



Reveal the learning potential  
of volunteering

## RIVER Training

I. Training concept

II. Training curriculum



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Reveal the learning potential of volunteering

RIVER Training:

- I. Training Concept
- II. Training Curriculum

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## INTRODUCTION

### RIVER: Recognition of intergenerational volunteering experiences and results

The original idea of the EU-project RIVER arose from the focus of the European Year of Volunteering 2011 combined with the European Year of Active Ageing 2012. Given the demographic trend and the increasing number of older people in Europe, it seems even more crucial to create opportunities for older people to stay active. Involving a larger number of seniors in voluntary work might turn out to be a major tool in active ageing strategies while on the other hand the increasing involvement of senior people in volunteering is essential for the vitality of the voluntary sector. Following these two principles, the RIVER project initially aimed at promoting senior- and intergenerational volunteering by helping to make senior volunteers' competence development more visible and to give more attention to the engagement of older people.

To reach that aim, a tailor-made planning and validation system for senior volunteering was developed and tested in intergenerational volunteering contexts.

The RIVER project aimed at adapting LEVEL5, a comprehensive methodology for assessing and validating competences acquired in informal learning settings to the specific requirements of the volunteering sector. The effects (or the impact) of informal learning can be displayed through the development of competence (e.g. empowerment, improvement of "soft" skills, activity level, self esteem, attitudes towards other groups, civic knowledge etc.).

The system LEVEL5 has been developed and piloted in a series of seven LLP-projects between 2005 and 2012 and offers an approach to assess, evidence and validate the cognitive, activity-related, and affective competence development of learners in informal and non-formal learning contexts.

### RIVER Methodology

The methodology is built on the LEVEL5 system. It is a tool that organisations can use to assess the competence of a volunteer at the beginning and at the end of an activity or of a specific period.

The RIVER Methodology was designed and elaborated to recognise or create informal learning opportunities through volunteering with a special focus on promoting senior volunteering as an important way for older people to actively participate in social and organisational structures. It has three different, but complementary, functions:

- 
- A method for recognising informal learning outcomes of volunteering activities
  - A method for planning competence development in volunteering activities
  - A method for planning learning processes as volunteering activities

The whole detailed description of the RIVER methodology can be found in the RIVER manual.

For further work and implementation of RIVER in volunteering contexts it is crucial to qualify volunteering facilitators and other staff or volunteering organisations on the RIVER methodology, the theoretical approach and the procedure. Therefore project partners developed a **two-day training concept**.

### Structure of this document

The first part (Training concept) gives an overview about the two-day training. Amongst other things it introduces the aims, target groups, learning outcomes and the structure of the training.

In the second part (Training curriculum) you will find the detailed descriptions of different training exercises. A good mixture of theoretical inputs and training activities helps to understand the steps of the assessment and provide opportunities to practice the assessment procedure.

You can find the information for theoretical input and training material in the “RIVER Manual” and in the file “Training material” which is on the RIVER CD.



## I. TRAINING CONCEPT

### 1. Target groups of the training

Staff and trainers from organisations

- working with volunteers
- who are interested in evaluating, validating and demonstrating the learning outcomes of volunteering activities

### 2. Aims of the training

- to learn how to assess the development of competences in volunteering activities
- to know how to include and support a learning process in volunteering activities
- to give introducing input about assessment and validation

### 3. Learning outcomes of the training

By the end of the workshop participants are expected to be able to

- understand the RIVER methodology (based on the LEVEL5 approach)
- apply the steps of LEVEL5 approach
- prepare a learning plan within a volunteering activity
- validate volunteers competences and their development within a learning activity
- differentiate competence dimensions
- apply different assessment methods
- summarize the validation and learning outcomes according to a certain quality criteria and to create a certificate
- use the LEVEL5 software for creating a certificate

### 4. Core Questions that may be discussed

- What is the value of volunteering in regard to personal development?
- Why looking at learning in volunteering projects?
- How can learning actions implemented in volunteering activities, to make the development of the social, personal or organisational competences of the volunteers measureable and visual?
- How can learning in volunteering be recognised / validated?
- How can the validation aspect implemented into the volunteering sector in general?
- Can the RIVER methodology help to make the volunteering offer more attractive?

