



**Soft Skills Assessment and
Competence Validation for Volunteers
in Transnational Crisis**

Soft Skills Self-Promotion Tool



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Introduction



0 Introduction

Within a few weeks in spring 2020, the Corona crisis led to people all over Europe volunteering on a large scale to help their neighbours and those in need. Volunteering and the associated assumption of responsibility in the civil society experienced a completely new appreciation. Tools for this (e.g. platforms for matching volunteers) were developed, activated and used virtually “overnight” thanks to digital technologies.

People got involved in the well-being of their neighbours, provided shopping services for the elderly and disabled who could not leave their homes, or took on activities of daily living. They mainly took on tasks that had nothing to do with their actual profession or education, e.g. in care, agriculture or mobility.

But looking closely, European societies have been in crisis mode since the beginning of 2020: through COVID-19, through floods, fires, storms, in which volunteers engaged incredibly for their fellow citizens. On 24 February 2022, a humanitarian crisis has been added that hardly anyone in Europe could have imagined – the Russian aggression towards Ukraine. Many thousands of refugees from Ukraine, especially women and children, had to leave their homes due to the war. They were initially finding reception and empathy in the neighbouring Ukrainian countries of Poland, Slovakia and Romania. Some of them moved further to relatives and friends in other countries, some stayed close at the border in refugee camps in order to get back as soon as possible. Many of them received help from volunteers who organise accommodation, transfers, and donations in kind out of compassion. The willingness to help and solidarity throughout Europe is extraordinary, and suddenly we all realised how great Europe can stand together in such a crisis.

Identification of soft skills gained in crises

It is all the more important to give something back to these volunteers, and that is what CRISISS does! CRISISS is a European project funded by the ERASMUS+ programme. The transnational CRISISS partnership consists of seven European institutions from voluntary organisations, disability institutions, youth and family guidance organisations, social partners, adult education institutions, social research centres and experts in the development of digital educational resources. They created tools to help volunteers identify and validate their own soft skills, raise awareness of the importance of soft skills in professional life and recognise informal and non-formal competences by collecting evidence. They developed these materials on a multilingual and interactive e-platform and as mobile apps for smartphones.

The CRISISS tools

The guiding question is how to recognise these new skills? How can employers be made aware of these skills as an added value for teamwork, stress situations or intercultural tasks? This is only possible if these skills are being validated. Even if the wording suggests otherwise, it is “soft skills” that can make the difference in working life.

The CRISISS approach is two-fold: The Soft Skills Identification Tool is available digitally: <https://crisiss.eu/training/> which can be accessed by a computer or tablet but also via an app on

mobile devices. It helps volunteers to identify their soft skills gained in times of crisis. It generates a certificate with the outcome to be presented to potential employers.

The Soft Skills Self-Promotion Tool – access to sources promoting voluntary work to future employers

Another valuable instrument is this Soft Skills Self-Promotion Tool which is demonstrated hereafter. This is another support tool that gives volunteers a wealth of ideas on how to use the soft skills they have acquired in crises. It also provides access via digital sources to other tools already in use across Europe. Overall, the CRISISS partnership collected more than 20 digital tools – websites, apps, support tools of many kinds – which are useful for self-promoting your soft skills acquired in volunteering. It is up to you to decide which of these tools is best suited to showcase and promote your volunteering. To help you choose, these tools have been described in terms of content. Most of them have been specifically selected for use by volunteers, but some others are very useful tools even if they are not always based on a volunteering background.

CRISISS Tools in a ready-to-use and free package

In this respect, the Soft Skills Identification Tool and the Soft Skills Self-Promotion Tool are a convenient and also free package solution for the identification and further use of social skills - ready for your beneficial use!

Voluntary organisations are expected to be the main users of the CRISISS tools but ultimately the tools are available to all volunteers who are interested in learning more about themselves.

As different as the professional backgrounds of the volunteers are, they have one thing in common: volunteering in times of crises proves to be a way to counteract the crises, to be socially active and to feel part of the civil society. Volunteers acquire new soft skills such as team spirit, critical faculties, communication skills, intercultural competence, stress management, discipline and self-confidence. Volunteering proves to be an effective learning environment. Strictly speaking, volunteering is a great opportunity to acquire soft skills that could then be used as an additional qualification in any professional setting.

The CRISISS partnership wishes you a successful application of all tools!

Wolfgang Eisenreich (Science Initiative Lower Austria, as main editor)

Pantelis Balaouras (GUnet), Sonja Bercko-Eisenreich (INTEGRA Institute for Development of Human Potentials), Annalisa Arru (CESCOT Veneto), Karin Drda-Kühn (media k GmbH), Maria M. Serrano (ALDAIMA), Costas Tsimpanis (GUnet), Alenka Valjašková (QUALED Qualification and Education), Ingrid Zimmermann (media k GmbH) as contributors to this publication.

Presentation of the Soft Skills Self-Promotion Tool



1 Presentation of the Soft Skills Self-Promotion Tool

Based on a qualitative survey among the partners country and on literature survey at European level, the CRISSIS project has selected 18 soft skills considered as important for the labour integration of people who worked as volunteers.

Personal skills

- Self-awareness
- Emotional intelligence
- Resilience
- Personal development
- Self-management

Social skills

- Communication skills
- Problem solving skills
- Intercultural skills
- Presentation skills
- Client-orientated skills

Collaboration skills

- Teamwork
- Adaptability and flexibility
- Conflict solving skills
- Cooperation and networking

Organisational skills

- Leadership
- Innovativeness
- Strategic planning
- Analytical thinking

In the following, you will find information of these soft skills, especially in the light of volunteering activities and working in times of crisis. In case you have already validated your soft skills acquired in volunteering via the CRISSIS Identification Tool on the [CRISSIS e-platform](#), you might like to take the next step and improve your application portfolio for the labour market. In chapters 2 and 3 you will find many recommendations and tips.

1.1 Collaboration skills

Collaboration skills are what enable us to work well with others. Most volunteering environments require collaboration, so these skills are essential. They include understanding a variety of perspectives, managing priorities from everyone in the group, and meeting expectations as a reliable member of a team. Successful collaboration requires a cooperative spirit and mutual respect.

The idea of collaboration seems easy enough, but in reality, it can be challenging to collaborate with others. Each person on a team has strengths and weaknesses, communication preferences, and personal goals. The special culture of a volunteer organisation might also influence collaboration. Using collaboration skills within a team of volunteers may include:

- Keeping communication open and never withholding information necessary to carry out tasks
- Reaching a consensus about goals and methods for completing projects or tasks
- Offering recognition of the contributions of others on a team, giving credit where credit is due
- Identifying obstacles and addressing problems cooperatively as they occur
- Placing group goals above personal satisfaction and/or recognition, especially if you're the leader
- Apologizing for missteps and forgiving others for mistakes; holding a grudge or sabotaging the efforts of other team members destroys collaboration

In the CRISISS environment, the cluster on collaboration skills contains four skills: teamwork, adaptability & flexibility, conflict solving, and cooperation & networking. The selection of the skills is not based on a specific method or school, but on the relevance of the skills from the perspective of a crisis situation in which volunteers are involved. The CRISISS project team for three reasons chose this method:

- Lack of a standardised methodological approach: The methodological approaches to validating skills differ in European countries. This may be related to academic schools and conventions that support or hinder the dissemination of a particular method.
- Linkage to crises: With good reason, crises have not been specified, because the CRISISS validation tool does not exclusively focus on a single crisis (even if at the time of the tool's creation the COVID-19 crisis was the highest in awareness). A crisis is understood to be any situation that represents an emotionally significant event or radical change of status in a person's life.
- Initial situation of the volunteers: This is not comparable to the initial situation of a professional helper who has been qualified to deal with a crisis situation. As a result, other skills come into play.

1.1.1 Teamwork

Group and teamwork is an integral part of skills needed when working as a volunteer. Actually, teamwork is one of the most important skills in any professional field.

There are many factors that have an impact on volunteers in their teamwork performance. Helping people in crisis, they are facing different types of pressures:

External demands – these come from the clients, unexpected situations, and issues which are appearing in the crisis and from the team-volunteers or voluntary organisation. It includes people and situations that want and ask something from us.

Deadlines – is a time constraint inside which the task or service must be completed.

Internal demands – these are personal expectations and norms that we place on ourselves. Some people are always pushing themselves and want to do more than is expected of them; some are perfectionists that are driven to high standards and excellence.

Perception of danger – It is an inner monologue that a person says to him/herself at each step of the way. By imagining negative scenarios, we put pressure on ourselves.

Evaluation of our ability to accomplish tasks – it is the pressure that we create with sentences as: “There is no way I can possibly get this done”. These types of sentences reflect our confidence (or our insecurities).

It is essential to be aware that we cannot change external pressures but we can influence them.

Internal pressures can be changed by our thoughts, emotions, feelings of efficiency and confidence. It is important to work on managing these elements because then we can control the level of stress and pressures we put on ourselves.

Especially in voluntary work environments, it can happen that persons surrender too much power to the clients. An important way to deal with our own well-being is to be assertive.

The group process in the team consists of different elements, which are present from the time where the group is formed to the time it ends. The main elements of the team are norms that are established, the level of cohesion, the level of trust among the members, the conflict-solving strategies inside and out of the team, etc.

Effective teams show the following characteristics:

- They have a clear purpose and aims.
- Team members mutually respect each other.
- Team members cooperate, collaborate, and address the conflict.
- There is a balance of process and content issues.
- Members are active.
- Feedback is encouraged among members and is delivered in a clear and respectful manner.
- Diversity within the team is respected.

In the field of thematic work in helping professions and voluntary activities, the process of intervention and supervision is of central importance, which are important “professional” tools, especially when assistance is provided to people in crisis situations.

How does it link to a crisis?

Good team communication without unnecessary communication noises is extremely important during a pandemic or crisis. Not only are people more emotionally vulnerable in times of crisis, but in these times agility and often quick action are needed. A quick communication slip that happens can paralyze the team communication in the long run. Therefore, knowledge and training of communication skills is a prerequisite for teamwork and successful work in the field of volunteering.

1 *Communication*

The foundation of effective teamwork is communication. Whether you are working as a volunteer or in a new project or in the workplace, it is important to talk openly and honestly with your teammates about expectations, deadlines, and responsibilities. So-called open communication promotes trust and enhances a positive environment. In every team, also disagreements can occur; therefore it is important to communicate in a respectful way. In team communication, it is important to know and consider the roles within the team.

How does it link to a crisis?

The most vital skills in teamwork are good listening skills, good verbal skills (paraphrasing, summarizing, synthesising, giving rapport, giving eloquent feedback), observing and reading non-verbal communication among team members, and at the same time being aware of one's own nonverbal messages. Of course, we must not omit the importance of written and online communication.

2 *Time management*

Important elements of teamwork are also accountability and responsibility. It is expected that members of the team develop a certain level of organisational skills in order to set manageable goals and keep others on track to meet deadlines. Volunteers also demonstrate time management skills, prioritizing and delegating tasks, so they can offer more time to clients who need extra attention or/and care.

How does it link to a crisis?

Learning how to balance assignments and the number of deadlines while you are working as a volunteer will make it easier to adjust to the possible future collaborative work environment. Having the skill of time-management means for the clients with whom the volunteers work, establishing cooperation and a level of trust that the mutual agreements will be realized. This is especially true in times of ongoing crisis.

3 *Problem-solving*

Problem-solving is the ability to work through problems by using critical thinking skills to come to a certain solution. When people work together they can share and compare ideas and choose the one that solves the problem in the best way. There is usually more than one solution to every problem. The first step in solving problems is to understand that the problem exists. To define the problem

means to make a statement that clearly tells what the problem is. Being able to identify and solve an occurring problem is something that is indispensable for successful teamwork management.

How does it link to a crisis?

When certain challenging situations arise, effective problem solvers are able to think outside of the box. Instead of focusing on negative outcomes, they stay calm and help to bring the issue towards a solution. The crisis inhibits both the problem and its resolution as soon as possible.

4 Critical thinking

Critical thinking allows you to make better decisions. It consists of mental processes of the ability to judge well, analysis and evaluation. It includes possible processes of reflecting in order to form a solid judgment that reconciles evidence with common sense. Critical thinking clearly involves synthesis, evaluation, and reconstruction of thinking, in addition to analysis. Critical thinkers gather information from all senses, verbal and/or written expressions, reflection, observation, experience and reasoning. Critical thinking has its basis in intellectual criteria that go beyond subject-matter divisions and which include clarity, credibility, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance and fairness.

How does it relate to a crisis?

By thinking critically – examining all sides of an issue, event or circumstances, reflecting on past experiences, and listening to what other group members have to say – you could arrive at a breakthrough that moves your team forward in new and exciting ways. Critical thinking is a necessary personality skill in teamwork.

5 Leadership

Good leadership skills are put together and integrated with a few other skills, which are also successfully integrated with own personal skills and characteristics, such as:

Courage – Courage is shown when the person does not avoid, deny or is afraid of conflicts but looks for solutions with all members of the group. A courageous leader is honest, credible and direct in communication. He/she recognizes the emotions of other members and can evaluate them.

Willingness to model – The best way to teach other members of the group a certain behaviour is through modelling; an effective group leader is aware that through modelling he/she can contribute and teach the other members. A group leader largely teaches by example.

Presence – Being present in the group means feeling and experiencing pain, problems, joy, confusion or other emotional states of the members. It means the leader is not distracted and that he/she is focused and devoted to the activity and dynamic of the group.

Goodwill, genuineness, caring – It means having a genuine interest in-group members. He/she makes sure that all the members develop, and that they feel respected inside the group because he/she is aware that in this way they can be the most effective.



Believing in the group process – The deep belief that the team is skilful and strong and able to convey results or/and agreed outcomes.

Openness – This means that the leader is open and shows who he/she is as a person to other members of the team; it means that the leader shows humanity and vulnerability. In this way he/she positively influences the other members; with this type of leader, the other members are not afraid to express their feelings, opinions, and constructive criticism.

Non-defensiveness and coping with criticism – Solving problems and conflicts directly and openly are connected with openness. He/she may be exposed to criticism and dissatisfaction expressed by the other members. That is why it is important that the leader can accept criticism and use it towards the growth and development of the group. It is crucial that the leader, together with the members, finds the reason behind the criticism and tries to solve negative feelings.

Becoming aware of subtle cultural issues – Most people think of themselves as being open-spirited and of a non-judgmental nature. But it is sadly impossible to be in a culture or environment that does not have any prejudices, taboos, and/or stereotypes. A person who poses the leadership skill has to be aware that it is human nature to jump to conclusions, to put on labels and to make mistakes or to offend someone. But it is important that he/she is aware of the difference between cultures, values, and the possibility of judgment that can happen completely sub-consciously.

Personal power – This does not mean being above other members or ordering them, but rather means being aware of who he/she is and what to expect.

Self-awareness – A personal characteristic, which is very much connected to all other enumerated characteristics. It means being aware of oneself, one owns culture, feelings, weaknesses, needs, and goals.

Inventiveness – The ability to approach teamwork with new ideas and thoughts.

Personal dedication and commitment – They are both very important characteristics that reflect loyalty.

How does it relate to a crisis?

The leader of the team can demonstrate strong teamwork skills by promoting collaboration, acting as a mentor for other volunteers and by empowering others to learn, grow and advance.

Well-developed leadership skills in the field of volunteering help clients in times of crisis in accepting reality and planning life and re-framing life experiences.

1.1.2 Adaptability and flexibility

Adaptability and flexibility are two of the very important qualities, highly sought in various working sectors and under diverse conditions. Both terminuses basically simply mean adaptation to certain circumstances or triggers (external and internal).

Adaptability is a willingness to change or confront your own perceptions or ideas. Flexibility is more an ability to “walk toward others” and meet them halfway. Both are becoming more important in our everyday rapid changing societies and our workplaces and according to Forbes adaptability and flexibility are among the eight skills people will need in the future workplace. The others are empathy, humility, transparency, competent communication, emotional intelligence and commitment to a vision.

