



# R2 – GUIDELINES for the training of sustainable economy volunteers and their trainers

29/02/2024

## Contents

1. Introduction .....	3
1.1 Competence Map.....	3
2. The Training Path - Guidelines .....	5
3. The Platform .....	8
4. First trial in presence: Madrid.....	13
5. Monitoring of experimental paths.....	14
5.1 Synoptic Tables Activity Report .....	14
TABLE 1 .....	14
TABLE 2 .....	15
5.2 Notes on the experiments carried out.....	17
5.3 Suggestions .....	17
5.4 Final considerations .....	18
6. Definition of possible competency validation models for volunteer competencies .....	19
6.1 Using VOW R2 and relevant competency assessment methods .....	19
6.2 Organizational reasons for validating competencies.....	19
6.3 Volunteer considerations for competency validation .....	20
6.4 Relevant volunteer groups.....	21
6.5 Relevant competency validation offering.....	22
6.6 Conclusion.....	24

# 1. Introduction

The contents of the previous result R1, namely defining the competences for an updated vision of the volunteer of sustainable economy, have laid the foundations for the realization of this project result. In this phase it was proposed to develop a training project both for the volunteer of sustainable economy, and for its trainers.

At first, the partners worked together to focus on what was identified as the main training needs in the volunteer path in fair trade activities.

To this end, they first completed a questionnaire to focus on competences, knowledges and training needs, in order to facilitate an exchange between the partners, which was then concluded in the presence of a training workshop in Brussels, during which the partners built together the training path for the trainers of new volunteers of sustainable economy.

The questionnaire, entitled "competence map", consisted of the following questions that we highlight because this tool can be useful to set the guidelines for the training course.

## 1.1 Competence Map

### Motivation of the volunteer

- Which competences and knowledges do you have to attract, motivate, engage new volunteers? What methods/contents do you use?
- What would you like to do to attract, engage and motivate new volunteers?
- What are your difficulties in this field?

### Knowledges of the volunteer

- Which competences and knowledges do you have to transfer knowledge about the sustainable economy and organizational know-how to new volunteers? What methods and tools do you use?
- What would you like to do to transfer knowledge about sustainable economics and organisational know-how?
- What are your difficulties in this field?

### Enhancement of the volunteer

- How do you measure the volunteer's preparation and involvement? How do you value his commitment? What methods and tools do you use?
- What would you like to do to measure preparation, involvement of the volunteer and reward his commitment?
- What are your difficulties in this field?
- Are you in possession of training/information materials (and/or any links) that might be of interest to other partners, to share with them, and that could be dealt with during the training?

The valuable information collected from the questionnaires compiled by the partners was summarized and was the starting point for the training laboratory in Brussels. (see summary document in Appendix 1)

3 training modules were created from the partners:

1. **journey in volunteering**, which deepens formative aspects of the recruitment, welcoming and recognition of the volunteer
2. **the management of volunteers**: training tools for the management of the individual and the group, tools for the management of the store, internal and external communication to your group.
3. **the sustainable economy**: principles of the Fair Trade and the European Sustainable Development Goals.

On the basis of these modules, a training platform was created to allow trainers sent by partners to train at a distance. The goal was for them to be ready for the experimental phase, and while using the platform they could correct, update, improve.

In the last phase of this Result, the partners activated their trainers, updated by training on the online platform, and then carried out field experimentation of some training modules included in the training proposal.

The experimentation has proved very useful to improve and systematize the training path and has provided further suggestions regarding the guidelines for the implementation of training for new volunteers of sustainable economy and their trainers.

## 2. The Training Path - Guidelines

### Vow – volunteering for a sustainable world

Modules	Contents	Methodological tips	Resources <sup>1</sup>
<b>Vow TRAINING COURSE</b> <b>MODULE 1: Guide to the Volunteer's Journey</b>	<b>1.1 Volunteer's recruitment –</b> In this Unit, you will see different tools we can use to attract volunteers and different examples on how to use them	1.1.1 Definition 1.1.2 Recruitment tools 1.1.3 Good practices 1.1.4 Inclusivity in the recruitment process	The theoretical content part can be realized with the frontal lesson, but it is important to verify the learning with exercises, in particular simulations, allowing participants to reflect on the effectiveness of the proposed instruments and to verify their capabilities in the field
	<b>1.2 Welcoming New Volunteers –</b> In this unit, you learn about how to properly welcome new volunteers. You will get an example of a welcoming process, as well as some tips for the first meeting with a new volunteer.	1.2.1 The key characteristics of a welcoming organisation 1.2.2 The people involved 1.2.3 The steps of the welcoming process 1.2.4 The tools to welcome volunteers 1.2.5 How to conduct a first meeting 1.2.6 Conclusion	For the duration of the whole module 1 a minimum duration of 2 hours is suggested, for the duration of each module at least 45 minutes.
	<b>1.3 Recognition of volunteers –</b> In this unit, you will learn about how to recognize the engagement of volunteers. As they offer their time for the cause of your organization, it is important to show volunteers how grateful the organization is for their engagement!	1.3.1 Basic principles of recognition 1.3.2 When to do recognition 1.3.3 The advantage of doing recognition 1.3.4 Tools/ideas to recognize volunteers 1.3.5 Example of good practices	Power point on volunteer's recruitment EN – The Ultimate Guide to Volunteer Recruitment: 15+ Strategies. QVIG (USA) <sup>[1][2][3][4][5][6][7][8][9][10][11][12][13][14][15]</sup> EN – “Volunteer recruitment: a complete guide to power your work”. Mobilize (USA) <sup>[1][2][3][4][5][6][7][8][9][10][11][12][13][14][15]</sup> EN – 15 Types of Questions (With Definitions and Examples) Indeed (USA) Power points on new volunteers welcoming FR – Processus d'accueil - Oxfam-Magasins du Monde (BE) FR – Projet de document d'aide pour le 1er entretien - Oxfam-Magasins du monde (BE) FR – Document d'accueil- Oxfam-Magasins du monde (BE) FR – Check List de l'accueil et de l'intégration du bénévole – Plateforme Francophone pour le volontariat (BE) Power point on recognition of volunteers Recognizing and Valuing volunteers. Volunteer Scotland. FR – La reconnaissance des bénévoles – Comment valoriser l'activité bénévole: le cas d'Oxfam-Magasins du monde – Oxfam-Magasins du monde (BE). FR – La reconnaissance et la valorisation des volontaires, Outil du réseau du volontariat local 2021.