## 5. Structure of the RIVER training

As the RIVER methodology is based on the LEVEL5 approach the RIVER workshop focuses on all 5 steps of the procedure and has a balanced agenda of theoretical inputs and hands-on sessions and ensures space for questions and discussion. The training concept and curriculum was developed for a two-day workshop.

Welcome and Introduction

The RIVER Project

The connection between volunteering and learning

The 5 Steps of the RIVER Methodology

Step 1: Planning your volunteering project and describe your activity

Step 2: Choose a competence from the inventory

Step 3: Using/adapting the reference system

Step 4: Choice of the assessment method

Step 5: Reasoning and rating

Conclusions and final questions

Evaluation of the Training



## 6. Planning the RIVER training

This section gives useful information on practical issues to those who would like to run a workshop.

### **Who can run the workshop?**

It is highly recommended, that the trainer who delivers the RIVER course is experienced in the use of the RIVER methodology and familiar with the methodological concept of LEVEL5 so that the optimal quality of results can be achieved. Apart from this the person should be of course experienced in the field of evaluation and assessment to answer general questions that may appear during the two days.

### **Who are the participants of your training? Which organisational background do they have?**

It is worthwhile collecting information about the project ideas of the participants prior to the training so that the trainer can be well prepared for specific questions with regard to different approaches and contexts.

### **What type of venue do you need?**

The content of the training workshop is a combination of theoretical input and practical exercises. The practical part of the training will be done in smaller working groups. When choosing a training venue this aspect should be taken into consideration – offering sufficient space or extra rooms for working groups.

### **Which resources do you need?**

For the content related part of the training it is important to know the procedural description and templates out of the **RIVER Manual**. All information sheets, templates and slides can be found in the **training material on the CD**.

For running the training it is recommended to have:

- a PC and a beamer
- a Flipchart, paper and pens

### **What is the best timeframe for the workshop?**

The workshop concept presented here was developed for a 2-day workshop. Especially in the context of volunteering two days seem a long time to do a training course but nevertheless it is worth investing this time to guarantee a good preparation and common understanding of the methodology.

## II. TRAINING CURRICULUM

Training part	Aims/objectives	Duration
<b>1. Welcome and Icebreaking</b>	Welcome and get to know each other (timing depends on the size of the group and the fact if participants know each other or not).	40 minutes
<b>2. Introduction</b>	Explanation about the training concept and discussion of expectations.	30 minutes
<b>3. The RIVER project</b>	Create a common understanding about the EU-project RIVER, its aims and objectives, target groups and settings to show the reason for developing the RIVER methodology.	30 minutes
<b>4. The connection between volunteering and learning</b>	Raise awareness of the fact that there is a connection between volunteering and learning, that volunteering can be seen as a setting for informal learning and competences can be developed through involvement in volunteering activities. Give participants a common understanding about the concept of informal learning and validation – depending on the experience of the target group	45 minutes
<b>5. The 5 steps of the RIVER methodology</b>	To make participants familiar with the five step procedure of the RIVER methodology and explain the idea behind the concept	15 minutes
<b>STEP1:</b> Planning your volunteering project and describe your activity	Define the framework conditions where voluntary work takes place To plan the volunteer project and the possible learning process in it.	60 minutes
<b>STEP2:</b> Choose a	To make participants familiar with the competence inventory and show them which	15 minutes



competence from the inventory	competences can be assessed. sharpen the knowledge about competences, skills and attitudes	
<b>STEP3:</b> Using/ adapting the reference system	The participants get familiar with the three dimensions and the five competence levels	50 minutes input 80 minutes practical activity*
<b>STEP4:</b> Choice of the assessment method	To get to know different assessment methods to be used in volunteering context, which methods are suitable for specific target groups and practice them.	20 input 60 minutes practical activity*
<b>STEP5:</b> Reasoning and Rating	Give guidelines about how to write an evaluation text. Participants learn how they can create a RIVER certificate with the use of the supporting software	80 input 60 minutes practical activity*
<b>6. Conclusion and final questions</b>	Summary of the lessons learnt. Space for still open questions.	10 minutes
<b>7. Evaluation of the workshop</b>	The evaluation of the workshop should take place at the end of each day.	30 minutes