In the field of social sciences and in all spheres of helping professions and activities, including volunteering, the skills are very highly required and represented. When assessing adaptability and flexibility we point out:

- Intellectual flexibility – keeping an open mind, ability to integrate information and shift
- Receptiveness – positive attitude and willingness to learn new ways
- Modification of behaviour – to be able to adjust method or working style to meet the needs of the situation
- Creativity – actively seeking new and more effective ways (approaches) to the best outcome(s)

How does it relate to a crisis?

Adaptation and flexibility are extremely important skills in working with people and in helping professions in general. When recruiting volunteers, both skills are an important recognized category for working in exceptional circumstances and under special conditions.

1 *Adjusting to changes*

Change comes to our lives as a result of a crisis, as a result of choice or by a chance. In all three situations we are facing the choice – do we make a change or not? In crises, we actually do not influence planned and conscious decision-making. The situation surprises us and adjustments are needed. These are often the cause of many emotional and even health problems. We cannot avoid unexpected events (crises) in our lives, as it is these events that challenge us and force us to step out of our comfort zone. If we ignore the challenge of change, on a personal level we deny also the opportunity to learn and grow.

Our resilience in life can become only stronger when we accept change and manage the challenges in a positive way. Coping skills are the methods a person uses to deal with difficult and stressful situations. They may help a person to face a situation, take action and be flexible and persistent in solving problems. It is important to establish or/and develop healthy coping skills to help to reduce emotional distress.

People generally move through a crisis in three stages:

- Seeking our security

- Opening up to new challenges
- Embracing the new normal

Adaptation strategies help us to tolerate, minimize and deal with stressful situations. They can help us feel better physically and psychologically. It is important to establish healthy adaptation strategies that can help to reduce emotional distress. There are two main types:

- Problem-based strategies;
- Emotion-based strategies.

How does it relate to a crisis?

We cannot control the events of change in our life, but we can control how we react to the impact that these events have on our lives. In pandemic crises across the world, humans are living through a period of extraordinary change, with jobs lost, businesses closed, graduations cancelled, and weddings, moves, and vacations postponed. Moving forward, adjusting to changes in the sense of adaptability is probably our best asset.

2 Adaptability

Adaptability we can define as the ability to be creative and flexible in new situations. It is an important survival skill, and it is often seen as a personality trait. Some people are more adaptable, and the others are more struggling. Accepting the uncertainty of the future means planning one step at a time. Taking small steps out of big problems, which undoubtedly pandemic is, means differentiating between the things we can control and can't control and, in this way, somehow cultivating adaptability in ourselves by learning it as a skill.

As a soft skill, adaptability requires several other soft skills in order to be applied successfully.

1. Ability to learn (for those with developed adaptability skills, failure is just part of learning)
2. Persistence (build more positive, encouraged and focused attitude, e.g., motivation, resilience);
3. Resourcefulness (search and find new resources and techniques) by demonstrating creativity, problem-solving, initiative
4. Curiosity (one is not afraid of ideas, suggestions) is demonstrated in an investigation, open-mindedness
5. Analytical skills strategic thinking
6. Negotiation
7. Communication (oral, written)

How does it relate to a crisis?

Knowledge and, above all, practical practice of the skills which are needed to adapt to challenging circumstances are most important in lingering situations. With practically moderate training, we trigger such emotional pressure and at the same time strengthen a person's resilience and his more empowering response to unexpected life situations.



3 *Types of flexibility skills*

Adapting to change requires flexibility. In the pandemic crisis, with all challenges, difficult circumstances, overall uncertainties people are facing complexity in change (physical, psychological, mental, medical, etc). Flexibility and adaptability are the requirements. Many social pieces of research are pointing out the necessity of social and emotional skills that will enable this process. Rigid personality traits, emotionally illiterate individuals' inability to develop a certain level of resilience can lead to more serious mental distress and even disorder.

To prevent that we point out three types of flexibility that help to adapt to change:

- Cognitive flexibility – the ability to use different thinking strategies and mental frameworks
- Emotional flexibility – the ability to deal with one's own emotions and emotions of others
- Dispositional flexibility – the ability to remain optimistic and at the same time realistic.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Improved flexibility skills produce a wide range of physical and psychological benefits and can have a positive effect on your overall well-being. A volunteer who is flexible is also more creative when working with clients, mentally and emotionally responsive, agile and above all proactive in finding approaches and ways of working that strengthen his client.

1.1.3 Conflict solving skills

Conflict is defined as a disagreement that can arise in various circumstances and settings. Conflicts are a normal part of healthy relationships and work environments, so it is important to understand their dynamics. To successfully resolve interpersonal conflicts, you have to be able to read both, verbal and non-verbal communication cues, stay calm and control your own emotions, and work to understand the position of the conflicting parties.

A conflict is more than just a disagreement. It is a situation when one or both parties involved perceive a certain threat, whether or not it is real.

When conflict is mismanaged, it can cause big harm. When conflicts are ignored, they continue to fester.

If you are not able to manage your emotions in times of stress, you won't be able to resolve conflict successfully. Conflicts trigger strong emotions.

We respond to the conflict based on our perception of the situation and not necessarily to an objective view of the facts. Our perception is influenced by our culture, beliefs, values, and life experiences.

Conflicts are an opportunity for personal growth.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Stress as a result of a crisis can have a significant impact on us, both physically and mentally. It can affect our thinking and behaviour which makes us more likely to get into conflict situations. And just opposite, being in conflict can be very stressful and affects our health and wellbeing on a big scale. In times of crisis, the triggers are even bolder. In a crisis, we experience a wide range of changes in our everyday lives: worries relating to our health and the health of loved ones, financial insecurity, or how to deal with uncertainty. All these are the triggers that in most of us cause some level of fear, anxiety, and even anger when we are not able to "control" the situation. Precisely because of this, the knowledge and practical application of conflict resolution skills in a time of crisis and crisis situations are especially emphasized in the field of socially based volunteering.

1 *Managing emotions*

A big role in determining whether the conversation is difficult has its starting point in how you feel and how the other person feels. A difficult conversation is anything you find hard to talk about. These are conversations that touch about race, sexuality, politics, religion, and gender. These are sensitive subjects that can make a person vulnerable - the conversations can be difficult, and they require many skills and abilities to face them successfully. People should not be afraid of a difficult conversation, although they open up a dilemma: to avoid conflict or to confront it?

Quite often we tend to think that we are expressing emotions clearly by being emotional. Sometimes we even try to suppress or ignore our emotions or the emotions of another person in the sense of staying more professional and rational. But our emotional response is almost impossible to hide as a secret.

Let us name some tips on how to express and discuss emotions effectively:

1. Be clear about how you are feeling;
2. Be open with how you are feeling, BUT careful how you describe your feeling;
3. Accept own feelings, remembering that we are allowed to experience negative emotions;
4. Acknowledge that your emotions are as much important as the other person's;
5. Avoid judging, just share.

How does it relate to a crisis?

In exceptional crises, situations can often arise that can trigger conflict. Therefore, knowing, regulating, and managing emotions is especially important, not only in relationships with the clients but also concerning one's emotional burden, which is done by the work done by volunteering.

2 *Listening*

The best way to understand and deal with conflict is by listening. It is an active skill that requires practice. Interactive listening is the best way to resolve a disagreement or conflict. The process involves:

- Try to understand the focus and feelings of the other person;
- Listening through body language, affirmative sounds, clarifying open-ended questions, non-judgemental questions, paraphrasing, summarizing;
- Acknowledge the speaker's feelings;
- Acknowledge the speaker's values.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Listening is a highly valued skill, important for effective communication. It is an essential part of conflict-solving skills and strategies. It represents the crucial part of usable "tools" for volunteers working with users from different social groups and in different social settings and/or frameworks.

3 *Exploring*

A useful approach to dealing with conflicts and exploring solutions together is negotiation. A principled negotiation is a useful approach that focuses on why a person wants a particular outcome. It involves the following elements:

- Understanding and separating positions and interests;
- Using objective standards that everyone would consider to be fair;
- Brainstorming options where all parties involved benefit;
- Discussing together and be mindful of how you communicate;
- Use appropriate communication to improve or maintain the relationship;
- Seeking out your best alternative agreement and your best alternative outcome;
- Designing the level of commitment at the end of the negotiation.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Exploring communication and difficult conversations forms the basis of the ability to recognize another person's experiential world. At the same time, at the relational level, it also encourages the process of approaching and establishing a mutual level of trust which may be weaker in crises.

4 *Framing*

Framing is how the problem is described or presented. Framing moves an issue toward a calmer, positive discussion rather than into a heated argument. In social theory, framing is a schema of interpretation, a collection of anecdotes and stereotypes, that individuals rely on to understand and respond to events. Shortly, it is a way that you see the world. This is called cognitive bias, which essentially means that we react differently to the information whether it is presented to us positively or negatively. No matter which way we see things, it directly impacts the decisions that we make.

How does it relate to a crisis?

When a person finds him/herself in a crisis situation, s/he is often fixed on a certain emotion. Framing is an important skill that is able to shift the focus point by opening up a possible, new, and different understanding of reality. Internal frustrations transferred to the outside world can thus reduce the level of conflict in relationships.

5 *Confronting*

Sometimes, after trying to resolve a conflict collaboratively without success, it is necessary to confront the other person to let them know that their problematic behaviour won't be tolerated anymore. It is the last option in difficult conversations.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Confrontation as a skill right in difficult conversations sets a healthy psychological limit. When none of the strategies, despite efforts, find a point of agreement, clear feedback is needed. In doing so, of course, we use the skill of compassionate communication.

1.1.4 Networking

Networking can be defined as the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions; specifically: the cultivation of productive relationships for organisational purposes.

Networking is the exchange of information and ideas among people with a common profession or special interest, usually in an informal social setting. Networking often begins with a single point of common ground.

Networking is used by professionals to widen their circles of acquaintances, find out about job opportunities, and to increase their awareness of news and trends in their fields. Business owners may network to develop relationships with people and companies they may do business with, in the future.

Professional networking platforms provide an online location for people to engage with other professionals, join groups, post blogs, and share information.

Existing networks

Trust forms the core of a network. Among academic researchers, the word network refers to a set of actors and the relationships between them. Previous research has documented that networks are very common in craft industries (such as construction and book publishing), industrial districts (German textiles, Italian consumer goods, engineering components/machines), and high tech (oil extraction, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals).

Scholars have identified network organisations as sharing three characteristics:

- The parties would rather discuss and work through a problem than simply abandon the relationship.
- There is a high level of trust.
- They share and help each other: This is the "norm of reciprocity."

Benefits of networks that have been documented by researchers include mutual learning; enhanced legitimacy and status for the members; economic power; and an enhanced ability to manage uncertainty.

The work of non-profits is even more conducive to network forms of organisation, because the issues these organisations are trying to solve are large, complex problems that can't be addressed by any single entity. Furthermore, non-profits seek to create social value, not just organisational value; have dispersed governance structures; rely upon tacit knowledge and expertise; have difficulty measuring performance; and rely heavily on trust and relationships to accomplish their work.

E-volunteering – using (and creating) networks to enable e-volunteering during a pandemic

The international company Vertex (<https://www.vrtx.com>) partnered with innovative volunteer-mobilising organisations to create custom remote and virtual employee volunteering opportunities in eight countries. Through the joint effort, they mobilised 195 volunteers engaged in 18 different volunteer activities, interacting with 23 local non-profit organisations. Volunteer opportunities for Vertex employees included:



- An online career day with students from a high school in Warsaw, Poland. Vertex volunteers reviewed the high school students' resumes, provided feedback, discussed career pathways and participated in a job interview simulation exercise.
- An at-home activity in Rome, Italy, where volunteers spent time assembling creative objects to help two local non-profits support their programs and activities.
- An at-home kit-building activity in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where volunteers put together supply kits to donate to 250 children.

Impact of volunteering on networking (during a pandemic)

Existing networks and the ability to create new networks is during pandemics essential. Having an existing network enables an organisation to invest in solving complex problems together – such as moving to volunteer online when social distancing becomes a new norm.

It's a win-win situation because every new volunteer that uses such an opportunity to volunteer is at the same time broadening their own network as well as creating an extension to the existing network. Thus, volunteering (during a pandemic) contributes to networking in the following ways:

Using existing networks during a pandemic to get help to people who need it

Networking is a way of bringing together people who share common interests and aspirations to work together to mobilise human and material resources to address a problem or need they identify together. Such networking can be done using modern communication technology, minimising the need to organise face-to-face meetings. Moreover, members of such a network can reach out to individuals and families in need of social support using the same technology which is easily available today. Such a strategy is necessary today to develop and implement social support programs needed today to meet the diverse needs of individuals and communities adversely affected by the pandemic and the resultant social and economic dislocation.

Volunteering one's network to support youth on the work market

In a time of physical distancing, we all have an opportunity to get creative and use technology to build relationships with people outside our current networks.

Young workers are most at risk of losing their jobs. Now, more than ever, young adults need a comprehensive support system to help them navigate this new reality. There's never been a more urgent time to connect young adults to new opportunities.

Extending one's network for job opportunities

Volunteering can be a great strategy for networking for a job. Local volunteer work can help you gain experience in your industry and meet people who have the inside track on local job openings in your field. As you may know, approximately 80% of jobs are never advertised, and finding those hidden job leads hinges on developing effective networking strategies. Volunteering can be a great career builder and a good way to find unadvertised jobs.

1 *Mutual learning*

Mutual learning is transferred information and then internalised this information by all collaboration partners.

A lot of our learning occurs randomly throughout life, from new experiences, gaining information and from our perceptions, for example: reading a newspaper or watching a news broadcast, talking with a friend or colleague, chance meetings and unexpected experiences. Collaboration, in its simplest form, means working together. It is a term that is widely used for teams or individuals working on a common project, or with a common purpose. It is often used to express the idea of individuals with different skills working together towards a shared aim. Mutual learning is thus collective collaborative learning, during which we share experiences, knowledge and learn from others.

Exchanging ideas, thoughts and experiences in everyday life are a good basis for diverse learning from each other. Mutual listening and learning are skills that are set in a big role, as well as the skills to critically evaluate and reflect the cultures (both, of the others and of your own) and the learning outcomes. This could help us to make new or strengthen existing relationships – which are, in general, reciprocal. Research shows that we have an essential need to be part of a community, to build bonds (relationships) with other people. Those bonds are based, at least partly, on an understanding that when one of us need help, it will be provided.

How does it relate to a crisis?

One of the best ways to make new friends and strengthen existing relationships is to commit to a shared activity together. Volunteering is a great way to meet new people, especially if you are new to an area. It strengthens your ties to the community and broadens your support network, exposing you to people with common interests, neighbourhood resources, and fun and fulfilling activities. Volunteer work might also tell you to professional organisations or internships that could benefit your career.

Knowledge sharing, collaboration, and improved communication are vital components of mutual learning. Mutual learning refers to collaboration and knowledge-sharing between actors from similar organisations, or those with a common interest from different national, regional or local settings. In these challenging times, there is much to learn from partners from around the world, or on a local level about progress made, difficulties overcome, and various ingredients for success. Social networking activities (coffee, sport, culture, etc.) hold the potential to initiate mutual learning processes between volunteers, refugees and the host society at the micro-level e.g. during a 'refugee crisis'.

2 *Creating trusting relationships*

The willingness to relate with another requires the belief that the other's actions will be beneficial for oneself. The trustworthiness and credibility of the information or support provider are particular issues influencing who individuals turn to in times of need.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Whether it's between family, friends, mates, co-workers, or business partners, the best relationships, also in times of crisis, are built on trust. The relationship between a volunteer and e.g. a non-profit

organisation is no different. It can take some work but building trust can be very beneficial to all involved.

When a person starts working within any organisation, there are forms, waivers, and handbooks to go over, probably also sign off on the same policy and procedural manuals as paid staff. This process helps volunteers to understand what s/he can expect from the organisation and what the organisation expects back. Having this clear understanding initially protects the volunteer and the organisation and helps build a trusting relationship.

3 *The norm of reciprocity*

The positive reciprocity norm is a common social expectation where a person who helps another person can expect positive feedback. Reciprocity also allows people to get things done that they would not be able to do independently. By working together or exchanging services, people can accomplish more than they would individually. Reciprocity is the primary basis for social networks and cooperation.

