
>> **Volunteering organisations experienced RIVER during the piloting phase**

Helping children with their homework, creating a network for immigrants, working for a fire brigade or engaging in a cultural exchange project: Senior volunteers act in different settings with their main motivation to support others, to let them benefit from their experiences or just to stay active. What most of them are not aware of: They all make learning experiences by doing this; they improve their own personal competences. In the RIVER piloting senior volunteers were involved in this new validation method, to show them how they are learning through volunteering.



The RIVER Methodology was tested in 5 different countries (Austria, Finland, Germany, Hungary and Italy) through 13 piloting projects with the involvement of 27 senior volunteers acting in different intergenerational settings. Most partners tested RIVER in volunteering activities linked to their organizations, some volunteers were chosen out of the private field of project partners. Even if the activities the senior volunteers were involved were very different and hard to

compare, they had one in common: the intergenerational aspect. Each volunteer was assessed on the specific competence "intergenerational cooperation" which was defined as their ability to work in teams of different age groups, to deal with other working or communications styles or to understand/accept attitudes of younger colleagues or project participants.

In all piloting settings the assessment of specific competence improvements of senior volunteers were finalized with success. All of them developed during the projects, and the initial and final assessment pointed at visible improvements.

>> Feedback after the RIVER piloting phase

From the feedback of volunteering facilitators as well as from the volunteers themselves **RIVER is seen as a useful tool for senior volunteers**, to support them, to reflect on their tasks and achievement in the volunteering activity, also to make them aware of



what they can and do learn. Even if for the senior volunteers the certification was not seen as the main benefit, they liked the concept in general. They were proud of results and they appreciated the attention given to them during the validation process.

One main result of the piloting is that the RIVER method is not only suitable for senior volunteering but for volunteering in general. It is a useful tool for organizing and monitoring volunteering activities and can improve the quality of planning. The certification of competence development offers recognition for senior volunteers and may lead to opportunities for younger people – e.g. in job searching activities.

As compared with the benefits of the RIVER methodology, one critical point was that the methodology was seen as time consuming and complex. Based on this comments the RIVER partners now work on the finalization of project products. The complexity will be reduced and the working material will be created in a way, that the methodology will be easy to handle.

>> Save the date: RIVER final conference!

All final products and results of the RIVER project will be presented at the final **RIVER conference**, which will take place in **Vienna (AT), November 12th 2013**.

Read more about the RIVER project: www.river-project.eu



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