The whole timetable of the 2-day RIVER workshop includes approximately 11 working hours. Especially the activities STEP 3 – STEP 5 (marked with \*) have a long duration. **It has to be mentioned that here breaks are already included in the estimated time!**



## 1. Welcome and Icebreaking

**Aim:** to create a good atmosphere and get to know each other  
to provide an overview on the training  
to discuss participants' expectations

**Time:** 40 minutes

**Resources:** flipchart, marker, post-its

### How to run the activity:

**Ice-breaker:** The trainer can use different exercises considering the size of the group.

## 2. Introduction of the training and discussion of expectations

**Aim:** to give the participants an overview about the two days  
to discuss participants' expectations

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Resources:** flipchart, marker, post-its or pinboard with cards

### How to run the activity:

#### **Overview on the training:** (10 minutes)

The trainer welcomes the participants and explains the aim of the two-day workshop. S/he introduces the time-frame and structure of the workshop as well as the agenda of the following two days.

#### **Discussing expectations:** (20 minutes)

The trainer asks participants to write down what their expectations of the 2-day workshop. This exercise can be carried out either in pairs or in small groups. Participants discuss their answers and then the trainer asks them to share their expectations in plenary.

The trainer writes down the answers on the flipchart and gives feedback about the expectations: what can be realised and what is not realistic.

### 3. The RIVER project

- Aim: to create a common understanding about the EU-project RIVER and RIVER methodology
- Time: 30 minutes
- Resources: Power Point presentation on the RIVER project  
**(Training material 1.1)**

#### How to run the activity:

Even if this training workshop is not only about the EU-project RIVER, it is useful for the participants to understand, why and in which context the RIVER methodology was developed. The trainer gives a short presentation using the prepared slides of the RIVER project presentation.

### 4. The connection between volunteering and learning

- Aim: Raise awareness of the fact that there is a connection between volunteering and learning. Give participants a common understanding about the concept of informal learning and validation – depending on the experience of the target group
- Time: 45 minutes
- Resources: Power Point presentation on volunteering and informal learning  
**(Training material 1.2)**, flipchart, marker

#### How to run the activity:

##### **Group work:** (30 minutes)

- The trainer asks participants to form groups of maximum 4 people. Then s/he asks them to discuss their own learning experiences in regard to different volunteering situations.
- Participants share their experiences in plenary and the trainer writes them down on the flipchart.
- Finally the trainer points out that in every volunteering situation we learn something new and some competences can be developed.

##### **Theoretical input:** (15 minutes)

The trainer gives a short Power Point Presentation on informal learning in volunteering emphasising the connection between learning and volunteering.

## 5. The 5 Steps of the RIVER methodology

- Aim: To make participants familiar with the five step procedure of the RIVER methodology
- Time: 15 minutes
- Resources: Power Point presentation about the 5 steps (**Training material 1.3**)

### How to run the activity:

The trainer gives an overview about the 5 steps of the RIVER methodology according to the given power point presentation. It is recommended to keep this introduction very simple.

### STEP1: Planning your volunteering project and describe your activity

- Aim: To plan the volunteer project and the possible learning process in it.
- Time: 60 minutes
- Resources: project description template (**Training material 1.4**)

### How to run the activity:

The trainer explains why the planning phase is needed referring to the findings of the exercise “The connection between volunteering and learning”.

S/he discusses the following aspects with participants:

- What are the most important learning elements of your volunteer project?
- How can volunteers develop their competences (through training, voluntary activity)?
- What kind of competences can be developed during the project?

Participants should have submitted their project ideas prior to the training. The trainer and the participants go through the template and discuss them. Then the trainer asks participants to fill in the template and try to plan their volunteer project and the learning process.