The concept of reciprocity represents the idea that giving and receiving is mutually contingent. In other words, a reciprocal act implies that doing good is tied to the expectation that future rewards will compensate it. Volunteering, in contrast, is generally associated with selfless or charitable engagement to benefit the larger society. A study from 2014 shows that reciprocity and volunteering are not contradictory concepts; it instead appears that a voluntary arrangement depends on individuals' reciprocal attitudes. Thus, help received in the past might motivate individuals in the form of generous reciprocity to pay back this good to the larger society and engage in informal volunteering.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Reciprocity, especially in times of crisis, is touted as one distinctive benefit of volunteering associated with trust, solidarity, and mutual interdependence. This form of exchange is embodied in the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) program description as a core method of volunteers' contributions: "Volunteerism benefits both societies at large and the individual volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, and by purposefully creating opportunities for participation."

4 *Ability to manage uncertainty*

Knowing what you can control and what you can't is the ability to cope with ambiguity. Uncertainty can be measured in magnitude and duration. By both measures, the extreme uncertainty accompanying the public health and economic damage created by the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented in modern memory. Extreme uncertainty—defined in terms of novelty, magnitude, duration, and the rapid pace of change—generates a challenging operating environment for people and organisations. The radically changed circumstances call for new forms of leadership, new ways of working, and new operating models. Crisis-tested volunteers and managers will develop a tolerance of ambiguity, a quickened operating cadence, and a culture of constant refinement, review, and revision.



How does it relate to a crisis?

As it brutally disrupts life as we know it, a pandemic has brought into sharp relief a crucial skill: the ability to manage uncertainty. That means knowing what you can control and what you cannot, aligning your life with a shared purpose, holding to a clear vision of where you want to be and what you want to do, and trusting yourself and the people around you to help you to get there.

5 *Cooperation and problem solving*

Cooperative problem solving is a process by which the parties involved in a problem or dispute

- Sit down together
- Listen to each other's' points of view
- Identify common fears, hopes and interests and
- Work to develop solutions that address as many of their interests as possible.

How does it relate to a crisis?

2020 bore witness to a hastening of the effects of some key long-term structural trends in volunteering; 2021 afforded us a chance to rebuild, to harness the spirit of problem-solving (problems large, small, operational, or structural) in need to reshape the volunteering.

So many organisations on the ground in Houston after Hurricane Harvey 2017 worked without clearly communicating their intent or updating the systems. This led to unnecessary competition, duplication of efforts, and quality of work standards all over the board. Oftentimes volunteers from one organisation would be working on a home, go to lunch, and return to find another group had replaced them. If responding organisations chose to coordinate between themselves, we could fill the service gaps, and better provide for the communities we're there to serve. Many disaster organisations rely on volunteers to provide the skills and services that are needed to respond to and recover from an event. These organisations interact with and—ideally—cooperate, communicate and solve problems with each other to help aid those affected by the disaster. These roles, interactions, data, and values exchanged are called a Disaster Volunteer Ecosystem.

6 *Transparency and reliability / authenticity factor*

Authentic, transparent behaviour has been described as representing the extent to which an individual exhibits a pattern of openness and clarity in his/her behaviour toward others by sharing the information needed to make decisions, accepting others' inputs, and disclosing his/her values, motives, and sentiments in a manner that enables others to assess the competence and morality of the one's actions more accurately.

Transparency is how much you share, while authenticity is the truth behind your words and actions.

Authenticity - not false or copied; genuine; honest; verified; entitled to acceptance or belief because of agreement with known facts or experience; reliable; trustworthy

Transparency - easily detected or seen thru; readily understood; characterised by visibility or accessibility of information, especially concerning business practices.



To connect with people, you also have to know who you are, what you have to offer them, and how you can help solve their problems.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Disasters and a sense of social crisis have generated a wide range of responses, including a surge in volunteer activity, growth in non-profit organisations to respond to some of the human needs unaddressed by the local and national governments. Volunteers, clients and staff overseeing volunteer activities are encouraged to share beliefs, values, interests and language to develop a social presence in an intimate person-to-person environment. This approach allows volunteers to build feelings of safeness, to be authentic and feel trust, and comfort to bridge differences and encourage a greater appreciation for cultural and social uniqueness.

1.2 Organisational skills

Organisational skills are the abilities that let you stay focused on different tasks, and use your time, energy, strength, mental capacity, physical space, etc. effectively and efficiently in order to achieve the desired outcome.

Organisational skills require a set of techniques used by an individual to facilitate the efficiency of learning, problem solving, and task completion. Being organised is not just about having a tidy desk. Organisation requires the integration of several elements to reach a planned goal. Organisational skills are mostly a combination of time management and self-motivation.

Good organisational skills in volunteering can:

- Help to prioritise work effectively
- Improve workflow management
- Save time
- Reduce stress
- Provide structure
- Prevent conflict with team members
- Improve efficiency

In the CRISISS environment, the cluster on organisational skills contains four skills: leadership, innovativeness, strategic planning, and analytical thinking. The selection of the skills is not based on a specific method or school, but on the relevance of the skills from the perspective of a crisis situation in which volunteers are involved. The CRISISS project team for three reasons chose this method:

- Lack of a standardised methodological approach: The methodological approaches to validating skills differ in European countries. This may be related to academic schools and conventions that support or hinder the dissemination of a particular method.
- Linkage to crises: With good reason, crises have not been specified, because the CRISISS validation tool does not exclusively focus on a single crisis (even if at the time of the tool's creation the COVID-19 crisis was the highest in awareness). A crisis is understood to be any situation that represents an emotionally significant event or radical change of status in a person's life [*Merriam-Webster*].
- Initial situation of the volunteers: This is not comparable to the initial situation of a professional helper who has been qualified to deal with a crisis situation. As a result, other skills come into play.

1.2.1 Leadership

The word “leadership” comes from the English verb “to lead” that means “to direct”, therefore this term refers to the skill of an individual to be able to lead a group of people. In the working field, the leader is the person that leads the team to reach certain goals and in doing this it combines the ability to understand which are the achievable goals with the ability to motivate the other people.

A more recent interpretation declares effective leadership from how the leader succeeds in making his co-workers feel part of a group or a team. What allows leaders to behave like leaders and the collaborators to become followers, this is the social identity: people involved in the leadership process have a sense of common belonging to a group (ingroup) and, consequently, establish bonds that make them different from other groups (outgroups).

Leadership can be defined as the set of skills that guarantee the effectiveness of the interaction with the working group, or as the process aimed at influencing the activities of an individual or a group that is committed to achieving objectives in a certain situation.

1 *Ability to motivate team members*

Motivation is perhaps the most complex field to tackle because it concerns multiple processes that should stimulate an individual towards the achievement of assigned objectives. It represents the positive energy that comes from finding sense and meaning in what we do, be it a job, a personal activity, a sport, a solidarity activity. Often the loss of motivation is linked more to personal processes, group dynamics and work climate than to technical aspects. We can list seven factors that influence motivation:

- **The contributors’ expectations:** to understand the expectations of all team members, it is necessary to organise regular meetings to detect feedback.
- **Success (goals’ achievement):** it is important to emphasize the successes and / or intermediate results achieved by celebrating, for example, and thus bringing together the working group, possibly even outside the operational scope itself.
- **Degree of involvement in the project and concordance with personal interests:** in this case, a careful definition of the roles within the project is closely linked to the expectations of the individual members of the group. The more the role assigned is in line with what the collaborator expected, the greater her/his involvement in the project and the resulting commitment.
- **Praise and recognition for the good performance provided:** feeling appreciated and esteemed is a strong motivational drive for the individual, therefore encouraging a periodic relational interaction, that aims to positively emphasize the work done, tends to install security in the collaborator, encouraging him/her to continue in that direction.
- **Reward for the work done:** it is necessary to define the reward that the contributor will receive for the work done (social reward, economic reward, reward of experience, of maturity etc.).
- **Status of the working environment:** relationships within the team, the working climate, etc.) The creation of favourable working conditions requires the control and implementation of a working environment that is "healthy", to this purpose it is important to facilitate relations among the members of the group, to foster collaboration and technically support wherever it is necessary.



- **Opening the communication with the leader:** the leader is required to have an open and helpful attitude in order to ease an effective communication with the contributors and collaborators.

How does it relate to a crisis?

While facing a crisis it is easy for people to lose motivation. The challenges we face during a crisis can prevent us from reaching our goals. For this reason, good leaders are asked to be able to find ways and apply strategies to keep themselves and their team highly motivated in order to better help others face crisis and tragedies.

2 Active listening

Active listening focuses on listening. It's done with words, with questions, and even with the body. Active listening concerns bodily and para-verbal signals of participation in what has been said, reformulations and recapitulations of perceived contents and other linguistic and non-verbal devices that serve to give the signal "what you say interests me, I'm following you". Active listening can be practiced for two large classes of interests, even opposed to each other. It can be done as an extreme act of love, a gift we make to a friend, or a moment of great humanity in which we are interested in others as in the period of the Covid -19 crisis. It is natural that more information emerges from active listening and the person can also expose emotional information, as the listener engages in not making judgments, not interrupting, not "interpreting".

Active listening requires energy, commitment, a rested body, an attentive and alert mind. When we are in this mode, even a single wave of the eyebrow can give us valuable information. The activity of evaluating the contributors and the ability to give them feedback, literally a "return" message, are very important to keep alive the constructive dialogue between the leader and the individual members of the group. The purpose of the feedback is to underline the behaviours and positive aspects of the individual's work, but also to highlight the less brilliant moments, hoping for corrective actions. In this way, collaborators always have the opportunity to feel listened to, but also guided in their professional growth.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Active listening and empathy are crucial for identifying a true leader. In times of crisis the ability to understand others and make them feel listened to become crucial to help them solve the problems they are facing, to understand their needs and fears.

3 Ability to transform vision in action plans

Leaders are those figures capable of creating a clear vision of the future, strategic actions and the path to achieve this vision. To achieve this result they operate through dialogue, motivation, involvement and sharing of the vision with their collaborators. Leaders lead by example, showing consistency between what they say and what they do. They also celebrate small victories, and this increases the group's confidence and courage to face future challenges.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Volunteers need to be able to clearly understand how to transform their ethical and moral drive into practice. This becomes particularly important in a crisis when everything becomes urgent without being necessarily fundamental to solving problems or helping people. For this reason, a good leader needs to be able to transform the vision of their work into clear activities and plans, also to avoid losing resources and time.

4 *Ability to clearly identify the team goals*

Leaders accept the challenges; they are ready to take risks and have the ability to experiment with innovations to accomplish desired goals. Through the sharing of information, the delegation, their authority, the drive towards others to act, they manage to empower the contributors by orienting their focus towards the purpose defined by their "vision".

How does it relate to a crisis?

Usually, in a pandemic crisis, the need to clearly identify the issue at hand becomes necessary due to the reduced resources. The need to effectively approach the problem, without causing waste of resources is necessary to avoid more problems and destroy the possibility to come to a conclusion of the crisis.

5 *Negotiation skills*

Negotiation is any form of communication with which we try to obtain approval, agreement, or action from another person. Negotiation is therefore an activity, sometimes very demanding, in which the parties confront each other and work concretely to reach a meeting point together. To understand the reasons of the others we must begin to listen to them, to understand their origins and motivations. The aim is to get out of the logic of conflict, based on the frontal opposition between two or more parties. The evaluation of what we have understood is a stage following the listening and must lead us to ask ourselves first, what the object or "problem" of the negotiation is. Then you can think of a solution. And here not only the method comes into play, but also creativity, thanks to which obstacles can be overcome and therefore reach a shared solution. Effective negotiation allows converging towards a solution that satisfies the needs of all the actors involved, without compromising on the results and, at the same time, creating relationships of trust and predisposition to possible future collaborations.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Crises make interpersonal relationships more difficult. At a time when everyone tries to respond to their own needs, before those of others, it becomes necessary for a volunteer to be able to find a balance between people's needs so as to trigger potential negative situations that can have disastrous effects on the work done. This not only within one's own work team but especially among those who are helped.

6 *Ability to create a positive environment*

Leaders openly attribute the contributions of others in achieving goals and thus build a social network of support outside the traditional organisational framework. A competent leader has the



courage to take the blame and responsibility for any failures, enjoying the successes and achievements of the group. The leader is called to develop the potential of collaborators, encouraging the learning of new skills, and improving the skills already possessed; but in general, it can be said that the best performance depends on the full expression of the existing potential (talent). This is possible by adopting and sharing actions such as the adoption of positive thinking, increasing positive energy through enthusiasm, developing creativity, enhancing social diversity as a heritage of groups, sharing ideals and goals, collaborating, and finding creative solutions to problems.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Good leaders are able to promote others in order to help the group work better. It is known that negative leadership (based only on blame) makes people work less and destroys their confidence in their abilities. In a crisis situation, it is important for people to feel and be confident in order to help others positively tackle challenges.

1.2.2 Innovativeness

Innovation is the process that generates value starting from ideas. Innovation is about growth, about recognising opportunities for doing something new and implementing those ideas to create some kind of value. It could be business growth; it could be social change. But at its heart is the creative human spirit, the urge to make a change in our environment.

Volunteering can contribute to the understanding of emerging needs and to the promotion of innovative measures for unprotected subjects to create a welfare that is increasingly territorial and inclusive: it should open to collaborations with the world of the social cooperation and with third sector entities, with public subjects and other private organisations and with the productive world to favour new connections and multi-actor networks. The volunteer is also called to be complementary to the meeting between supply and demand for services and the professionalisation of skills to strengthen the so-called social service sector, which is still weak in some countries today.

Volunteers and voluntary associations can also contribute to aggregating the demand for services to feed an approach that captures the interdependencies between the needs of a specific territory and generates aggregative responses. It is equally important to create connections between service providers, by encouraging their co-production to identify possible paths for integration between sectors of intervention and performances, by exploiting the potential of e.g digital platforms.

In other words, through the involvement of volunteers, associations and voluntary networks, practices and interventions can generate positive social externalities for the territory and communities, connoting present and future welfare with new characteristics: specific attention to social innovation and processes of comparison and, possibly, of co-planning and co-production of welfare actions within multi-stakeholder networks anchored in the territory and intent on putting people and their needs back at the centre.

This mobilisation of human resources leads to widespread activism capable of multiplying energies and initiatives at the service of social improvement.

Social innovation practices tend to be located on the border between non-profit, public, private, civil society (voluntary work, movements, collective action, etc.), they are transversal and the result of an interesting contamination of values and perspectives. They arise from new forms of collaboration and cooperation between subjects of different nature who find an alignment of interests to achieve a common goal.

How does it relate to a crisis?

A pandemic crisis like we were experiencing can contribute to opening windows of opportunity to introduce policy changes. However, it is necessary to be aware that such changes are not automatic and obvious: windows can "close" as quickly as they opened and not generate the opportunity to experiment with more effective measures and interventions adapted to new challenges.

In this "new normal", in turn, challenged e.g by the second pandemic wave during the Covid-19 pandemic and trying to consolidate the acquired learning, what role can we imagine for volunteering concerning welfare in crisis but also in transformation? What learnings have arisen from the Covid-19 pandemic for the world of volunteering? Looking back at the months of lockdown and at phase 2, the resources and actions put in place by volunteering were highlighted from many quarters. Overall,

volunteering has proven to be a valuable and strategic resource even in emergencies, capable of both reacting, using new and innovative tools and channels and capable of providing essential services, tailored to emergency needs.

Volunteering today is called to a double challenge: on the one hand, not avoiding the requests (including contingent and daily ones) that come from the territories, continuing to be reactive and innovative and, on the other, also seizing the opportunity to start a profound process of renewal that leads it to strengthen itself and to deal with the criticalities that distinguish it, opening up to innovation both in terms of products (the aid provided and the initiatives implemented) and of the process (relations with other public stakeholders and between private profit and non-profit).

The link between territorial welfare and volunteering can and must be nurtured and made strategic also by looking at the framework offered by the UN 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In a renewed relationship between the eco-system of volunteering and the plurality of local actors, the challenge is also for volunteering to contribute to the promotion of the social development of the territory and the contrast of growing economic and social inequalities by contributing to the activation of the local communities, and together creating the conditions for the inclusion of fragile and poorly or not at all protected people.