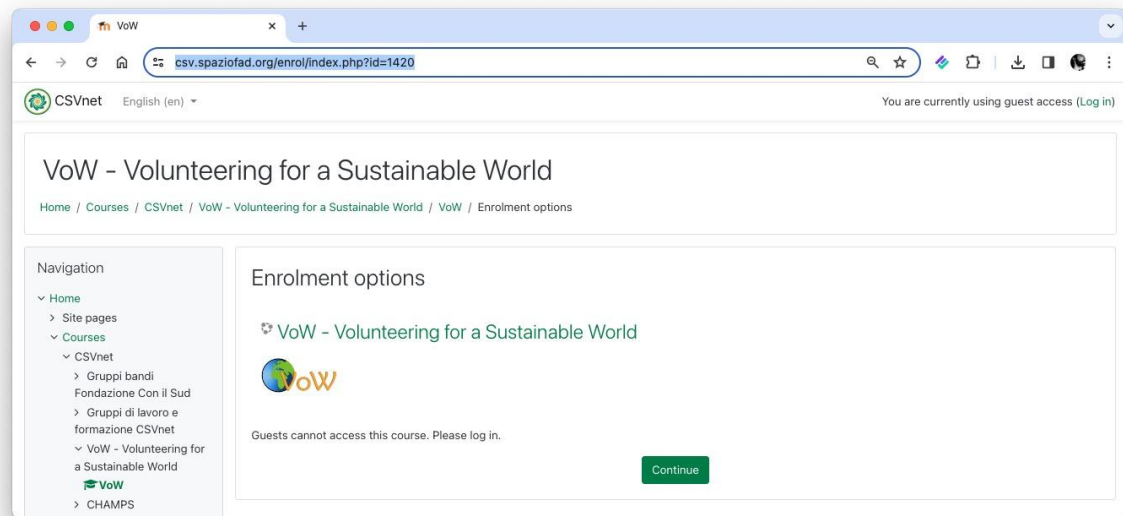
<sup>1</sup> The resources listed here are all contained on the online platform created for the sharing of training and for its use at a distance, which will be discussed later. On the platform you can find more resources, with more details

<b>VoW TRAINING COURSE</b> <b>MODULE 2: Organising Volunteers</b>	<p>2.1 Managing volunteers – In this unit we will explore some methodologies and get some tips on how to manage volunteers.</p>	<p>2.1.1 Intro 2.1.2 What is management of volunteers 2.1.3 Keywords 2.1.4 Managing “regular volunteers” 2.1.5 Managing “flexible volunteers” 2.1.6 Conflict management 2.1.7 Team Building 2.1.8 Conclusions</p>	<p>Since this ‘role’ can be very different depending on the structure and purpose of the organization, what is described here must be accompanied by a face-to-face activity</p> <p>If module 2.1 wants to be fully realized, including in particular the content 2.1.6 on conflict a duration of at least 2 hours is suggested</p>	<p>Videos Managing volunteers – intro Overview of Volunteer Management Best Practices</p> <p>Tools Conflict Management – Celivo Training 2022 Team Building – Celivo Training 2022 Team Building – World Café method</p>
	<p>2.2 The Fair Trade shop – In this unit we will explore some aspects of how to volunteer in a Fair Trade shop.</p>	<p>2.2.1 Intro 2.2.2 What is a FT Shop 2.2.3 Keywords 2.2.4 Learning by doing 2.2.5 Good practices</p>	<p>Since the management of the various aspects within a store is learned by doing, what is described here must be accompanied by face-to-face activities (approximately lasting 2 meetings of 2 hours each)</p>	<p>Power point on volunteering in a FT Shop Checklist for the shift in the shop</p>
	<p>2.3 Communication</p> <p>In this unit, you will see different ways of communication, focusing on the volunteers’ team, both internal (within the organization) and external (towards the civil society, an introduction to some tools and practical examples on how to use them.</p>	<p>2.3.1 Introduction 2.3.2 Internal Communication 2.3.3 External Communication 2.3.4 Inclusive Communication</p>	<p>This unit allows participants to acquire new knowledge but it must also enable them to measure their own methods and effectiveness in communication, through exercises and role play.</p> <p>A minimum duration of 2 hours is suggested for module 2.3</p>	<p>Power point on communication</p> <p>EN – “A Complete Guide to Internal and External Communication”. Indeed (USA) EN- “Emoji Meanings: Different Types of Emojis Used on WhatsApp and Other Chatting Apps with Meanings”. MSP Digital Media Private Limited (IN) EN- “What is the cloud?”. Azzure (USA) Videos EN- “How To Start A Newsletter From Scratch That Builds Community?”. HubSpot Inc. (USA) EN- “How can NGOs use social media to promote their work?”. FUNDSFORNGOS LLC (USA)</p>

