as added value.
3. Volunteers can work on their Europass in small groups, so they can support each other, and give each other feedback on their personal development.
4. Ask a senior volunteer to give support to the volunteers who are working on their Europass certificate.
5. Start with a small group of volunteers, to get some experience with the process, and then offer the Europass certificate to all volunteers in your organization.



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EXPERIENCE DESCRIPTION

Objective To acquire a first work experience in a voluntary environment

Community or mobility programme To leave this world a little better than you found it

Initiative Social and educational activities

Duration **from** 1 September 2014 **to** 1 February 2015

SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

Activities and tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Provide administration- Solve problems- Support and mentor other volunteers
Job-related skills and competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Solve problems with computers- Analyze data- Advise people- Act independently
Language skills and competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Communication with customers- Prepare meetings- Do presentations- Clear improvement of level of the English language
Computer skills and competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Using MsOffice tools for processing documents- Using Social Media, like Facebook and Twitter
Organisational skills and competences	Good capacity in organising the tasks carried out during voluntary work <ul style="list-style-type: none">- identify priorities;- manage efficiently relations with other members of the team.
Social skills and competences	Excellent communication skills in daily contact with customers <ul style="list-style-type: none">- good knowledge of corporate practices for dealing with customers' request;- fits in well with members of the team- motivate others
Other skills and competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Good listener- Work quickly

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Signed on 2 March 2015