1 *Lateral thinking and creative thinking strategies*

The theory of lateral thinking developed in the late seventies by the Maltese psychologist and doctor Edward De Bono is applied to try to solve problems using apparently "illogical" methods. "Lateral" thinking is a different way of thinking and dealing with problems, a productive thought, preconceived ideas are unhinged in search of new ways of organising concepts, it is a stimulating thought that explores less obvious, even if more uncertain paths. The creative process can be learned by training it through practical and targeted exercises. Mark A. Runco, one of the leading scholars of creative thinking, says that the most important element that characterises creativity is the flexibility, which allows you to see the same thing from multiple points of view, to deal with changes and to devise new solutions.

How does it relate to a crisis?

During crisis lateral thinking becomes crucial to solve complex problems that can be seen as unsolvable. Being able to find creative solutions to complex problems, to reach for solutions where no one can, is necessary for volunteers to tackle crisis and change.

2 *Creative problem solving*

It is a proven method to tackle a problem or a challenge in a creative and innovative way. It is a process that helps people redefine the challenge they face, develop innovative ideas, and turn them into actions to achieve their goals. Creative Problem Solving (CPS) is a complete system built on our thought processes that deliberately ignite creative thinking and produces innovative solutions. Through alternating phases of divergent and convergent thinking, CPS provides a process for managing thought and action, avoiding premature or inappropriate judgment. It is built on a flexible structure that can incorporate many creative tools and approaches. It is a structured but very flexible process. It is possible to adapt it to every situation we encounter.

How does it relate to a crisis?

The COVID-19 pandemic and the drastic measures that have been taken in response have caused a flood of new problems. To overcome these new hurdles, people have to look for creative solutions. The ability to think out of the box and find solutions where they are not usually looked for becomes crucial to be able to tackle critical challenges. During a crisis, volunteers need to use creative problem-solving techniques to be able to find new solutions to problems.

3 *Design thinking*

It is a methodology for creatively solving problems. It is therefore a well-defined process, and it follows certain steps: understanding, exploration and concretisation. Within these steps there are the 6 phases: empathize, define, conceive, prototype, test and implement. One of the main benefits is to provide a valid method for making crucial and strategic decisions, drastically reducing the associated risks. Furthermore, it promotes an attitude of listening, collaboration, teamwork and encourages the possibility of concentrating on people's needs.

How does it relate to a crisis?

While it is usually applied to develop new products and services or make current products more appealing, the ideation process can be used to solve any problem. In the current unpredictable climate, design thinking can help an organisation address the crisis in a more empathetic and collaborative way. In fact, design thinking prioritises empathy and the human aspect of the solution. By being a human-centred approach, it allows a volunteer to put people first instead of a mere resources/objective calculation. Also, it helps to build solutions around people not around the problem/issue at hand, allowing them to easily tackle the challenge and making them more sustainable and long-term orientated.

4 *Capacity to understand the change and know how to adapt to it*

In this historical period, nothing is as decisive as understanding and adapting to the changes we are experiencing, to uncertainty, to variability. We are practically forced to face these realities, and the lack of certainty makes us feel restless. This feeling is not accidental: the brain does not like changes because any variation in the surrounding environment is perceived as a threat. Adaptation requires change, but it is not just about behaviour, it requires the creation of new thought patterns and the reactivation of certain emotions, not being discouraged by novelties and trying to learn from everything, even failures.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Change can create fear and crisis are massive change bringers. For this reason, it is crucial for a volunteer to understand that change is part of growth and not an unsolvable problem. They need to understand how to adapt to change and to manage it, without being managed by it. The ability to manage change helps transform it into opportunities. Also, understanding that change is part of life allows people to rapidly respond to it, without losing time focusing on the challenges it brings.

5 *Capacity to use technology and create communities*

Covid-19 has upset all aspects of our daily life, from sociability to learning, from consumption to services, generating strong inconveniences but also great opportunities: the intelligent use of technology and the exploitation of information are factors that have revealed strategic in the last years to tackle the pandemic and other crises, they have made it possible to reorganize and study alternative methods of intervention. To create a successful community, it is necessary to develop one's own "collective individuality", thus aiming to increase e.g. new digital skills as well as the collaborative dynamics, the group objectives, the recognition (concrete and symbolic) of the group (social media identity of the community). It is also necessary to measure the performance of the activities carried out, monitoring user engagement (audience engagement), measuring the impact of supporters (advocacy impact), measuring user satisfaction (satisfaction score), without underestimating the role of soft skills such as listening skills, active listening, empathy, and collaborative leadership.

How does it relate to a crisis?

In these difficult times, technologies have been our go-to tool to face the challenges e.g. the pandemic has brought to us. The ability to understand the technology and to use it correctly becomes crucial to creating a community around issues when social distancing is in place. Also, it helps advocates to reach further than physical distance. Technologies have proven to be important in keeping communities together and creating communities able to help and organise responses to the challenges the pandemic has brought to our societies. For this reason, being able to correctly use technology is important in times like these.

1.2.3 Strategic planning

Strategy, in its simplest sense, is deciding where you want to be and how you're going to get there, and then taking the action necessary to do so.

Strategic planning highlights the desired end results and emphasizes working our way back to the current status. It is basically a skill that will help you strengthen all your other skills, provide a basis for important decision making, and create an action plan for getting the highest possible rewards for the efforts made and achieving success ultimately.

It keeps you focused on the things that actually matter, as well as spells out the fundamental values and philosophy under which you wish to work. It helps you to know what exactly your next moves should be and why it's important to you.

The insights provided by strategic thinking also help us come up with logical as well as creative solutions to bridge the gap, in the form of guiding policies or 'strategies' that help us achieve our desired end results.

Strategic planning covers various areas ranging from:

- Forecasting
- Formulating
- Implementing
- Monitoring
- Evaluating
- Resource allocation etc.

These processes are a key component of strategic planning.

Appropriate strategic planning can lead to excellent crisis management that could lead to productivity. Scholars opined that strategic planning is an independent construct from crisis management though there is a similarity between the two constructs because they both involve process planning which includes formulating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating.

How does it relate to crisis?

The importance of strategic planning is evident. How does volunteering during pandemics contribute to the development of one's skills in strategic planning?

- Volunteers are working in challenging environments and in very difficult circumstances => analytical thinking, understanding context
- People who choose to get involved as volunteers must have a strong set of values.
- Respondents are most interested in supporting the areas directly affected by COVID-19, such as child and youth protection, food insecurity, health care and poverty.

Research shows the potential that the pandemic will accelerate a new era of civic engagement.

In other words, volunteering during pandemics enables individuals to experience different impacts of the crisis - through their own experience as well as from the perspective of those in need. This experience builds up insights into and understanding of the context.



By acknowledging that pandemics won't stay here forever, civic engagement teaches volunteers to think long-term and work out of vision, how would they want the world to look like once the pandemic is over.

1 *Long-term thinking*

Long-term thinking means you are comfortably envisioning and consciously working towards the future. It's a viewpoint that brings to life the exciting possibilities of what is to come and each decision you make is made with an expected timeline in mind.

How does it relate to a crisis?

The need to draw on our capacity to think long-term has never been more urgent, whether in areas such as public health care (like planning for the next pandemic on the horizon), to deal with technological risks (such as from Artificial Intelligence-controlled lethal autonomous weapons), or to confront the threats of an ecological crisis or climate change, where nations sit around international conference tables, bickering about their near-term interests, while the planet burns and species disappear.

According to a study from Points of Light, a US-based organisation that inspires, equips, and mobilizes people to volunteer for a variety of civic activities, 82 percent of respondents agree that once the pandemic is over, we all must get involved to rebuild our communities and country. From this, it is clear that the majority of the volunteers from this study already have strong long-term thinking.

2 *Strategic thinking*

Strategic thinking is the long-term vision for the future, and how you plan to get there, with tactics being what you do on a day-to-day basis that supports your strategy, and particularly how you deal with problems. Strategic thinking is a continuous process and its aim is to eliminate ambiguity and make sense for a complex environment.

Strategic thinkers are those individuals in your organisation who are able to assimilate external opportunities and threats; apply their professional judgement (experience and intuition); interpret creatively the opportunities presented; assess these new opportunities in conjunction with the organisation's current plans and desired future, and then lead and communicate with clarity and evidence these new strategies to grow the organisation with intention and success.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Volunteers working in crisis were often involved during their assignments in shaping their own professional responsibilities and goals, planning with other volunteers. These tasks enhanced planning and strategic thinking.

3 *Creating vision*

Creating vision – a picture of what and where you want to be in life. You might think of this as identifying what success looks like for you in work, in your personal life, or in your volunteer work.

The next step is to turn that vision into specific goals. The same applies to creating a vision for your volunteering work.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Vision is especially urgent during a global crisis. Developing a strategy to walk back your envisioned future to today, working backward, laying out a path from your long-term aspiration to the mid-term (your post-crisis focal point), and from there to today, is a valuable skill.

While it is true that volunteers operate without receiving market-value compensation for the work performed, any serious organisational initiative—of any type—requires a strategic vision and an outlay of time, attention, and infrastructure. Leaders, as well as volunteers, need to be committed to working with other volunteers and need to learn how to work well with the community, including creating a vision and optimizing strategy.

4 *Analysing context*

Analysing contexts is a simple but useful structure for examining any situation or event. It can be used both on a personal and business level. It is particularly helpful in a developmental context because it allows you to explore the positives and negatives of both: you (or your organisation) and the external environment in a relatively safe and controlled way. For example, the so called SWOT analysis could be a good way to start strategic planning.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Crises leave an indelible mark on every individual, agency, and organisation. Voluntary agencies that are resilient and agile in reshaping their strategy would be able to serve their users more effectively and efficiently, truly meeting the vision of empowering every individual towards independence.

Analytical thinking or finding contexts will help volunteers to avoid rash decisions. It is worth it, to pause, wait, and patiently mull over ideas, opportunities, and choices, especially in times of crisis. Carefully weigh the pros and cons and dig into the research. Contextual analysis is the systematic analysis - identification, sorting, organisation, interpretation, consolidation, and communication - of the gathered information for the purpose of understanding the work context for a new “crisis” environment.

5 *Strategic directions*

Strategic directions concern identifying strategic options, evaluating, and selecting the best options. Strategy links the destination (vision) with current reality. Vision is timeless, but strategy must be set in time, place, and conditions. Strategic direction refers to the plans that need to be implemented for an organisation to progress towards its vision and fulfil its goals.

How does it relate to a crisis?

The most important competency for a leader to possess is the ability to develop a strategy. A crisis strategy is the framework of decisions and choices that an organisation or person makes to respond to a crisis (or the perception of one). The goal of the strategy is to withstand a crisis.

6 *Focused implementation*

Focus is a stabilising force that leads to insight, innovation, and productivity, and those factors are accelerants for recovery. Effective problem solving usually involves the implementation of focus and working through a number of steps or stages, such as problem identification, structuring the problem, looking for possible solutions, and making a decision. Making a decision involves careful analysis of the different possible courses of action and then selecting the best solution for implementation. During focus implementation, more problems may arise especially if identification or structuring of the original problem was not carried out fully.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Importantly, putting one's undivided attention and effort into specific actions that address today's tumultuous issues is a vital coping mechanism. Maintaining focus is valuable when life is normal, it's absolutely crucial in times of crisis. In the presence of e.g. a pandemic, our ability to establish and maintain our focus can increase the chance that our businesses, our communities, our families, and each of us will survive and, eventually, return to a thriving and more confident state.

7 *Change management*

Change management is basically the science, or possibly art, of managing yourself and others during a period of change. People who are good at managing change primarily need to be very good at engaging with people, with good empathy, and excellent communication skills. They need to be good at motivating others and have very strong emotional intelligence, in particular a good understanding of themselves, and strong resilience.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Successful change management requires effective communication and the involvement of people who will be affected. Managing change with volunteers can present challenges that are quite unique from those experienced by paid staff.

Volunteering can create leaders. By watching those around you, you can begin to identify the qualities of leadership that you most admire, and you can develop those qualities in yourself. Managing a group of volunteers is not the same as managing employees. Volunteer groups are often groups of peers, and they respond more to leadership than management. You will have opportunities to lead by persuasion, innovation, and your ideas and ideals. Working in volunteer settings will help you learn strategic thinking, *change management*, and conflict resolution skills. You will learn about your community, about trends and issues, about people, and about resources. All of which can help you develop your leadership potential in times of change.



8 *Review and evaluation*

Reflective practice is, in its simplest form, thinking about or reflecting on what you do. It is closely linked to the concept of learning from experience, in that you think about what you did, what happened, and decide from that what you would do differently next time.

Thinking about what has happened is part of being human. However, the difference between casual 'thinking' and 'reflective practice' is that reflective practice requires a conscious effort to think about events and develop insights into them. Once you get into the habit of using reflective practice, you will probably find it useful both at work and at home.

It could be done by the Plan-do-check-act procedure, which supports continuous improvements:

- **Plan:** Recognise an opportunity and plan a change.
- **Do:** Test the change. Carry out a small-scale study.
- **Check:** Review the test, analyse the results, and identify what you've learned.
- **Act:** Take action based on what you learned in the study step. If the change did not work, go through the cycle again with a different plan. If you were successful, incorporate what you learned from the test into wider changes. Use what you learned to plan new improvements, beginning the cycle again.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Evaluation is the oxygen that powers decision-making. During times of crisis decisions must be made, with or without data. Acting quickly, with the right decisions, can save lives. Acting quickly, with the wrong decisions, can cost lives. Creating feedback loops, opportunities to understand and learn from our successes and mistakes, are critical to improvement. As an evaluator, you have a role in the iterative process of rapid response. Thus, it is important to review and evaluate information and recent decision, to find pitfalls and learn to avoid them.

1.2.4 Analytical thinking

Societies affected by a crisis must learn quickly and (sometimes) unprepared to handle respective risks, develop prudence and cope with abandoning routines. Analytical thinking plays an important role here, regardless of whether aid services are provided by professional helpers or volunteers. Volunteering in emergencies, crises, and disasters nearly always occurs quickly and is driven by the desire to help others and by concern for relatives, friends and neighbours. In the first reactions, analytical thinking is not necessarily in the foreground, but at the latest when helping processes have to be organised and more complex tasks have to be fulfilled, analytic thinking becomes essential.

Analytical skills refer to the ability to collect and analyse information, solve problems, and make decisions. Analytical skills support detecting patterns, brainstorming, observing, interpreting data, and making decisions based on the multiple factors and options available. Most types of work require analytical skills and we use them to solve problems that may not have obvious solutions or have several variables.

There are many types of analytical skills, including communication, creativity, critical thinking, data analysis, and research. There are mainly two ways to improve analytical thinking: by a straightforward methodical approach, or through more creative techniques. Both ways of solving a problem require analytical skills.

In the context of crisis we concentrate here on three core elements for analytical thinking”:

- Research and check of accuracy
- Analytical reasoning
- Decision making on multiple factors

1 *Research and check of accuracy*

Using the term ‘research’ does not mean scientific research. Instead, in our context, it is about research in the sense of data collection, about gathering information in order to arrive at a solution or to be able to better assess different solutions. Research is an integral part of analytical thinking. Once a problem is identified, it’s important to perform research for a solution. Research can be as simple as asking another volunteer or a superior who may have more knowledge of the problem. It can mean to conduct more extensive online searches through different digital sources. It may be data collection. Part of the research is also assessing what information is valuable or essential to solving the problem.

How does it relate to a crisis?

This brings us to a very important and difficult part of the research, namely the fact check. Many sources, however reputable they may look, can be beholden to certain interests that may not be purposeful in the management of a crisis. This problem became apparent several times in the COVID-19 crisis, e.g. when the danger of the virus was denied or when conspiracy theories were publicly communicated. Reliable data need reliable sources and fact checks. This can be science-based data, it can be information from serious media. Social media certainly do not belong to these reliable and fact-based sources, and the internet is not a reliable source per se.

2 *Analytical reasoning*

In psychology, different forms of analytical reasoning are distinguished and evaluated in different situations depending on the method.