VOW TRAINING COURSE MODULE 3: Sustainable Economy	<b>3.1 Fair Trade</b>  In this unit, you will have a look at the Fair Trade principles with examples of each of them, tools, and activities about Fair Trade with real examples of those in the Fair Trade organizations.	<b>3.1.1 Introduction</b> <b>3.1.2 The 10 FT Principles</b> <b>3.1.3 Activities and tools about FT</b>	In this unit, after having carried out an in-depth study of the principles of the FT with the participants, it is a question of experimenting with ad hoc training tools for learning the FT principles.  A duration of at least 2 hours is suggested	Power point on FT principles Activities and tools for FT principles education (included in the ppt) Pictionary Categories and Words EN – “Definition of fair trade”. Fair Trade Advocacy Office (BE) EN – “10 Principles of Fair Trade” WFTO (NL) ES – “Informe divulgativo Empoderadas Mujeres del Comercio Justo.” Coordinadora Estatal de Comercio Justo (ES) Several videos on the subject Podcast EN – “Principle 2. Transparency and Accountability” WFTO (NL) EN – “Principle 3. Fair trade practices” WFTO (NL)
	<b>3.2 Sustainable Development Goals</b>  In this unit you will learn about the 17 objectives that the United Nations have decided to go towards from 2015 to 2030. If you already know about the SDGs this unit can help you to improve your knowledge about it.	<b>3.2.1 The definition of sustainable development</b> <b>3.2.2 The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</b> <b>3.2.3 Activities related to the SDGs</b> <b>3.2.4 The Climate Fresk</b> <b>3.2.5 Other European project on Sustainability</b>	For this unit is located in the power point a frontal lesson on the subject of the module, and activities are suggested that can be carried out in the presence and at a distance. The proposed exercises can be used for individual reflection, even at a distance, to be shared later with the group, and exercises that encourage comparison and group learning.  A minimum duration of 2 hours is also suggested for this module	Power point on the SDGs We are a force card SDG Escape Room. Rotterdam School of Management. Online Online Climate Fresk Workshop The Sustainable Development Agenda. United Nations. Online: The 17 goals. United Nations. Online Progress chart 2022. United Nations. Online Sustainable Development Goals. Fairtrade International. Online: Glossary of sustainability. Online  Videos What is sustainability? UCLA. Online Sustainable Development Goals explained with 3 useful tips   Environment SDG Sustainability. Développement Durable Illustré.





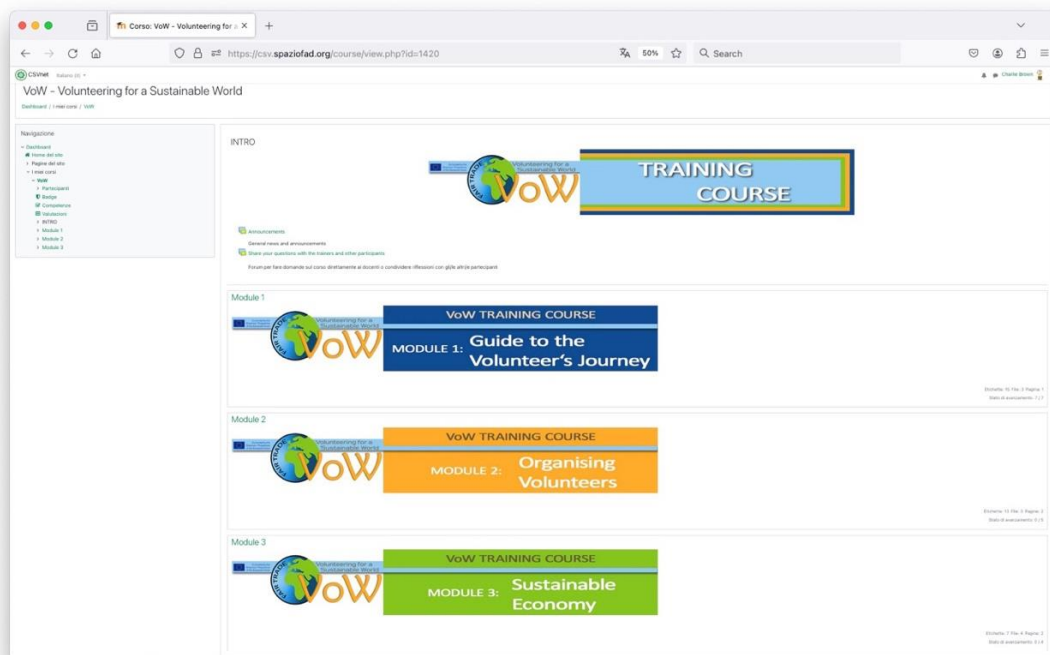


After clicking on the Continue button, enter your username and password.



Users can also access from the homepage <https://csv.spaziofad.org/> and find the link to the VoW space on their home page (dashboard). The participant can also see the percentage of course completion in the course access box.