Finally participants can ask questions and discuss ideas in a feedback round.

## STEP2: Choose a competence from the inventory

**Aim:** To make participants familiar with the competence inventory and show them which competences can be assessed.

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Resources:** competence inventory (**Training material 1.5**)

### How to run the activity:

The trainer introduces the competence inventory, which contains 10 competences and are useful to assess in volunteering settings. S/he draws participants' attention to the special feature of the method: it assesses soft skills.

## STEP3: Using/ adapting the reference system

It is highly recommended to have a break between STEP 2 and STEP3. In the plenary open questions can be discussed, after that, the work is continued. After the theoretical input, it is recommended to work in smaller groups.

### A) The 3 dimensions

**Aim:** To make participants understood what the 3 dimensions mean  
To practice the identification of the dimensions within a case study and to differentiate them; discuss indicators

**Time:** 50 minutes

**Resources:** Power Point Power Point presentation on the 3 dimensions (**Training material 1.6**)

### How to run the activity:

#### **Theoretical Input:** (10 minutes)

The three dimensions of a competence are introduced by the trainer according to the power point presentation.

#### **Activity:** (40 minutes)

The trainer explains the 3 chairs method. The description of the 3-chair method can be found in the RIVER manual

In order to illustrate the three dimensions of a competence, the trainer uses a case study choosing a special focus (e.g. problem solving competence). S/he asks participants to observe the 3 approaches and take notes.



Using the 3-chair method the trainer tells the story from three different points of views – affective, cognitive, activity related.

When the trainer tells the story s/he should also demonstrate that the 3 dimensions cannot be distinguished sharply. Participants have to be able to select information when they will assess volunteers' competences.

Finally the group discuss which affective, cognitive, activity related elements they identified during the exercise.

## **B) The 5 levels**

**Aim:** To practice the rating of the competence according to the 5 level-system

**Time:** 80 minutes

**Resources:** reference system template (**Training material 1.7**)  
Power Point Power Point on the five levels of a competence (**Training material 1.8**)

### **How to run the activity:**

#### **Theoretical input:** (20 minutes)

The trainer explains the 5 levels and shows what a reference system looks like. It is crucial for the trainer to demonstrate that the levels should be comparable in all three dimensions. The trainer should leave enough time to participants for asking questions.

#### **Activity:** (60 minutes)

Using the three chair method again, the trainer tells the same story from three different points of view – affective, cognitive, activity related. Participants are asked to rate him/her according to the 5 levels.

This time they will use the reference system template so they have to take both the 3 dimensions and the 5 levels into account at the same time.

During the story-telling participants can interrupt the trainer and ask questions from her/him which help the rating.

In the feedback round the trainer and participants discuss the results (scores) together.



#### STEP4: Choice of the assessment method

Aim: To get to know and try out some assessment methods

Time: 80 minutes

Resources: Power Point presentation on Assessment methods (**Training material 1.9**), flipchart, marker

#### How to run the activity:

While competence inventory and reference systems are predefined and there are templates which volunteering organisations can use directly, the assessment is one step which requires a lot of time and preparation.

#### **Theoretical input:** (20 minutes)

Trainer gives an overview on assessment methods, the quality criteria and which methods are suitable for the specific target groups.

The four most useful assessment methods for volunteering settings are presented in detail.

#### **Activity:** (60 minutes)

Participants form 4 groups. The trainer can either involve an external partner (e.g.: a volunteer) or ask a participant to take the role of a volunteer to be assessed. Each group chooses a competence and an assessment method. After a short preparation participants try out the different assessment methods in 4 groups. Participants are asked to take notes which will be used later in the reasoning and rating exercise. Then the trainer asks each group to discuss the results, the advantages and difficulties and issues to consider while using the specific method. Finally all groups give feedback in plenary and participants discuss all assessment methods. The trainer summarizes the information and writes down the main findings.