Analytical reasoning is a psychological term that refers to the ability to look at information, be it qualitative or quantitative in nature, and discern patterns within the information. Analytical reasoning involves deductive reasoning with no specialised knowledge, such as: comprehending the basic structure of a set of relationships; recognizing logically equivalent statements; and inferring what could be true or must be true from given facts and rules.

We always demonstrate analytical thinking when we can question a situation in order to break it down and solve related problems. This involves identifying what is important and what information can be ignored in a complicated issue. Analytical thinking skills are important in our personal lives as well as in volunteering as they are an essential part of solving problems we encounter.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Crisis situations that require analytical thinking have always existed in the history of disasters and the need for analytical reasoning depends on the crisis situation: For recurring threats such as earthquakes or serious accidents there are emergency plans that have already proven their worth in practice, there are support structures that can be relied on. In other crisis situations, we often cannot draw on experiences we have already had. This makes the ability to think analytically even more important.

3 *Decision making on multiple factors*

Analytical thinking and effective decision making is critical to the success of any organisation and person. However, regardless of context, all decisions depend on developing and forming a judgement. Difficulty arises as these judgements are often complicated by a variety of factors that could influence the outcome. Decision making therefore involves analysing information and utilising various strategies and techniques in order to effectively resolve decision problems or identify the most appropriate course of action.

Decision-making is linked to several disciplines like psychology and neuroscience which shows how important it is regarded in terms of analytical thinking. There are numerous techniques linked to the different disciplines, but mainly they distinguish between decision making in a group or as an individual. For a volunteer this makes a huge difference because depending on the scope of a decision, feedback with other volunteers, team leaders or third parties will be necessary.

Not all situations in which you have to make decisions are problems at the same time; often they are rather banal everyday decisions that can nevertheless be very important for those affected. In such cases, you will need other soft skills such as empathy, communication skills or intercultural competence - you will probably have had this experience many times in your voluntary work.

How does it relate to a crisis?

As a volunteer in an aid organisation acting in a crisis, you will hardly make decisions without consulting colleagues and the leading unit. For preparing a situation of crisis, decision making techniques in



groups may include consensus or participative decision making, voting, or a method like Delphi (an interactive forecasting method). No matter which method you finally use to reach a decision, you will always try to capture as many decision-relevant factors as possible, analyse them and find trade-offs in favour of a solution.

1.3 Personal skills

Personal skills are things we are good at – our strengths, abilities, and attributes. They relate to how you express yourself and how you interact with others in the workplace and in everyday life. A person with a deficiency in these skills is not easy to deal with, and their presence can cause a rift in a team. It is much easier to work with people with well-developed personal skills who contribute to creating a productive and effective environment. This is important when volunteering in the social sector, especially in crises. A person with well-developed personal skills:

- says directly what s/he thinks or feels
- is able to listen carefully to what you have to say without interruptions
- treats you honestly and respectfully
- behaves consistently and is self-controlled
- is able to control emotions
- you can rely on her/his courtesy and professionalism
- is open to your comments, makes sure to understand
- works with you to solve a problem
- is responsible for her/his actions
- is flexible and willing to adapt or make changes for the benefit of the team
- recognises and confirms your strengths and contributions
- supports you in your ideas and is willing to contribute.

In the CRISISS environment, the cluster on personal skills contains five skills: self-awareness, emotional intelligence, resilience, personal development, and self-management. The selection of the skills is not based on a specific method or school, but on the relevance of the skills from the perspective of a crisis in which volunteers are involved.

1.3.1 Self-awareness

Self-awareness involves being aware of different aspects of the self, such as traits, behaviours and feelings. Essentially, it is a psychological state in which oneself becomes the focus of attention.

Self-awareness is one of the first components of self-concept to emerge. Although self-awareness is something central to who one is, it is not something that one focuses on acutely every moment of every day. Instead, self-awareness is woven into the fabric of who one is and emerges at different times depending on the situation and personality. In other words, self-awareness is the ability to watch ourselves through introspection and reflection.

The theory of self-awareness (and subsequent research) suggests that this feature plays a critical role in how we understand and evaluate ourselves, and what decisions we make consequently. In addition, our level of self-awareness interacts with the probability of success in realigning ourselves and our standards to determine how we think about the outcome. When we are self-aware and believe that there is a high probability of success, we are generally quick to attribute that success or failure to our efforts. On the contrary, when we are aware of ourselves but believe that there is little chance of success, we tend to think that the result is more influenced by external factors than by our efforts. Of course, sometimes our success in realigning with our standards is partly due to external factors, but we always have a role to play in our successes and failures.

Also, as a well-developed sense of self is key part of how we relate to others and the world, it helps us anticipate the behaviour of others, be aware of how others see us, know how to behave, and thus work in teams.

Practicing self-awareness has many benefits:

- It can make us more proactive, boost our acceptance, and foster positive self-development.
- Self-awareness allows us to see things from the perspective of others, practice self-control, work creatively and productively, and experience pride in ourselves and our work, as well as general self-esteem.
- It leads to better decision making.
- It can make us better at our work, better communicators in the workplace, and improve our self-confidence and work-related well-being.

These benefits are reason enough to work on improving self-awareness, but this list is by no means exhaustive. Self-awareness has the potential to improve practically every experience one has, as it is a tool that can be used anytime, anywhere, to place yourself in the moment, to realistically evaluate yourself and the situation, and act consequently.

1 *Positive thinking*

One of the things that self-awareness and self-talk can lead to is positive thinking. Self-talk is the endless stream of unspoken thoughts running through your head, and they can be positive or negative. Some of these automatic thoughts come from logic and reason, while others may arise from misconceptions that are created due to a lack of information.

If the thoughts running through our head are mostly negative, our outlook on life is most likely pessimistic, but, if our thoughts are generally positive, we are probably optimists, someone who practices positive thinking.

Positive thinking does not mean that you purposely ignore distress and unpleasant situations in life, something that can be often tempting. It actually means dealing with the uncomfortable more positively and productively.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Researchers continue to explore the effects of positive thinking and optimism on health. Among those benefits we can include:

- increased life span;
- lower rates of depression and distress;
- better psychological and physical well-being;
- better coping skills during difficulties and times of stress.

Those are really useful during a crisis when volunteers have to be managing and dealing with stress constantly. Positive thinking allows to tackle unpleasant situations during crisis in a way you can not only avoid getting overwhelmed by stress and negativism, but also reduce the harm that those do to your body and mind, and thus, to maintain your health and strength you need to face the crisis.

Here's an example of how positive thinking works: when facing a tough situation, instead of saying to yourself "there's no way I can do it, it's too difficult", you try and think "I'll give it a try, it's a great opportunity to learn!". This new approach will be really useful to better cope with the situation and is more likely to give you the results you are looking for.

2 Self-control

According to the American Psychological Association, self-control is the ability to command our own behaviour and to inhibit or restrain our impulses and desires; to be in charge of ourselves. This means that we are able to regulate our behaviour in order to follow a rule or value or to meet an ideal or standard.

Self-control applies not only to change our behaviour, but also to the regulation of our thoughts, emotions and moods, impulses, and performance. We practice self-control very often during the day: when we try to pay attention to something and stay concentrated, or we try to feel better, and even when we persevere on doing something hard and we resist surrendering.

With that said, we can see that self-control is very important: It is the tool that will enable us to achieve our long-term goals and challenges.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Taking as an example of the Covid-19 pandemic, we can explore how self-awareness and self-control can be useful for us during a crisis. These skills will not only help our general mental health, but they can also be useful to protect us against all those fake news and dangerous behaviours some people might be promoting, like refusing to wear a mask or not following social distancing. It would be easier for us to follow our impulses and do the comfortable thing, but we know that the security measures are aimed to protect us and they serve a greater good, and therefore we will practice self-control to follow them. We cannot control the actions of others, but we can control our own responses.



A lack of self-control is always dangerous for our well-being, and this is especially true during a crisis. That's because it leads to poor choices (based on impulses, immediate rewards, or emotions) and to negative reactions when we don't get what we want, like anger or unhealthy coping strategies. When we are dealing with crisis stress, unpleasantness, and frustration are quite frequent. Therefore, it's more important than ever that we train self-control in order to be able to keep stable, make good choices and successfully follow the plans to achieve our noble goals.

3 *Decision-making*

Decision-making is another core element to self-awareness since it requires a great amount of knowledge of the situation, oneself and all the individuals involved. The better your understanding and assessment of yourself and the situation are, the better decisions you will make.

The process of decision-making includes weigh the benefits and costs of our choices, predict the consequences and make the choice that is likely to have the better outcome. This process takes a lot of energy and needs as much information as possible. Frequently, on our day-to-day we make lots of decisions automatically, based on our previous experience; however, when we face a new situation, we must take some time to make an informed decision, bearing in mind the knowledge we need, the potential benefits and risks, and our own biases and blind spots.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Decision-making is stressful but doing so during a crisis can be even more difficult due to the uncertainty, the difficulties to think clearly, and the lack of information and time. Sharpening your decision-making skills can be a great way to overcome the anxiety and fear involved in the process of making up your mind.

In times of change and crisis, people are confronted with a big number of factors, some of which they can control and some of which they cannot. If we try to make decisions based on factors we can't control or issues we can't know, we run the risk of being trapped in analysis paralysis. When we work within our framework and adjust it as needed, we can model and explore scenarios with a greater degree of accuracy. For volunteers and professionals who intervene in a crisis, being able to identify new solutions to problems or make difficult decisions can be a key skill in their work.

1.3.2 Emotional intelligence

Being emotionally intelligent means that we understand what we feel, why we feel that way and how to react appropriately to these feelings. In other words: naming, understanding and managing our emotions.

Emotions are an essential part of who we are, but sometimes they can be difficult to understand. Knowing what we really feel, reflecting on it and talking about these emotions are a key part of developing emotional intelligence. Avoiding, not listening to or getting carried away by our emotions can lead us to problematic situations and distress. Moreover, emotions can really help us in the decision-making process, so there's no point in trying to remove them from it.

1 *Mental health*

Emotional Intelligence is key to develop positive mental health. And what's that? People have good mental health not only because they don't have a diagnosable mental problem, but because they have gained some abilities that protect them to develop such problems. These abilities are: learning, making and maintaining positive relationships, cope with uncertainty and changes, and in particular, managing both "positive" and "negative" emotions.

The World Health Organisation pointed out that one in four people in the world will be affected by mental health problems at some moment in their lives. Considering this information, we can see that is very important to raise awareness, to understand what is a mental disorder and how can we promote good mental health. Thereby, we can help prevent the development of mental disorders and reach people suffering in order to provide them with assistance.

Mental health is not an individual responsibility – and mental illness is not a personal failure. Societies and governments are obliged to have mental health policies and programs, and to improve the living conditions of the population in order to reduce the risks of developing mental health issues and remove the access barriers to treatment. That being said, there are some little but important things that we as individuals can do to achieve those abilities mentioned earlier that help us develop good mental health. They are not innate, we can train!

How does it relate to a crisis?

The pandemic has posed a significant threat to mental health. Quarantine and self-isolation can have a negative impact on our wellbeing, added to the fears related to infection, frustration and boredom, and lack of information and supplies. There were many groups at risk of mental health problems during the pandemic, for example, children and adolescents; older adults; people at risk of domestic abuse; people with economic difficulties or in a low socioeconomic situation; frontline healthcare workers who had a heavy workload, had to make life-and-death decisions, and were at risk of infection; women, in particular, that have to combine home-schooling, work from home and housework; and people who have had mental health or dependency problems in the past, made worse by not being able to meet with their regular support groups.

Perceived social isolation and loneliness lead to a wide range of psychological symptoms. Among them are depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress, and they have a negative impact on quality of life. These can be common with other crises, both personal and social, but they could be mediated

by physical activity outside the home or social support. Forced social isolation in the context of a pandemic is what makes it different from other circumstances.

Having developed positive mental health can help us cope with these new struggles and fears, and assist other people who may need us, for our skills can prevent that we feel overwhelmed and thus we can manage the situation. But, because of all these risks we have mentioned, we must take care of our mental health, as well as our physical health since these restrictive measures have undoubtedly affected the wellbeing of people in all areas. And remember to ask for help if you need it!

2 *Social intelligence*

Social competence is the extent to which we are effective in our social interactions with others, including creating and maintaining social relationships, displaying cooperative and flexible skills, and adjusting behaviours to meet the demands of different social contexts.

Emotional intelligence can help us in our relationships with others. When we take the time to listen carefully to our partner, our family, our friends or colleagues – when we try to relate to their feelings - they will feel understood. And when a person feels understood, they are much more likely to reciprocate your efforts and try to be more understanding of you. Also, emotional intelligence can help us in a conflict resolution: if we are able to regulate our emotions while we address disagreements or misunderstandings, it will be easier for us to communicate in a calm way and thus to come to terms with the other person.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Communication is key when we are facing a crisis: we need to act fast and reach consensus quickly while we are dealing with stress. Thus, we must know how to give information properly and pay attention to what others are saying at the same time that we take care of the feelings of our team members. Training our social intelligence can help us with these challenges.

Also, social intelligence can be really useful when we have to manage interpersonal conflicts, which can be frequent in a complex situation like a crisis. Some things that appear easy doing can be actually very difficult, but they have big importance when we want to solve a conflict, so it's important that we train them. We mean abilities such as: be able to say no or express disagreement, express feelings, either positive or negative; negotiate and respect other's feelings and opinions.

Additionally, when we are facing times of uncertainty, fear, and stress, having positive and nurturing relationships in our environment can stop and even reverse our distress. If we are part of a group, taking time to enhance the feeling of belonging, assertive communication, and care between members, can be a good way to prevent stress and burnout and can prepare us for when we have to face a crisis, which will help us to achieve better and faster results.

3 *Empathy*

Maybe you have heard at some point of your life the expression “put yourself in someone else's shoes”. And maybe you already know that it refers to having empathy, to being empathic with someone. But, could you define empathy accurately?



Empathy is the ability to understand a feeling, a situation or life circumstance, an opinion, a point of view different from one's own. It means that we can connect with other people and know what they need, want, or feel. This connection is what enhances our capacity to help people and is the basis of altruistic behaviour.

Don't mistake it for sympathy: being empathic with someone doesn't necessarily mean that you agree with or like him/her, but you are able to understand this person. Also, empathy doesn't apply to "feel sorry" or "take pity" on someone. Empathy is what makes it possible for every one of us to be seen, heard and have our needs responded to.

How does it relate to a crisis?

When we are facing a critical time, full of fear and stress, it's important to worry about other people as much as we care about ourselves, if not even more. It is in these times that we need more than ever to come together, empower ourselves and bring our best to the cause. However, empathy is always necessary: cooperation and collaboration are what can make society survive and thrive as a whole.

On the other hand, helping others can provide a sense of control and empowerment amid a period that can be overwhelming. When the world seems unpredictable and chaotic, finding tangible ways to do well and make things better for someone else can be a source of comfort. Practicing empathy during a pandemic or a crisis not only opens your mind to what others are experiencing but can also provide a social connection that can help combat feelings of isolation and distress. Nevertheless, we have to bear in mind that we need to listen and take care of ourselves to be able to help others, and that is not selfishness – it is self-empathy.

In difficult times, it's important to remember that we are all in this together! Think of each other, do what you can to support one another, and ask for help if you need it.

1.3.3 Resilience

Resilience is not only the ability to bounce back from an adverse situation. It is more than that – an ability to reach one’s goals even in the face of greater challenges. As a developmental process, resilience primarily involves the agency, or inner capability of individuals of all ages, to call on their internal strengths, engage with others and look for external resources to successfully transform stressful situations or adversity into opportunities to learn and thrive

Nowadays, resilience is understood as an interactive process of three elements:

1. individual personal assets = individual protective factors (such as optimism, self-efficacy, cognitive flexibility, etc.),
2. relational resources = located outside the individual (family, peer group, significant others)
3. contextual resources = education, cultural, recreation institutions, community cohesion.

Since these three elements are interconnected, the improvement in one of them will lead to improvements in the other areas as well. Furthermore, growth tends to become exponential after a while, as every success becomes bigger than the one before and has an impact on all three elements of resilience.

Volunteering on its own contributes to developing the three elements of resilience. Volunteering makes communities stronger; it makes relationships deeper and more meaningful, and it enables volunteers to develop personal assets that are necessary to handle stressful, traumatic and adverse situations in life.