The courses include a general introduction and three modules.



In the introductory part there are two forums:

“Announcements”, to receive information and news about the course.

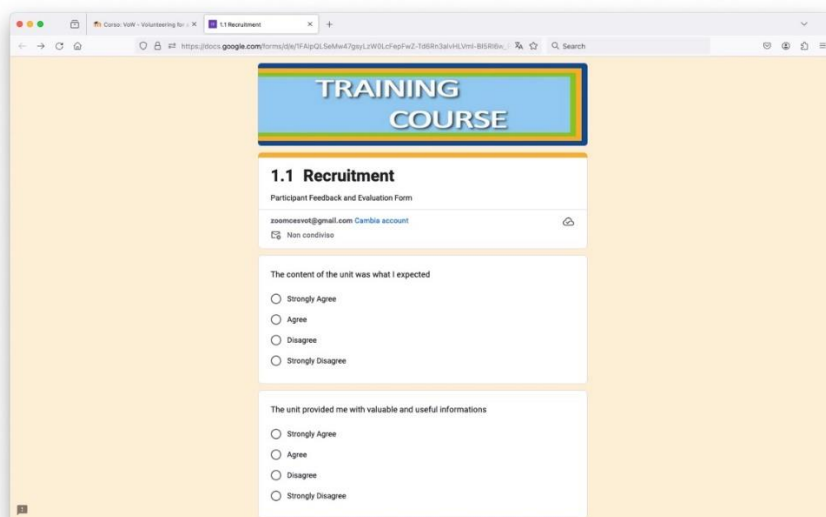
“Share your questions with the trainers and other participants”, to ask questions about the course directly to the teachers or share reflections with the other participants.

To access a module, click to the title, for example “Module 1”



In the first module entitled "Guide to the Volunteer's Journey" there are materials relating to "Recruitment", "Welcoming" and "Retention". When a resource is viewed, the platform records the completion of the activity. For this module the materials are pdf resources and web pages. Click on the resources and web pages to open it.

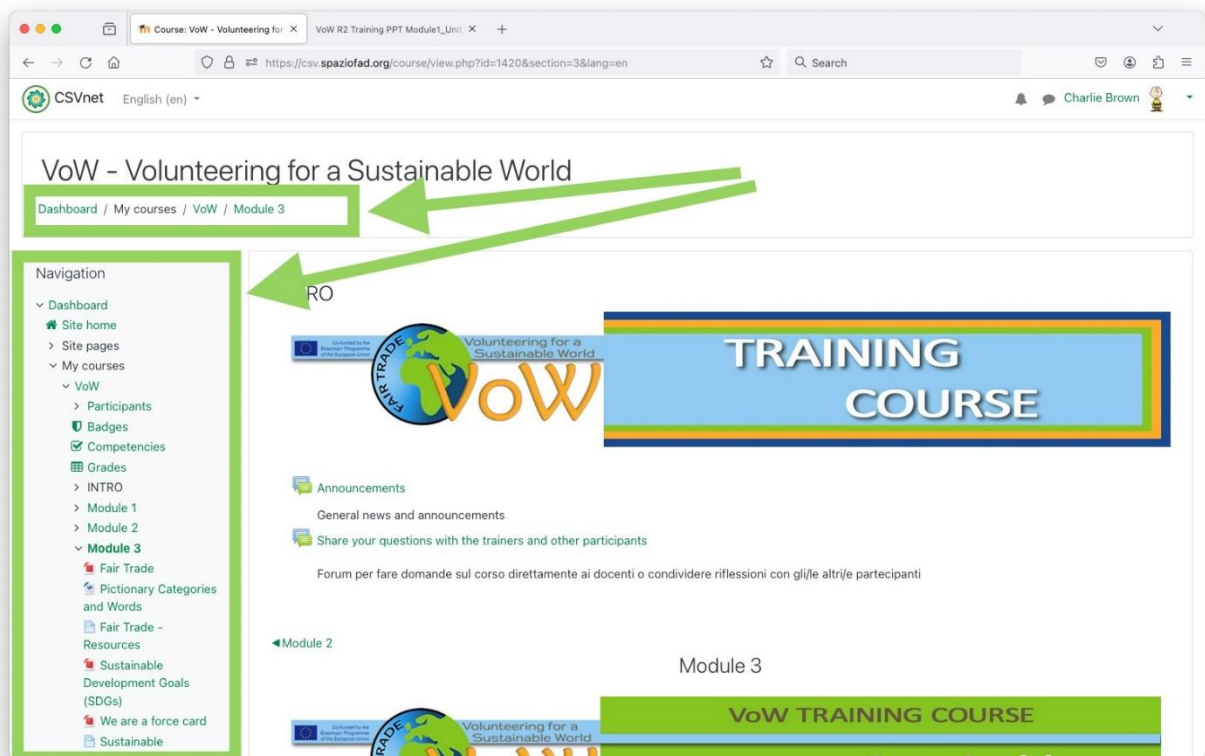
There is also a link to a Google form which contains a feedback questionnaire on the completed module. Each module has one.



The second module entitled "Organizing Volunteers" gathers materials related to the topics "Managing volunteers", "The fair-trade shop", "Communication". This module also includes training videos. Click on the videos to open.

Module 3 entitled "Sustainable Economy" gathers materials related to the topics "Fair Trade" and "Sustainable Development Goals" with resources in PDF, web pages and Google forms.