## STEP5: Reasoning and Rating

**Aim:** to learn how to summarise evaluation results  
to learn how to create a certificate

**Time:** 140 minutes

**Resources:** template of reasoning and rating with a concrete example, quality standard guidelines (**Training material 1.10**)  
RIVER template for a certificate (**RIVER manual**)  
RIVER **software** (**Training material 1.11**)

### How to run the activity:

Reasoning and Rating is the 5th Step in the RIVER methodology and includes the work on how to summarise the evaluation results, after the assessment of volunteers at two specified dates. These results are included in the software so this training part can be about the software as well – in case you want to use it.

#### **Theoretical input:** (20 minutes)

The trainer introduces the quality standards which should be applied when volunteer facilitators prepare the evaluation text.

The trainer introduces the template and also shows an example on how to fill in the template taking the quality standards into account.

#### **Activity:** (60 minutes)

The trainer asks participants to use the notes they took during the assessment and prepare an evaluation text according to the criteria of the quality guidelines.

The results are presented and discussed in plenary.

#### **Creating a certificate:** (60 minutes)

After the step of reasoning and rating the participants have to be made familiar with the procedure how to create a certificate.

The RIVER methodology is supported by a software, which automatically creates a learning certificate, visualising the development of competences. A users' guide for the software is included on the RIVER CD. The trainer should be experienced in using the software when providing an introduction to the participants.

An alternative to the software is to create a certificate based on the outcomes of the two assessments. A template for non-electronic RIVER certificate can be found in the manual. It is simpler and it does not include the visualisation of competence development.

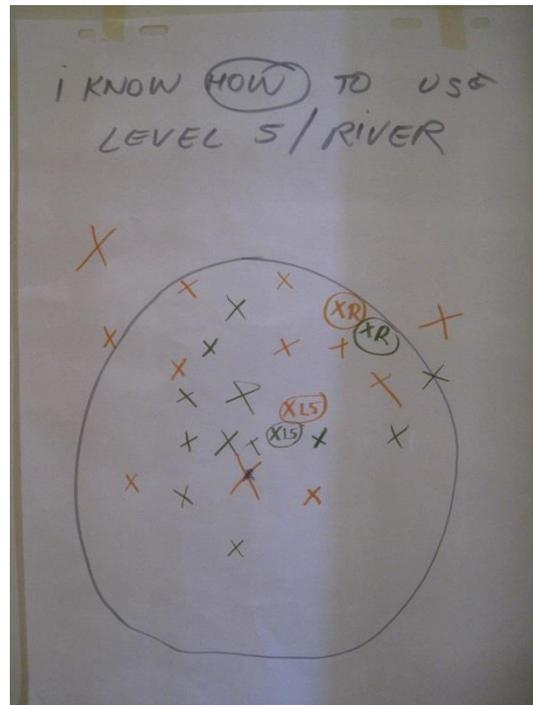
## 6. Evaluation

Each workshop day has to end with an evaluation session of the participants. This is important for the trainer to get an impression if participants understood the content of the training and to gain general feedback.

A questionnaire, bull's eye or another suitable assessment method should be selected to gather the opinions of the participants. The evaluation method used depends on the fact if the evaluation is intended by the trainer him/herself or the institution which organised the training course.

This is an example for a short course evaluation with the bull's eye, conducted after the first RIVER Training workshop organised by the project partners in the first year of the RIVER project. After the 2-day training, participants were asked to give feedback through marking their position to the following statements:

- I understand, why we need the RIVER methodology
- I know how to use RIVER/LEVEL5



If the training participants are eager to do so, a short follow up discussion to explain the results can be conducted.



## ANNEX

List of training material which can be found on the CD:

- 1.1 RIVER Project Presentation
- 1.2 Volunteering and informal learning
- 1.3 5 Steps of RIVER
- 1.4 Template: Project description
- 1.5 RIVER Competence Inventory
- 1.6 The 3 dimensions
- 1.7 Reference system on intergenerational cooperation
- 1.8 The 5 levels
- 1.9 Assessment methods
- 1.10 Template: Step 5 - Reasoning & Rating
- 1.11 RIVER Software user guide