How is volunteering in times of pandemic different from volunteering at any other moment?

Resilience is a multi-faceted capability. To face challenges and respond appropriately can require us to draw on all our resources, both internal and external, including our personal relationships. The good news is that improving our resources can help to develop resilience, and there are many ways in which we can do that.

Researchers conducted a comprehensive review of the literature on resilience and identified these recurring individual assets that help individuals to deal effectively with adverse and highly stressful situations:

- Intelligence and cognitive abilities
- Executive functions
- Problem-solving skills
- Easy temperament
- Positive-effect
- Positive outlook or emotions
- Sense of humour
- Effective self-control or self-regulation
- Creative thinking
- Agency & self-efficacy
- Adaptability & competence
- Faith or spirituality
- Meaning-making framework

1 Optimism

Optimism is the ability to notice and expect the positive, to focus on what you can control and to take purposeful action. Optimists tend to view hardships as learning experiences or temporary setbacks. Even the most miserable day holds the promise for them that "tomorrow will probably be better." People with optimistic attitudes are more likely to continue working toward their goals, even in the face of obstacles, challenges, and setbacks. Such persistence ultimately means that they are more likely to accomplish their goals. The importance lies in focusing not only on "staying positive" and ignoring other emotions, but the goal should be to try to look on the bright side while still acknowledging the difficulties of the situation. Thus, it is important to focus on maintaining a healthy, realistic level of optimism.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Volunteers who have been stepping up to help during a crisis, have been a beacon of selflessness and optimism. Volunteering is a win-win situation – bringing benefits to communities and the volunteers themselves. Research shows that those who continued to volunteer during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis had a significantly and substantially smaller decline in life satisfaction and psychological distress than those who stopped or who never volunteered in the first place. Those who continued to volunteer reported lower levels of loneliness. Maintaining volunteering activity appears to be an important protective factor in times of stress and brings a more optimistic outlook.

Volunteering can reduce the risk of mortality and physical functioning limitation, lead to more physical activity, and create better psychosocial outcomes, like higher optimism and lower depressive symptoms or loneliness.

2 Mental agility

Mental Agility is the ability to look at situations from multiple perspectives and to think creatively and flexibly. We're all prone to imagining the worst, it is called catastrophizing. It is possible to train your mental agility and avoid imagining the worst scenarios. It is possible to learn how to channel the fear, how to think about the most probable outcomes of the situation.

How does it relate to a crisis?

In a crisis, when the reality is changing by the day (or even by the hour), when there is no way of knowing with certainty what lies ahead or the best course of action to take, there is no time for perfection. In a crisis is needed an agile mindset. Through these uncertain times, we need to quickly zoom out to comprehend the shifting big picture and then zoom in on the short-term actions to be executed. It is hard to do due to the overload of information and constant changes. To combat distractibility, we need mental agility to shift between focus, flexibility and awareness.

Mental agility is inter-twined also with contextual resources. Communities are facing new, unknown challenges. Their old ways of functioning do not cover the current needs of their members. Volunteering allows for recognizing the needs of the community and self-organisation around them. Thanks to grassroots organisation, the response is faster and available at the place and time when it's most needed. Recognising the needs of the communities in time of pandemics, and becoming a volunteer to respond to them makes communities stronger and more resilient.

3 *Strengths of character*

Strengths of character is the ability to use one's top strengths to engage authentically, overcome challenges, and create a life aligned with one's values. Behind the words, strengths of character, you could find *trustworthiness and conscientiousness*, which can be considered as two sides of the same coin, because both are about behaving 'well', in accordance with your personal values and code of ethics. When you begin volunteering, it is important that you remember you're there to help, not to prove yourself. Volunteering requires you to be selfless and focus only on how you can create a meaningful impact. Great volunteers understand this and are eager to do everything possible to bring about a positive change. It's important to stay humble.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Crises reveal character. The media are alive with stories about inspiring altruism, character, or selfishness. The National Council of Voluntary Organisations in England reminds us that we are facing 'a marathon, not a sprint' in our volunteering efforts. Crises offer an opportunity to hone and habituate character strengths that our communities increasingly need from us.

4 *Self-regulation*

Self-regulation is the ability to change one's thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and physiology in the service of a desired outcome. Self-regulation is concerned with how you control and manage yourself and your emotions, inner resources, and abilities. It also includes your ability to manage your impulses.

Learning to manage the mentioned areas of personality, especially emotions, will help you with self-regulation. The key is to understand your reactions, your emotional responses, or thoughts directions in stressful situations. You can practice by reflective thinking back over situations, to analyse why we acted in the way we did. This can help us to behave with more control in the future. Then we might be able to knowingly channel our uncontrolled reactions to positive-controlled ones.

How does it relate to a crisis?

After witnessing and working in a crisis, volunteers should take time to rest, reconnect with loved ones and move slowly back into usual routines. Many people will process the experience of living through or working in emergency overtime – reflecting on what they learned, moral or ethical dilemmas they encountered, and the human suffering they have seen. It is important to assist volunteers in understanding and coming to terms with their emergency experiences by providing space and time for reflection, learning self-regulation.

5 *Connection*

Connection is the ability to build and maintain strong, trusting relationships. Good relationships are a pillar of rock for resilience and are a source of support when times get tough. Maintain your family and friend relationships and you'll have an instant, trustworthy, and reliable support network around you at all times. Connection is heavily linked with compassion, which is a significant part of this element. Compassion, apart from empathy, leads us to take some action to help the other person,



not just feel for them. The second part of the connection is to be present: paying attention is a powerful connector. However, there is a need for a balance point for connection.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Connection as a resilience skill element makes us better at communicating and relating with others, also during volunteer work it could improve our social relationships. Feeling concerned about someone else, wanting to do something to help them, be sensitive and present, for example as a volunteer, is good for a person, for those around, and for society.

Volunteering provides a fantastic opportunity to meet new people. Volunteers get in touch with the people to whom they are providing support as well as with other volunteers and active citizens. They get a chance to make new contacts and friends and to experience real human connection. The rules of social contact have been extremely altered e.g. during the Covid-19 pandemic. People are struggling to find a balance between staying physically safe and feeling connected to others at the same time.

Volunteering provides opportunities to keep real human connection, create new relationships and even increase one's social and relationship skills. Feeling this connection is a great boost to the relational resources, an essential element of one's resilience.

6 Self-awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to pay attention to your thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and physiological reactions. Self-awareness is the baseline of many other soft skills, not only personal abilities but also social ones.

Self-awareness involves understanding yourself and how you are likely to respond to situations. Self-awareness enables us to build on positive qualities and be aware of any negative traits which may reduce our effectiveness. Self-aware people make conscious decisions to enhance their lives whenever possible, learning from past experiences. You may need to improve your awareness of your strengths, weaknesses and limits.

How does it relate to a crisis?

When volunteering, we are always being challenged. Challenges make us think when volunteering abroad, about others: other cultures, other ways of being. But when we think of others, we also reflect on ourselves, we question our habits, our emotions, and our actions. This helps us to know ourselves even more. Self-awareness can help reduce the frustrations and anxiety that can arise when facing something completely new. It can also help a person to be aware of his/her purpose.

7 Agency & Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to succeed in a particular situation – how people think, behave and feel. Self-efficacy can play a role in not only how you feel about yourself, but whether or not you successfully achieve your goals. Self-efficacy is part of the self-system comprised of a person's attitudes, abilities, and cognitive skills. Personal efficacy is developed based upon four sources



of information: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal.

Agency generates change through action. Peoples' agency, as well as collective action and the fostering of solidarity and empathy among society is key to overcoming this view of inequalities.

How does it relate to a crisis?

In the study "Human Traffic: Skills, Employers and International Volunteering" self-efficacy or self-assurance developed among volunteers on the sixth place of the top ten soft skills gained by volunteers.

8 *Sense of humour*

Sense of humour is the ability to use humour to achieve desired outcomes. Humour has the power to transform our emotions and change our thinking.

How does it relate to a crisis?

In the study mentioned above, many volunteers commented on how they had a better understanding of how humour and enjoyment was a necessary and valuable part of one's working life, particularly during difficult conditions. However, employers usually associated volunteering with crises, and they did not see a good sense of humour as a product of the experience. In the top ten list of gained soft skills during volunteering, was a sense of humour assessed on the tenth place.

9 *Faith, spirituality, sense of meaning*

Life may be experienced as meaningful when is felt that you have a significance beyond the trivial or momentary, to have a purpose, or to have a coherence that transcends chaos. It's a hard feeling to put into words, but when you don't know who you are or what you want, it's hard to ignore. Finding the real you is an enlightening experience.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Offering one's services as a volunteer to the community is beneficial to the community as well as to the individual. Especially in times of pandemics, it can be very difficult to see meaning in one's actions or to feel connected to other people around us. Mental well-being is put on trial, having to deal with lockdowns and rules that impact our usual ways of connecting to others.

Becoming a volunteer in the time of pandemics might add to one's individual protective factors by:

- increasing self-confidence and the sense of self-efficacy through practicing different skills and achieving different goals;
- helping them to stay physically healthy;
- allowing them to gain career experience;
- bringing fun and fulfilment;
- creating opportunities for meaningful engagement – both feelings of engagement and a sense of purpose are essential parts of well-being;
- providing a great opportunity for new growth, both emotional and spiritual.



Keeping one's mental health and a sense of well-being is a challenge that each of us has to face, especially during the pandemic. Volunteering offers a good opportunity not only to keep one's balance but even to develop one's assets in the midst of a crisis.

10 *Accomplishment*

A person doing something (or being a part of something) that benefits others and the world outside of that person is an accomplishment. A job or project that has been completed also involves change. Accomplishment represents the things of which you are particularly proud because you feel that you did them very well, or they were especially hard to do, and other people might not have managed.

How does it relate to a crisis?

The volunteer experience and accomplishment should be listed just like a job and should capture the essence of his/her role and a description that highlights skills applied.

Professionals are focused on what comes next; they often do not take the time to track, measure or count the impressive array of accomplishments they have achieved throughout their work. It is important to remind volunteers of how impressive their accomplishments might be. In fact, they need to write them down to highlight them to attract employers.

1.3.4 Personal development

Personal development is a lifelong process. It represents a way for people to assess their skills and qualities, consider their aims in life, and set goals to maximize and realize their potential. Many ideas define personal development; one of them is Maslow's process of self-actualization which suggests that all individuals have an in-built need for personal development. Which of the individuals can develop them depends on particular needs to be met in the form of hierarchy.

The basic human needs have always been the need for food, beverages, and body protection, both in clothing and a suitable place. However, in today's complex environment, we need to add to the basic needs the needs for health and social care and education. Satisfying these basic human needs is now one of the fundamental human rights. People today are not just trying to satisfy their basic needs but also to live in prosperity. It also means that people live in a safe, healthy, and free environment. Prosperity is a prerequisite for human happiness and its actual development. Life in prosperity does not make us happy by itself, but it helps us that we can be happy, satisfied, and creative. The prosperity of the social community and humanity should be the ultimate goal of the entire social structure.

How does it relate to a crisis?

A crisis is an event in the normal flow of human growth when the evolvment of dramatic change or shift occurs and produces abnormal responses. A situational crisis emerges as uncommon and extraordinary events that individuals cannot forecast or control (e.g., a pandemic threat with illness and death). A situational crisis is random, sudden, shocking, and intense. The existential crisis involves the inner conflict and anxieties that can inflict the person's purpose, responsibility, independence, commitment, and freedom.

Regardless of the type of crisis, each inhibits the individual's personal development or personal growth. Because of this importance, it is personally sufficiently equipped for the challenges of life and the resulting changes. Therefore, the process of adapting to new circumstances and building the necessary resilience can be shorter.

For the project's aims, we have chosen the skills that can represent the basics of the requirements when facing crises in volunteering.

1 *Healthy Mindset*

We can define a healthy mindset as finding a way to grow from our thoughts and emotions instead of letting them control our lives. Moreover, it does not mean being obsessed with and over the positive mindset. In this sense, we should instead focus on cultivating a healthy mindset. For this purpose, we will take the approach of five C's on how to build it:

- Calmness (ability to calm the mind when it is under pressure; find the strategies and practices)
- Clarity (to have a clear idea of what is important to you; become clear about your priorities, values, goals,..)
- Compassion (allows you to accept yourself and others, building healthy expectations without comparing, pressuring, doubting, etc.)
- Concentration (is about commitment and dedication, focusing on what matters)

- Courage (helps us taking actions without procrastination)

How does it relate to a crisis?

The several components of a healthy mindset are prerequisites for responding to crisis events in our lives. One of the essential elements is to set healthy boundaries for ourselves without a doubt. Boundaries serve a vital role in our lives, especially when feeling anxious or experiencing a crisis. Knowing what we need and communicating those needs can help protect our mental health. The latter is especially important in all helping professions in a crisis. These certainly include helpers and volunteers. The bases of such an attitude are substantiated by how the person processes her/his own emotions, looks for bright spots, practices self-care, and builds a capacity for emotional balance.

2 Personal Ethics

We denote ethical principles that a person uses when making decisions and behaving in personal settings as Personal Ethics. Personal ethics refers to a person's beliefs about what is right or wrong and guides him/her in the decisions. A person's unique ethics will determine how s/he handles certain situations and how s/he grows. When we talk about personal ethics, we think about ethical principles that a person uses when making decisions and behaving personally and professionally. These ethics influence various aspects of a person's life, e.g., goals and values. We can also say that personal ethics are mainly based on personal values.

Personal values are deeply rooted standards that affect almost every aspect of our lives. To our moral judgments, behaviour, relationships with other people, our choices in life, to what others think of us, and not least to our most important personal goals. Values need not be better or worse. The differences we appreciate the values are primarily not the result of rational decisions but a lengthy process in which we have internalized the values of our surroundings. Because values are internalised and deeply anchored in us, any comparison in terms of "my, our are better, more correct, more appropriate" leads at most to misunderstanding and conflicts. Of course, there are some values that people appreciate universally. Other values reflect the spirit of the time of its historical era, the cultural environment, and the current social climate.

How does it relate to a crisis?

When we are faced with crises or operate them, personal ethics,

- encourage a sense of trust and support
- better enable to make decisions and take actions in challenging situations (easier and streamlined)
- help to establish an appropriate standard of own behaviour (making decisions based on their ethical nature)
- support motivation (willing to go an extra mile to accomplish a task in the correct manner)
- prevents the motives of possible personal abuse of another person
- is concretely reflected in the actions of a person in values as honesty, loyalty, integrity, respect, selflessness, responsibility).

3 *Personality Type*

Psychological classification of different types of individuals we denote as Personality Types. Sometimes they distinguish from personality traits – the smaller grouping of behavioural tendencies. According to C.G. Jung's theory of personality psychological types, people can be, in general, characterized (in dichotomies) as:

- Extraverted vs. introverted (direction and source of energy expression. Extravert's source is mainly external world, while an introvert source is mainly in the person's own internal world).
- Sensing vs. intuition (represents the method by which someone perceives information. A sensing person mainly believes in the information s/he receives directly from the external world. Intuitive one believe mainly information from the internal world).
- Thinking vs. feeling (perceives how a person processes information. Thinker receives information mainly from logic. Feeling means the person makes decisions based on emotion – on what s/he feels).
- Judging vs. perceiving (reflects how a person implements the information s/he is processing. With judging, a person organises all of her life events and sticks to her plans. Perceiving means that s/he is inclined to improvise and explore alternative options.)

All possible permutations of preferences in the four dichotomies yield 16 different combinations of personality types. Each personality type can be assigned a four letter acronym of the corresponding combination of preferences (for example: ISTJ stands for Introverted-Sensing-Thinking- Judging).

How does it relate to a crisis?

Different personality types navigate crises differently. It is crucial how people take and process information, how they are motivated to take appropriate action and how they experience the crisis event(s) emotionally. Recognising this and considering it can help craft effective response plans to minimise panic and maximise problem-solving.

4 *Personal Development Plan*

The process of personal development vs. personal growth begins with awareness. Knowing essential personal qualities and the insights from life experiences provides a solid foundation for planning our personal development. Creating a personal development plan involves:

- setting goals;
- analysing strengths and weaknesses;
- creating objectives;
- reviewing your progress.