To navigate within the course, you can use the "Navigation" side block or the page path open that you find at the top.



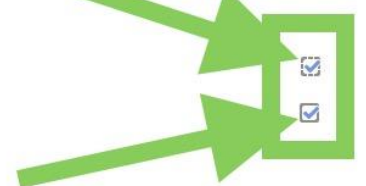
A blue check next to a resource indicates that it has been viewed. If the square containing the check is dotted, the check appears automatically when the resource is viewed; if it is a solid line, the check must be placed manually after the activity has been completed (for example, for the Google feedback form you have to check manually when you complete feedback)

## 1.2 Welcoming

Bienvenue, Willkommen, Benvenuti, Welkom, Bienvenido,... This is how to say "welcome" in French, German, Italian, Dutch, and Spanish. In whatever language you speak, saying "welcome" to someone who just arrived in your organization is often one of the first words you will say. Beyond the words you express, how can you create a welcoming environment? In this unit, you learn about how to properly welcome new volunteers. You will get an example of a welcoming process, as well as some tips for the first meeting with a new volunteer. Do not spend any more time reading this introduction, and check this unit out!

 Welcoming new volunteers

[Answer to the feedback form](#)



## 4. First trial in presence: Madrid

After the testing of the training platform by 75 users, the partners met in Madrid, hosted by Fundacio Oxfam Intermón (FOI), to take stock on the training platform, but also to trial the training for new volunteers of sustainable economy, for the first time in presence.

FOI volunteer trainers have carried out a training of one and a half days (9 hours) for 13 participants, 60 years of average, mostly women, on issues related to Fair Trade (module 3.1 of the training course). The other partners had the task of observing the course, equipped with adequate tools for observation, in order to provide impressions, suggestions and questions about the progress of the experiment.

At the end of the trial, the collection of observations in summary gave the following results:

### Positive impressions

- training promotes a very positive exchange between participants
- importance of the training in presence, in group, after the years of the pandemic its value is emphasized
- feelings that develop during training can increase motivation
- training does not present moments of boredom: good rhythm, mix of techniques and methodologies gives the best result
- training activities seem perfect for any group of volunteers, even for new volunteers
- importance of the quality of trainers, prepared and communicative
- the activities suggested for the modules are really effective

### Suggestions/guidelines

- ✓ With regard to the participation of disadvantaged young volunteers, the question is whether further measures should be found to encourage their participation in training
- ✓ The question also arises as to how training can be achieved by spending less: for the Madrid experiment, 4 trainers and many means have been deployed which not all, and not always, can be
- ✓ On the duration of the training, it is established that you can consider different versions of the training and prepare the best training agenda taking into account the target you are looking for
- ✓ How to give handouts to participants. It depends on the target: older people may also like to receive in-depth texts, perhaps digital, not paper. For young people better provide only reading tips
- ✓ One of the activities of the experiment was to create a video promotion on fair trade, which suggested that for participants it can be very engaging and motivating to prepare during the training something that will really be used
- ✓ It stresses the importance of following up the training of participants and asks how to do so.
- ✓ It is emphasized the fact of adapting the setting to target participants: for young groups eliminate the tables and any kind of barrier in the middle of the space that would limit the dynamism

## 5. Monitoring of experimental paths

As foreseen by the project: Fundacio Oxfam Intermón (FOI), AltroMercato (AM) and Oxfam – Magasins du Monde (OMM) experimented, with the help of their trainers, at local level, the modules designed for the training of the new volunteer for a sustainable economy: local implementation of pathways for volunteers of the sustainable economy, in several national locations to expand testing and educational products.

Below is a summary of the results produced during the trial. The total report is available in the appendix.

### Methodology

The trial was carried out between September and December 2023. To monitor the Realized activities the involved partners had in hand two tools (in appendix 2 and 3).

A. Activity report form; documentation of activities composed by:

1. a brief record of the activities carried out,
2. the trainer's report on how the activity took place.

B. Participant Feedback and Evaluation Questionnaire, to collect feedback from course participants

### 5.1 Synoptic Tables Activity Report

**TABLE 1**

Partner	Title	Place	Name of trainer	Date	Overall duration	N participants	Average Age	Gender
Oxfam-Intermon	3.1 Fair Trade	Madrid	Claudia Carrasco	21, 22/06/2023	9 hours	13	60	3 M 10 F
	National volunteers meeting	Madrid	Claudia Carrasco	24/09/2023	45'	34	49	28 M 6 F
Oxfam-Magasins du Monde	Proforal - program "Elio"	Bruxelles	Louise Godard	13/09/2023	2 hours	13	25	3 M 10 F

Altromercato	Discover OMM 1	Wavre, OMM's offices Belgium	Louise Godard	21/09/2023	2 hours	17	55 – 60	3 M 14 F
	HE Condorcet FT principles	Charleroi, Belgium	Louise Godard	23/10/2023	1h 30	20	20	5 M 11 F 4 n/a
	Discover OMM 2	Marche-en-Famenne (Belgium)	Louise Godard	7/11/2023	2 hours	8	65	1 M 7 F
	Understand FT	Bruxelles Bureaux du CNCD 11.11.11	Louise Godard	28/11/2023	6 hours	13	45 very mixed from 24 to 65+	3 M 9 F 1 n/a
	FT principles Ex Aequo	Ex Aequo FT shop Bologna	Chiara Castellana	23/10/2023	2 hours	5	Very mixed: 20, 23, 27, 47, 66	1 M 4 F
	FT principles Bottega Solidale	Bottega Solidale Office, Genova - Piazza Embriaci	Federica Rolandi	9/11/2023	3 hours	6	40	0 M 5 F 1 n/a
	Samarcanda 3.1 FT 3.2 SDGs 2.2 FT Shops	Istituto Superiore di Feltre	Piero Sbrovazzo	2/12/2023 4/12/2023 7/12/2023 20/12/2023	2 hours each training	73	16	73 n/a
<b>Total</b>		12 training, 1 meeting			36h 15	202	32	47 M 76 F 79 n/a