As a starting point, one can use this short, suggested template:

- Long-term goals
- Priorities
- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Possible learning opportunities
- Threats



- Objectives
- Start doing
- Stop doing
- People who can help
- Review (assess and record your progress – make a list of what is working well and what might need to be changed)

How does it relate to a crisis?

For people worldwide in periods of crisis, life circumstances change; in the year 2020, it happened dramatically with the rising seriousness of the Covid-19 crisis. Many people found themselves in a completely uncertain spot. However, there are ways to use the crisis as an inhibitor for improving the way we think, behave or/and work. Every crisis is a challenging situation and especially enforces the need for resilience and strength in helpers and volunteers.

1.3.5 Self-management skills

The definition of self-management describes the term as "management of or by oneself, taking responsibility for one's behaviour and well-being". Self-management (or handling himself) is one of our most important competencies. If we do not know how to manage ourselves, we will find it difficult to manage anything.

Self-management is leadership that we exercise over ourselves. It is the ability to influence to achieve a set of personal goals. Good self-management means action, execution and efficiency. Strategies for effective leadership are achievement-oriented, holistic thinking, and time management. It is a process by which we lead, execute or coordinate ourselves successfully in daily tasks or a long-term period to achieve longer-term goals.

Four characteristics define self-management:

- Self-perception - the ability to acknowledge, accept and pay attention to one's values, perspectives, strengths, weaknesses, emotional needs, and leadership inclinations.
- Self-regulation - the ability to nurture and use passion, abilities, emotions and leadership abilities, and the ability to make decisions.
- Perception of others - the ability to recognise and acknowledge the passion, strengths, weaknesses, potential and needs of others.
- Managing others - the ability to encourage growth and motivation in others to reach their potential and / or achieve the goals (of the organisation).

Self-management allows an individual to regulate her/his life and their meaning. By leading oneself, the person gains a higher level of self-perception, improves the ability to set goals, has a more balanced life, experiences less stress, gains higher self-confidence, and can discover something new about him-/herself. Self-management is an essential skill throughout one's whole life. From a broader perspective, there are many aspects to consider:

- setting goals and prioritisation
- develop listening habits vs. skills
- stop procrastinating
- handling stress
- control and regulate one's own emotions
- plan tasks
- be flexible

How does it relate to the crisis?

Self-management skills reflect in situations of helping others during a crisis (pandemic). They will be able to strengthen resilience through self-regulation and thus more effectively approach the motivation, encouragement, and empowerment of individuals encountered in their activities. In helping professions and activities, self-management is one of the most important personal skills.

For the purpose and goals of the project, we decided on those core elements that stand out the most in crises when working with different target groups.

1 *Stress Management*

Psychological stress is one of our biggest enemies, as it takes away a lot of physical and mental energy from an individual for daily activities. Stress gives a feeling of incompetence, which leads to a lack of self-confidence. The balance between the individual and the environment is upset, and stress is difficult to avoid if the individual does not have the knowledge and ability to self-control.

Self-regulating and self-controlling skills are among the most fundamental virtues of a socialised person. They are not inherited but can be given and must be learned. They are crucial because they affect self-confidence, communication with others, stress management, (self)motivation, and achieving personal maturity. Developing effective self-regulatory skills requires quite a bit of systematic practice and work on oneself.

There are several reasons for the development of self-regulatory skills, as they help an individual to:

- control over one's thoughts, emotions, and consequent behaviour,
- developing positive attitudes towards the world and life,
- developing motivation and knowledge of goal setting,
- managing tension and coping with stress,
- control over one's impulsiveness and aggression,
- the process of effective communication.

The development of self-regulatory skills includes basic theoretical knowledge skills and self-practice, which involves gradually gaining control over one's thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and behaviours. Here are just a few techniques for managing stress and self-regulation: relaxation techniques - used to manage tension before, during and after the competition, and the relaxation techniques include many of the techniques and methods such as autosuggestion, breathing techniques, hypnosis and self-hypnosis, some behavioural techniques (e.g. systematic desensitisation technique), biofeedback method of relaxation, Jacobson's method of progressive relaxation, various forms of meditation and the most effective and best known relaxation technique - autogenic training. Of course, we must not forget the daily activities, which are already relaxing. Such is e.g., a shower in hot water or a sauna, a light run or a walk, and sometimes just the usual fun in pleasant company.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Although stress management techniques are beneficial for each of us, these techniques must be especially well developed by all those who respond calmly, prudently, decisively, and, above all, correctly in stressful situations.

2 *Goal Setting*

Goal setting is the ability to determine what a person wants to achieve in a clearly defined manner. It helps one to decide what is essential so that one can create an action plan. The plan of goal setting helps to manage tasks efficiently and achieve goals aligned with those values. This skill enables a person to manage the action and timeline framework. Setting specific, measurable goals can provide the path to personal accomplishments. Advancing personal interests by building experiences in personal skills can be easily transferred into the professional field.

The SMART method is helpful in formulating and setting goals.

S – Specific (make your goals specific and narrow to more effective planning)

M – Measurable (define what evidence will prove you are making progress and re-evaluate when necessary)

A – Attainable (make sure you can reasonably accomplish your goal within a certain timeframe)

R – Relevant (your goal should align with your values and long-term objectives)

T – Time-based (set a realistic, ambitious end-date for task prioritisation and motivation).

How does it relate to the crisis?

Setting goals at uncertain times (life-crisis, pandemic, ...) may be more critical than ever. In a psychological sense, this lays the foundation for reframing and, based on evaluating a new situation, moves toward strengthening the individual's power. Thus, goal setting grounds us, as most of us find ourselves in a field of lethargy, especially when faced with new, stressful, and threatening situations beyond the current reach of personal control.

3 Time Management

Time management skills allow us to prioritise tasks, avoid distractions and maintain focus. The work area, including the voluntary work area, helps with setting and meeting deadlines, working on one task, and delegating responsibilities. The essential part how to managing ourselves is by managing our time. There are many reasons why time management is important. One of them is the so-called "positive cycle" that can dramatically improve many aspects of our lives.

Good time management:

- improves self-discipline;
- improves the quality of work-related tasks;
- helps winding down (if you want to have time to relax, self-renew or prepare for coming more demanding tasks, good management skills are essential);
- reduces stress;
- opens up new possibilities;
- enhances decision-making abilities;
- enables to see new opportunities;
- enhances focus and efficiency (you can accomplish more);
- helps to build and improve personal relationships.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Managing time is a persistent and frustrating challenge in the pandemic and other types of crises. In such situations, people are suffering from a distorted sense of time. They somehow rob us of "normal" time, structure, and routines, including stress, anxiety, and grief. Consequently, our time-management strategies do not work anymore.

Revisit the core components of time management – structure, planning, productivity, and limiting distractions – and adapt them to the new life situation and circumstances. It is vital to get back to basics (e.g., sleep, morning routine, etc.).

4 Organisation

We can describe the abilities that let us stay focused on different tasks and use our energy, strength, time, mental capacity, physical space, etc. We can describe it as organisational skills. It is important to say that they are transferable from one job to another. Organisational skills are one of the soft skills the person can bring with her/him to any position, so they are featured as an essential employability skill. Some elements of organisational skills are:

- collaboration;
- communication;
- teamwork;
- delegation;
- planning;
- prioritising;
- mental organisational skills (analysing, assessment and evaluation, creative thinking, conceptual thinking, critical thinking, identifying problems, strategic thinking, etc.);
- time management;
- work-life balance.

How does it relate to the crisis?

A volunteer, especially in times of crisis, needs a range of knowledge, skills, and competencies developed at a high enough level to master the field of volunteering works successfully. In addition to competence in the narrower working view, it is for quality work with an appropriate personality orientation based on some desirable personality traits. As volunteering becomes more specific and increasingly demanding (new target user groups, the impact of different cultures, health status, social status, material status, etc.), key skills, including organisational skills, are crucial. Last but not least, the acquired organisational skills from volunteering are also transferable to other sectors.

5 Self-motivation

Self-motivation ensures forward progress with the projects and activities. It is the ability to take the initiative and finish tasks that should be completed. Self-motivation, as positive motivation, help us to focus on outcomes that result from accomplishing a task or achieving a particular goal. At the same time, self-motivation has a strong link with setting goals. Motivation is helpful for many situations in life and can vary as we face challenges, deal with unexpected situations, and care for our emotional and physical health or well-being. It is normal to experience shifts in motivation levels while moving through life.

How does it relate to a crisis?

A person who enters the field of voluntary work is supposed to be internally motivated to help others. Motivation is thus an internal regulator that makes sense of one's decision to participate.

In the field of volunteering during pandemic and crises situations, the competences of volunteers are strengthened by the focus on identifying and developing skills dedicated to motivating people; on how to deal with clients' expectations, from what they expect to what they fear, and how to act in such situations.

1.4 Social skills

Social skills are skills we use to communicate and interact with each other, both verbally and non-verbally, through gestures, body language, and our personal appearance. Human beings are sociable creatures and have developed many ways to communicate messages, thoughts, and feelings with others. What is said is influenced by both verbal language and the way we use it - tone of voice, the volume of speech, and the words we choose - as well as by more subtle messages such as body language, gestures, and other non-verbal communication methods. Developing social skills is about being aware of how we communicate with others, the messages we send, and how methods of communication can be improved to make the way we communicate more effectively. Having well - developed social skills also helps when volunteering in crises e.g. to

- create more and better relationships;
- better communicate;
- manage conflicts without loss of face for the parties;
- have greater efficiency;
- increase overall happiness.

In the CRISISS environment, the cluster on social skills contains five skills: communication, problem-solving, intercultural sensibility, presentation, and client orientation

1.4.1 Communication skills

Communication is defined as the exchange or transmission of information and messages. Communication is always a process because it is an activity, an exchange, or a set of behaviours - not an unchanging product.

Thus, it is about a relationship established between sender and receiver, whether in a conversation, a public speech, or in a letter, a presentation. What is said, how it is said, and the context in which something is said is important for understanding the message.

Communication skills are not only the willingness to engage in communication, but also the ability to communicate successfully. This means understanding information and interpreting it correctly, but also responding to it in an understandable way. Someone who has strong communication skills is able to communicate his or her knowledge, insights or experiences to others in a comprehensible way, but also to interpret the messages of others correctly. In conversation or when addressing others, it is important to strike the "right note" in order to communicate successfully.

Communicative strength means that someone can empathize well with the context of the other person's situation or also knows the previous history or the people and can adapt his or her style of speaking and communicating (also non-verbally). Good communication skills are therefore considered a key qualification in professional life.

1 *Verbal and written skills*

Verbal communication relies on language and means the ability to express oneself in words in an understandable way in order to avoid misunderstandings. According to Paul Watzlawik, verbal communication is about information, data and facts that are transmitted - and an emotional aspect when it comes to the relationship of the interlocutors: if it is friendly, hostile, or hierarchical, it can be decisively changed or influenced by gestures or facial expressions.

Written communication is the transmission of messages by means of written signs, which can take place via various media as a letter, report or email or cell phone message. It presupposes that the sender of a message has mastered the most important rules of grammar and word formation and that the recipient can also read. The clarity and comprehensibility of a written message is of particular importance, as it lacks the possibility of consultation that would be conceivable in a direct conversation.

How does it relate to a crisis?

In crisis situations, which put people in uncertainty and trigger fears, good communication skills are required. It is a matter of explaining the situation, which appears to be threatening, well by means of data and facts and making it comprehensible. In times of the Covid-19 pandemic, for example, it was necessary to disseminate information about the effect of the virus, the development of the infection or even the distribution of vaccination protection. For it was only through knowledge of the nature of the disease caused by the virus that fears could be reduced - at least among a large proportion of the people affected. Likewise, it has also been shown in the voluntary sector that the protective and hygienic measures taken as a precaution had to be explained again and again, whether in written or oral form.

Good and factual information creates transparency, and thus also confidence in the actions of those responsible that they are able to get a grip on the threatening situation. This applies to long-term crisis situations such as a pandemic as well as short-term accident situations. When addressing people directly, it is helpful if people strike the "right tone," take the fears of those being addressed seriously and are able to explain well what assistance can be offered to help them coping with the situation. Sometimes clear announcements have to be made in a crisis situation, sometimes more empathetic explanations have to be given in order to gain people's trust.

2 *Nonverbal skills*

Non-verbal communication complements verbal communication, because facial expressions, gestures or body posture can convey important messages and support or even change the meaning of the spoken word. Consciously or unconsciously, it is always part of verbal communication and even when you do not speak, you send messages to your counterpart ("You cannot not communicate", said Paul Watzlawick). If it is possible to harmonise body posture, facial expressions or gestures with the spoken word, it becomes possible to establish a "direct line" to the interlocutor or the audience and, in a positive sense, to reinforce the message.

How does it relate to a crisis?

When people are frightened or uncertain, as in times of crisis, a targeted approach or even a friendly talk can help them to cope with a difficult situation. It is important that non-verbal means such as facial expressions or gestures are harmonised with speech. In this way, you can establish a connection with the other person; you can also show understanding, openness and affection through body language and thus strengthen your own message. In this way it is possible to arouse motivation, courage and enthusiasm and to support people in a crisis situation.

3 *Empathy*

Empathy refers to the ability and willingness to recognise, understand and empathise with sensations, emotions, thoughts, motives and personality traits of another person. Empathic people are good at empathising with others, understanding their motivations for behaviour and reactions, and responding accordingly. They develop sensitivity to the needs and motivations of the other person and show consideration and acceptance in their reactions.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Crises create anxiety in people such as fear of job loss, illness, death and extraordinary reactions. By responding empathically in conversation, one can make it clear that one takes these fears seriously and respects the needs of the other person. This understanding, empathising with the other person, allows one to better convey one's message and thus achieve the goals of communication.

4 *Active listening*

Active listening serves mutual understanding in conversation and describes the manner and basic attitude with which the conversation is conducted. Active listening makes acceptance and understanding possible and creates a productive climate for conversation. How efficiently one can communicate often depends on the ability to listen actively. Does my conversation partner understand my concerns and my point of view, or does the conversation drift apart? So it is not only about the "what" of a statement, but also about the "how" or "why". With active listening and sensitive questions, it is possible to explore the motives of the conversation partner and to better understand the needs and concerns.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Through active listening, you show in the conversation that you can engage with the people you are dealing with in the crisis: what fears are driving them? What insecurities? Active listening also makes it possible to find the right style of response and thus achieve the goals of the communication: sometimes it's about reassuring people, informing them, or motivating them to unleash their own power. The opposite of "active listening" would be "talking past each other" when one ignores the other in his/her motivation and one does not understand each other.

5 *Adapting communication styles*

Language levels mean varieties of a language that differ from the standard language by a preferred vocabulary, by preferred grammatical constructions and by variations of grammar. Language forms our personality and is learned and developed through our environment from an early age. Through training, school or study, language structures are learned that are sometimes only understood in the respective environment. Thus, the language of administrative officials or lawyers differs clearly from the language of craftspersons or salesmen, marketing employees. Within one's own (professional) group, for example, it is easy to communicate successfully, because everyone understands respective concerns. But when it comes to explaining a complex context to another target group, many people will probably find it difficult to reach them. Different language levels are therefore often perceived as barriers or obstacles to communication. The ability to overcome these language barriers are the basis for successful communication across different groups in society.

Barriers to effective communication can delay or distort the message or intent of the message being delivered. This can lead to a failure of the communication process or create an undesirable effect.

How does it relate to a crisis?

In crisis situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic, it is also important for volunteers to be able to explain complex issues well and simply. For example, it is important to be able to explain the applicable hygiene regulations for the protection of the population in all areas of society. Good explanations that are easy to understand and reach all sections of the population inspire confidence. Failure to overcome such language barriers can lead to a breakdown in the communication process. In this example, it could be more likely that a misunderstanding will create uncertainty and a lack of understanding of the actions taken. Clarity in language for all social groups, on the other hand, creates transparency and thus agreement with the measures envisaged.