TABLE 2

Partner	Title	Participants' background	Training recruiting	Did you ever volunteer?	Less opportunity
Oxfam-Intermon	3.1 Fair Trade	FOI volunteers who needed an update on the topics	All participants were inside volunteers	Y 13 N 0	no



	National volunteers meeting	volunteers from various cities from Oxfam Intermón	All participants were inside volunteers	Y 34 N 0	no
	Proforal - program "Elio"	Newcomers, that have been in Belgium for less than 3 years. International background (no Belgian people)	Participants are not volunteers. They take part in the program "Eilo" lead by Proforal. The training was part of their learning about volunteering in Belgium.	Y 0 N 13	13 newcomers trying to integrate into their new community
	Discover OMM 1	No informations	Training for new volunteer in Oxfam-Magasins du monde. They were recruited through e-mail sent with our training agenda	Y 8 N 6 n/a 3	No information
	HE Condorcet FT principles	All 3-year students in international business	HE Condorcet contacted OMM to have a workshop about FT. The activity was part of one of an English class.	Y 2 N 14 n/a 4	No informations
Oxfam – Magasins du Monde	Discover OMM 2	All participants retired	Training for new volunteer in OMM. They were recruited through e-mail sent with our training agenda	Y 5 N 1 n/a 2	No information
	Understand FT	4 retired 1 Incapacity for long-term work 4 Employees 2 students	Emails to our volunteers and colleagues and a post on our website.	Y 8 N 4 n/a 1	1
Altromercato	FT principles Ex Aequo	Student (2) retired freelancer employee	old and new volunteers: some already knew a lot about FT, some knew very little	Y 5 N 0	no
	FT principles Bottega Solidale	teachers, university students, retired	All aspiring volunteers in the trial period	Y 0 N 6	no



Samarcanda	Students	Hopefully aspiring volunteers	Y 0 N 73	3
3.1 FT				
3.2 SDGs				
2.2 FT Shops				
<b>Total</b>			Yes 75 No 117 n/a 10	17

## 5.2 Notes on the experiments carried out

- 12 educational activities were carried out, reaching 202 people: 76 females, 47 males (79 n/a), among whom 75 had already volunteered and 117 no.
- 17 of them were participants with less opportunities (1,2% of total)
- 5 trainers, from different partners, were responsible for the implementation of the activities
- 4 of these activities addressed within the organization: updating volunteers, training for new volunteers (Oxfam Intermón meeting, Discover OMM 1 and 2, FT principles BS) thus reaching 64 people.
- 2 of these activities addressed both within and outside the organisation (Understand FT, FT principles Ex Aequo, 18 participants in total).
- 6 courses were carried out on request within external educational programs (HE Condorcet, Proforal, Istituto Superiore di Feltre: 106 participants in total).
- Among the participants the number of students prevails mainly thanks to the course in the schools IS Feltre and HE Condorcet, and the national meeting of Oxfam Intermón.
- In its courses OMM has presented module 3.1 but with variations due to the training target, the time available, and the intention to improve the intervention.
- In addition to Module 3.1 on the FT, have been tested Module 3.2 on SDGs and Module 2.2 on the organisation of the FT shop and its products (Samarcanda/AM)

## 5.3 Suggestions

- The course is too long when the activities have not allowed participants to cool down, with an audience often little interested in the subject (in particular those participating in compulsory training). These are participants who test you and from whom you learn more.
- The course is too short when you actually put too much emphasis in the time available; it can still be a positive indicator that participants would have liked more training.
- Always check the technical aspects (computer performance) before the start of the meeting
- Trainers must know and not abuse the technical tools, in particular the digital ones, which are very useful but invasive in the relational dimension
- Avoid training days which are too dense of contents.
- You have to know how to interpret the climate of the group and adapt to it, improvising... And therefore, you have to be very prepared

- More examples of partners our organization works with: the experiential dimension of formation is very important for the younger generations. This also means allowing as many meetings as possible with FT producers who immediately make the whole theory very concrete
- Add a follow up meeting to give participants the opportunity to meet in cold, after elaborating what they learned

## 5.4 Final considerations

- The final evaluation of the trainers shows that overall, the activities have been successful and achieved the intended training objectives. Not only the understanding of the contents but also the ability of the module to arouse participation by the group, dynamism, desire to have more.
- The group of participants is appreciated especially when it is heterogeneous, bringing together new and old volunteers, people with more experience and knowledge and people who do not.
- The search for new volunteers is certainly favored by agreements with other educational institutions, schools, centers that support volunteering or other, but making the engagement by the participants not always easy because they can perceive the training as something desired by others.
- The trainings have all achieved results (by feedback questionnaires) between the good and the excellent compared to the satisfaction of the participants and learning. The experimentation has also shown the ability to improve the module correcting their mistakes, the ability to stimulate participants, make them participatory and dynamic, to want more.

## 6. Definition of possible competency validation models for volunteer competencies

### Introduction

This report provides an overview of the current state of volunteer competency validation models both within and outside of the participating Fair-Trade organizations.

Its function is to provide insight and a clear set of options for further developing skill validation of volunteers generally and within Fair Trade. After reading this report, readers are knowledgeable about both what's already out there, and the concrete possibilities for their own organizations and volunteers.

### 6.1 Using VOW R2 and relevant competency assessment methods

VOW R2 has produced a series of e-learning. These online modules are presented in the form of slide decks. To validate the learnings from these units a validation framework must be created. However, any assessment created for these units also provides learning by itself.

Organizations that choose to use the VOW R2 material, can integrate the material into their existing training measures. The material can be used as mandatory or optional self-study material but could also be used in a group lecture type setting. In both cases assessments could be devised. Due to the form of this material, written knowledge tests or written assignments would be suitable. Assignments could also lead to products that benefit the organization. Examples of assignments could be:

- Developing a volunteer management policy.
- Developing a recruitment strategy.
- Developing new volunteer activities.
- Developing a volunteering event.

### 6.2 Organizational reasons for validating competencies

Reasons for validating volunteer competencies are manifold. However, organizations must decide on whether the investment made is worthwhile.

Validating volunteer competencies can be used as a precursor to become a volunteer both with and without offering the volunteer training. It can be used as a means of vetting incoming volunteers, and seeing whether they'll need extra assistance or are up to the task in general.

On the other hand, validation can be used to, in part, validate the learnings offered to the volunteer.

From the organization's perspective, reasons for validating the competencies of volunteers could be:

1. Better volunteer placement

Validating competencies could lead to a better match between the potential volunteer and the volunteering activity. While simultaneously, it's not the whole story, competencies don't have to say much about interest and willingness to learn.

2. Quality assurance

Making sure that volunteers can do the job, can limit the amount of lost efficiency due to a discrepancy in required and actual competency levels.

3. Making volunteering more attractive

Offering validation could be an incentive for existing volunteers to stay longer and new volunteers to join.

4. Increased effectiveness

Validation, especially when combined with training, can lead to an increase in organizational effectiveness. Even more so when the competencies that are being trained/ validated are not yet present within a volunteer team.

5. Improved risk management

6. Legitimacy

Partners from the Fair-Trade umbrella organizations are of the opinion that functionally, the benefits of validation for efficiency and effectiveness of volunteer tasks would not outweigh the implementation of validation infrastructure. However, certain groups of volunteers may value competency validation. The umbrella organizations may benefit in terms of making volunteering more attractive.

Validation does not have to be compulsory or generally applied to all volunteers. Organizations can implement validation for specific tasks, roles, or competencies, and can do so on their own initiative or that of the volunteer. Only validating on request of the volunteer, could ensure only volunteers who personally benefit from validation use this option, without introducing strain on the organization.

### 6.3 Volunteer considerations for competency validation

Considerations for the validation of competencies could vary based on demographics and socio-economic factors. Generally, the reasons for – and benefits of – validation for volunteers can be categorized as:

1. Personal

a. Confidence

Volunteers may feel more confident about themselves and the tasks at hand when they have verified their competencies.

b. Value

Validation of competencies may lead to enhanced feelings of self-worth.

2. Organizational

a. Affiliation

Having competencies related to a specific organization, may give volunteers a closer feeling of affiliation with the organization and/ or their mission.

b. Recognition

Having their competencies validated, may have volunteers feel more recognized by the organization.

3. Professional

a. CV strengthening

Validating competencies can boost the CV of a volunteer by providing clear proof to potential employers, without the use of references.

## 6.4 Relevant volunteer groups

If validation of competencies is not compulsory and done through the initiative of volunteer's, organizations need assess which groups of volunteers may benefit most from validation for two reasons:

1. To more effectively present and promote the validation offering to volunteers.
2. To better tailor the validation offering to the volunteers.

### The current volunteers

The typical volunteer for Fair-Trade shops in all partner countries (Italy, Spain, Belgium), and in many charity shops generally, is relatively senior. Most often, volunteers are middle age or senior women, commonly possessing a higher level of education.

Competency validation for this group, may be less valuable, due to their relatively high educational background. Their age means they're less likely to need the validation for cv-building, with exception to those wanting to transition into another field.

However, when the validation of skills is connected to an actual training track, leading to a higher level of volunteer management effectiveness than is now present in the volunteer's environment, validating competencies may become very attractive for current volunteers too.

### Newcomers

European countries have become host to an increasing flow of newcomers from various parts of the world in recent years. In many cases, they cannot immediately go to work due to their legal status, but they are allowed to volunteer. NGOs have a unique position for allowing newcomers to integrate and develop their competencies / increase their odds of finding paid work when they're allowed to.

### Young people / students

Young people are only just starting out or still must start their professional lives. Some within this demographic have never had a job or worked in a professional environment. The validation of competencies can give young people the proof they need to break into other work and can add to their self-esteem- and worth. Additionally, when focusing on sustainability-oriented competencies, it can set them apart from their peers by showing dedication to the theme.

### Lifelong learners

Some volunteers may be interested in building their profile, adding new competencies from a lifelong learning perspective.

The European Commission has designated [9 competencies](#) as being essential for lifelong learning. The possible validation offering of Fair-Trade volunteering and charity retail fits many of these competencies, due to the combination of direct experience with running / maintaining a business with a clear social / sustainability angle, where communication with others, including other volunteers and customers is essential:

- Literacy competency
- Multilingual competency
- Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering
- Digital competence
- Personal, social and learning to learn competence
- Citizenship competence
- Entrepreneurship competence
- Cultural awareness and expression competence

## 6.5 Relevant competency validation offering

Based on the unique combination of elements Fair-Trade volunteering comprises of, a wide range of competency validation offerings could be made. Volunteering tasks range from shop management to more non-profit related tasks such as volunteer management and activism. From the interactivity with other volunteers and customers, transversal skills such as storytelling and teamwork can be developed and potentially validated. The following is a selection of possible validation ‘packages’ shops could choose to develop and offer volunteers.

### Shop management

A package related to the various facets of managing a (charity) retail shop. Covering the basics from manning the floor and working a register, to stocking and interacting with customers. These competencies are organically developed by conducting regular volunteer tasks in all shops. However, to reach the full range of competencies, volunteers may need to be trained beyond the regular volunteer tasks, and potentially gain more responsibility at a management level to organically gain the competence. In preparation of this volunteers could be trained, also utilizing the learning units of VOW R2. Validation could more than in other cases be done through observation.

### Volunteer management

Managing volunteers is a distinct competence gained through experience and training. Volunteer managers are faced with unique challenges related to motivation, control and performance that do not arise with paid staff. Validating these competencies may prove valuable for those wanting to continue in that field or adjacent fields (in local governments for example). Also, through utilizing the learning units of VOW R2, those wanting to validate volunteer management skills can learn about new ways of managing volunteers, along the lines of event and project volunteering / short – vs. long-term volunteering / online and offline volunteering.

### Fair Trade principles – and sustainability systems

Volunteers are already trained regarding the Fair-Trade principles. One of the learning modules created during VOW explicitly covers this. Volunteers are ambassadors of the Fair-Trade movement and understanding both the principles of Fair Trade and the underlying sustainability (i.e., sustainable development) system basics, potentially makes them much more effective ambassadors. Volunteers seeking other volunteering or paid work could benefit from the validation of this unique angle to Fair-Trade volunteering, setting them apart from others.

### Teaching Sustainability

Transferring knowledge about Fair-Trade and its relevant sustainability themes is a key activity of the Fair-Trade shops, umbrella organizations and shops. There are various ways volunteers are part of this effort. They teach students in schools, during event, they educate customers and their fellow volunteers, for example through the VoW-developed Fair-Trade fresk.

### Language validation

Charity shops are an excellent place for those unfamiliar with the local language to gain language experience. Most interactions stay simple, language wise, making them ideal for practicing. Gaining a better understanding of the local language can a strong tangible benefit for volunteers. The shop experience could be enriched with a language course – possibly offered by local partners - and a language certificate.

### Activistic skills validation

The Fair-Trade movement is inextricably linked to the retail element. Across Europe, these shops are also used as activistic hubs. Activism comes with its own set of competencies that are unique and rare. Through experience and umbrella organization support, volunteers can develop these competencies. Focus could lie on mobilizing others for a cause, coordination, organizing events, facilitating change – reaching the right people that can effect change - and even cause related communication through – among other things - protest signs.

### Event organization

Every year, the Fair-Trade movement, consisting of the umbrella organizations and shops, organize many events throughout Europe. Event organization is not only already an important part of Fair-Trade, but also a point of great potential. Event volunteering is on the rise, volunteers on a 'track' for validating event organization competencies can be tasked with organizing events that involve volunteering with a double-sided goal – the event's main draw /cause on one hand and drawing in new volunteers on the other. Introducing a dedicated volunteer, who is on track to validate these competencies, who simultaneously organizes events could greatly increase the number of events hosted and people reached by the organizations / shops that implement it.

## 6.6 Conclusion

The results of this activity indicate the Validation of skills gained through volunteering in the fair-trade volunteering movement is still in its infancy. The three organizations interviewed recognize the importance and the value of volunteering, but they don't see the validation process as a priority.

There is a certain reticence by parts of voluntary organizations to present their activities as a personal and professional growth, they think that could reduce the value of gratuitousness and bring volunteering to a trade logic dimension. Another obstacle that makes the certification of competences a difficult process in this context is the excessive bureaucratization of this procedure, often managed in a centralized way by national or regional authorities, and that scares the social workers and volunteers, this is true especially in Italy.

Finally, the partners have expressed they feel skill validation is a topic reserved for younger and more job seeking volunteers, instead of the current volunteer pool, which is mostly made up of seniors and non-jobseekers.

Starting from the results collected and the discussion held in Rotterdam during the LTTA (C1) we can define the following conclusion:

- *At this stage validation is not a priority for the Fair-Trade organizations. Before it's important to define the profile and the roles. Validation should be taken into account for future developments;*
- *there is a lack of understanding of what validation is both within the organizations and within volunteers;*
- *on the other hand, fair-trade organization claimed that they should attract more young people. Offering validation could be a tool for this aim;*
- *The concept used by fair-trade organization is "valorization" that is broader idea of giving value and rewarding the volunteering activity, validation could be an aspect of it. But none of the fair-trade organization has already integrated validation in their valorization approach.*