A good example of the effect of simple language in the Covid-19 pandemic are the presentations of various scientists who were able to present complex relationships of the infection process and the virus development in a simple and understandable way. In this way, the highly theoretical and scientific correlations became accessible to a broad audience. It was only through numerous explanations of this kind that confidence was built for the measures that were initiated to protect the citizens. This was because they conveyed the feeling that those responsible also understood what was happening there and could therefore act prudently. Overcoming the levels of language creates trust.

1.4.2 Problem solving skills

Volunteering in times of a crisis is on one hand giving something back to society and those in need of support. It can also be a helpful way of boosting employability by gaining new skills and competences. In times of a crisis most volunteering opportunities involve working with other people, which allows building on social skills. And whatever a volunteer does, it's inevitable that s/he will be faced with problems, obstacles and challenges at some stage – smaller or bigger, all of which allow to develop practical skills like problem-solving.

Generally spoken, problem-solving skills refer to our ability to solve problems in an effective and timely manner. It involves

- being able to identify and define the problem,
- generating alternative solutions,
- evaluating and selecting the best alternative including a consideration of possible risks,
- implementing the selected solution, and
- reassessment in case a solution does not sufficiently work.

Problem-solving abilities are connected to a number of other skills, including:

- analytical skills in order to identify a problem,
- innovative and creative thinking in order to generate one or more solutions,
- a mindset for thinking out of the box,
- flexibility in order to adapt to different situations,
- prudence in order to weigh things up for different solutions,
- personal initiative and strength to bring solutions forward,
- resilience in order to reassess when a solution does not work.

Problem solving needs emotional, social and psychological well-being

However, it is not only about solving a problem that arises in the context of volunteering. It is also about how a volunteer can mentally deal with problems arising from volunteering without burdening oneself and her/his personal environment. Emotional, social and psychological well-being are pre-requisites for problem-solving skills. One's own well-being and care for oneself are no less important, because problems in volunteering can become a burden that might even lead to give up volunteering. As a volunteer who has dealt with certain challenges in a crisis, you may have already learned to deal with them without affecting your own well-being.

Problem-solving competence - and what it entails

Problem-solving competence means dealing with problems and challenges in a thoughtful and systematic way in order to overcome them, to recognise difficulties, to react to them quickly and to find a suitable solution before further damage is done. Problem-solving competence is not a single action or decision. It shows itself in a process that consists of several steps that build on each other.

In scientific theory, e.g. psychology, cognitive science or neuroscience, there are various models that are widely used for problem solving, often transferred to disciplines like e.g. engineering. There, interdisciplinary problem solving is at the start of many innovative processes. Such a methodical problem-solving approach was developed by the Institute for Product Development at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (Germany) as a sequence of steps that can be understood as a guideline for the methodical solution of any problem. The individual steps are:

- situation analysis;
- problem delimitation;
- identifying alternatives;
- solution selection;
- analysing the scope - assessing opportunities and risks;
- decision and implementation - measures and processes;
- follow-up and learning.

Based on this sequence, we will focus in the following on three core elements of problem solving in crises. In doing so, we follow experiences that many volunteers have already made.

1 *Analysis of a problem*

First, problem-solving skills are always about identifying the problem. What exactly is the problem? Did something go wrong? Why a result was not achieved or for what reasons were expectations not met? It is not enough to point out a problem. To find a real solution, you need to identify and define the problem precisely.

The analysis of a problem should not only be based on the question of guilt. Of course, it is important to find out who was involved in creating the problem and whom it affects. However, pure blame will not contribute to the solution. When analysing the problem, it is better to ask the classic W-questions, primarily the reason:

- Why could the problem arise?
- Why did we not notice it earlier?
- What is the reason that the problem has not yet been solved?

Analysis includes many other soft skills, e.g. active listening, communication abilities or team orientation when it comes to discuss a challenge with other volunteers or the volunteer organisation.

How does it relate to a crisis?

In crises, problem-solving skills are particularly important in order to find satisfying, effective, creative and feasible solutions to problems and challenges that might appear in an environment where the volunteer is not familiar. In crises, many volunteers take on tasks that have nothing to do with their actual field of work, their education and profession. They do it for reasons of social commitment, to help others. However, they also do it because, for example, they themselves are directly affected and are temporarily unable to carry out their actual jobs. This means that they cannot use their own knowledge and experience, but must first find their way around necessary problem solutions.

2 *Selection of a solution*

A problem is usually quickly identified as such, but when it comes to suggesting suitable solutions, even those who have previously grumbled the loudest fall silent. Recognising problems does not necessarily mean having a solution at hand.

Part of problem-solving competence is courage and a sense of responsibility to take the implementation into one's own hands. When a problem has been analysed methodically, possible solutions usually emerge. These solutions then need to be weighed up, discussed with those affected or additional assessments obtained.

When choosing a solution, risk assessment will also play a role. Weighing risks and active risk management can be trained, perhaps not in an acute crisis situation, but at another time. So keep it on your agenda if you want to learn more here. Many voluntary organisations offer training in this area.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Especially in times of crisis, risk assessment plays a particularly important role. Risk assessments can mean that the seemingly best solution is only a second-best one and an alternative has to be chosen. This makes it all the more important to make such assessments together with those affected and thus obtain their agreement to solutions.

3 *Effectiveness in providing a solution*

Problem-solving competence means finding solutions quickly and also implementing them efficiently. There are situations that do not allow for long decision-making processes, e.g. because they pose hazards such as health risks or risks posed by materials. It is precisely in these situations that personal initiative is needed to implement solutions quickly. This is certainly not easy for volunteers whose responsibilities are often limited and may require self-confidence and assertiveness in individual cases.

However, effectiveness also includes questioning solutions if they do not bring the expected success. Therefore, solution competence also includes the personal strength to correct oneself and to push for a different solution.

How does it relate to a crisis?

In crises, we can rarely fall back on proven solutions in the sense of a tool kit, but we may have to try things out. Therefore, effectiveness also includes clearly communicating possible limits of solutions and preparing those concerned for the fact that a chosen solution is an attempt. This is always better than wearing out a solution.

1.4.3 Intercultural skills

Intercultural skills can be defined as the ability to function effectively in different cultural settings, to think, act, communicate and work appropriately with people of different cultural origins, both at home and abroad. These intercultural skills are a valuable asset in an increasingly globalised world where we are more likely to interact with people from different cultures. And what does culture involve? Simply put, culture is the array of beliefs, values, attitudes, experiences, and traditions shared by a community that shapes ourselves and the way we see the world, and is an important part of our identity.

Intercultural skills are part of a family of concepts that includes cultural competence, global citizenship, education for sustainable development, cultural sensitivity and the ability to think outside the box. At the core of all these concepts is the recognition of diversity as a force for change in all aspects of the contemporary world, and the importance of people being able to engage and act globally. It also includes demonstrating respect for others, adapting to different cultural settings, accepting cultural differences, being open to new ideas and ways of thinking, or even speaking foreign languages.

The prefix “inter” already suggests that the encounter between cultures must imply a mutual exchange, an overcome of past barriers and fear of the unknown. Interculturalism needs us to be able to relativise our own culture and explore new ways to cooperate with other cultures.

1 *Cultural competence*

Cultural competence is the ability to develop specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes that lead to behaviour and communication that are effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions.

There are many constituent elements of cultural competence:

- Knowledge: Cultural self-awareness; culture-specific knowledge; socio-linguistic awareness, and understanding of global issues.
- Skills: Listening, observing, evaluating, using patience and perseverance, and viewing the world from other’s perspectives.
- Attitudes: Respect, valuing other cultures; openness withholding judgement; curiosity, viewing difference as a learning opportunity, and tolerance for ambiguity.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Given the immediate demands on the professional or volunteers during a crisis, factors like culture and cultural identity are often neglected. However, the professional and the client in crisis often come from different cultures (that is age, gender, race, ethnicity, language, national origin, religion, occupation, income, education, and mental and physical abilities) and, since crisis intervention requires an immediate development of trust between professional/volunteer and client, we must consider the cultural factors in order to enable it. The rapid development of rapport and trust between people of different cultures often requires the professional/volunteer to communicate, both verbally and non-verbally, and behaviour based on knowledge and acceptance of cultural differences.



Most professionals in the human services field would agree that this is a task that is often easier said than done during a crisis. Most of them have witnessed that, in most cases, cultural competence can explain many of the powerful connections achieved between professionals/volunteers and clients.

As human beings, it is important that we feel validated and respected. This is especially true in crisis. It is important to note that the lack of cultural competence of a professional is not indicative of a lack of validation and respect to their client, but rather of a missing repertoire of skills that allows professionals to genuinely and effectively communicate this validation and respect to the customers they attend.

Research suggests that culture, socialisation, and race influence our thinking, feelings, and behaviour during crisis intervention, as they play an integral role in the way we determine what a crisis is and how, when, and if we intervene in a crisis situation. Thus, professionals/volunteers who are not aware of these critical variables risk failing in intercultural interactions, resulting in negative outputs.

If professionals/volunteers are willing to do the necessary work to practice from a culturally competent framework, such as developing self-awareness of their own cultural biases, they help clients feel validated and respected during crisis and it's easier for them to reach their pre-crisis state after the intervention.

Ultimately, an effective crisis intervention practiced with cultural competence produces positive results for all those involved in crisis intervention.

2 *Cultural sensitivity*

Cultural sensitivity is related to cultural competence and it refers to the awareness of the differences between cultures, without assigning any value to these differences (better, worse). It also involves the willingness, flexibility, and responsiveness needed to understand different people's backgrounds. When someone or something can be adapted easily (or even doesn't need to be adjusted at all) to the needs of people from different cultures is culturally sensitive.

This skill takes some premises, such as respecting diversity and difference, interest in other cultures, seeing people as individuals and not just cultural representatives, but also being aware of people's cultural background and reflecting on its effect on our personality.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Professionals and volunteers facing a crisis will need to work closely with people who won't share their culture, if they don't possess cultural sensitivity, it might be more difficult to reach their goals. In order to prevent this, we must train our ability to respectfully interact and communicate with others, both verbally and non-verbally, and assure the right that both parties (professionals, volunteers and clients) have to express their culture and be heard and accepted.

On the other hand, cultural sensitivity can prevent conflict, or help to manage it. If we recognize and value diversity and integrate all the cultures we are working with into our intervention framework, people are more likely to have their needs met, to feel respected, and willing to work for everyone's goal. A crisis is a time where conflict can emerge easily, so we will have to prepare all the tools that can help us deal with it and even eliminate it before it can occur.



3 *Thinking outside the box*

Thinking outside the box is an ability quite close to openness, curiosity, and discovery. This metaphor refers to the ability to think differently, unconventionally, or from a new perspective and point of view. Thinking outside the box will be of special importance when trying to understand different cultures and viewpoints, granting us the chance to be more open-minded and creative. It allows us to seek out intercultural interactions, viewing difference as a learning opportunity, being aware of our own ignorance, tolerating ambiguity, and viewing it as a positive experience; willing to expand one's comfort zone. This couldn't be possible without respect, seeking out other cultures' attributes; valuing cultural diversity; thinking comparatively and without prejudice about cultural differences.

Interculturalism is all about creativity. When working on an intercultural framework, where we have to redefine constantly our approaches, being creative and flexible, and feeling comfortable with new situations can be key to meeting our goals and the needs of each part involved. And the best way to embrace those skills is to challenge yourself!

How does it relate to a crisis?

A crisis is, by definition, a difficult period when big changes take place and important decisions have to be made. Creativity and thinking outside the box, as they enable flexibility to adapt and reflect, are great allies to face a crisis. These skills will allow professionals and volunteers to think in new directions, rethink the established framework and move along different cultural settings with confidence and respect.

It can also be the other way around. During a crisis, we see ourselves forced into new situations and environments and we have to deal with uncertainty. This can be really difficult and stressful, but it will allow us to empower our creativity and reshape our comfort zone – not escape it. Our comfort zone embraces all the things we can do without much effort or stress, and when we confront something new, complicated or tough, we have to take time until we learn it and it's not stressful anymore – and we move on to the next thing. We've just expanded our comfort zone, we've included new things and made it bigger, we haven't broken it out! Thus, a crisis can be seen as an opportunity that can lead us to grow and learn new things, and acquire the ability to think outside the box.

1.4.4 Presentation skills

The abilities to listen and communicate, teamwork, flexibility and leadership have always been important requirements for people joining the labour world. Also, in the volunteering sector soft skills are a fundamental proficiency, a crucial issue of differentiation and success for both organisations and aspiring volunteers as well. Soft skills are referred to personal and relational qualities. I.e.: effectively communicating, practising leadership, problem-solving and strategic view are the soft skills most asked for contributors, as it's been suggested by a recent report by Performance Strategies. Anyway, some soft-skills macro-categories are considered essential, in the labour world and the volunteering as well.

The first is the communication, being able to speak clearly (with contributors, associates, clients, providers). In this category are skills such as to be able to listen, persuade, successfully interact, show empathy; also to negotiate, holding an audience, interpreting non-verbal language, writing properly or be able to do storytelling as well.

The second soft skill considered important by an organisation is critical thinking: people that can analyse the situations, interpret them and take decisions based on the disposable data. Creativity, artistic inclination, observing capacity, curiosity and the continuous desire for knowledge, flexibility, adaptability, innovation, all these aspects are part of this category. People full of resources are appreciated, who don't get scared in front of changes and can create a new solution to the problems ("think outside the box").

The capacity of team working is another soft skill extremely important in the volunteering field and it has undergone a still more relevant dimension since the pandemic outbreak which included features like being able to accept comments and criticism, interface with other people, face difficult or stressful situations. Emotional intelligence is required, to be open to multicultural working environments, to be able to interact with disabled people or with someone who has a bad temper. Networking, team building and resistance to stress are part of this category.

Among the soft skills may also be found the ethical aspect of labour: the most requested workers are people who work respecting and supporting the others and the deadlines, with organisational and planning skills, goal-oriented, who can manage their time and be multitasking if needed, reliable and punctual.

The main skills identified are:

- Non-verbal capacities (observation, empathy, target analysis and environmental/situational analysis): non-verbal communication can train us to be self-perceiving, listening, and monitoring our body reactions when we communicate with other people. One of the most important actions, in this context, is to be able to quickly get the communication feedback, i.e. be-hold the listener and decipher how the reaction is going. It is imperative to be careful observers, in this way we could „read“ our interlocutors' reactions and decide whether to go ahead with the explanation or to rephrase the concept. Understanding our interlocutors' non-verbal communication modalities and being able to read our own, are useful skills, especially in the present social-labouring context. Those will let us be more confident and influential.

- Empathy is the capacity to “put in the other’s shoes”, in this way we can perceive emotions and thoughts. This term comes from the Greek *en-pathos* i.e. “feeling inside”, it consists in the recognition of the others’ emotions as they were our own, descending in the others’ reality in order to understand their point of view, thoughts, feeling, emotions, and “pathos”. Empathy is a highly important social skill, and it represents a basic instrument to effective and rewarding interpersonal communication. In interpersonal relation, empathy is one of the main front doors to the moods and, more in general, to the other’s intimate world. Thanks to it we can not only get the point of what the interlocutor is conveying, but we can also get the more deeply hidden psycho-emotional meaning. Therefore, we can expand the value of the message, collecting elements that frequently go beyond the mere semantic content of the line, explicating the meta-communication, that is the most meaningful part of the message, expressed by the body language, that can be decodified through the empathic listening.
- Thanks to listening skills, paying our attention to other’s sensations, we can relate to them until we reach that emotional tuning, which will improve our relationship making it more effective. It has been the empathy that during the COVID-19 pandemic phase has allowed creating trust, collaboration, sharing and involvement between people, creating tuning among the individuals, and improving their communication.

1 Ability to clearly identify the focus of the subject/issue

It consists of the ability to identify the disposable opportunities to personal activities, professionals or economic, this attitude is featured by: sense of initiative, clearness of intents, future vision, ability to anticipate events; independence and innovation on private life, social, working; commitment to reach specific goals, may these be personal, shared with others, or at work. These abilities originate a proactive projecting management that involves for example the capacity of planning, organising, managing, leadership and delegation, analysis, communication, reporting, rating and recording; working individually and in partnership into other groups as well; identifying and rating our own strengths and weaknesses and analyse our own willingness to take risk if necessary.

How does it relate to crisis?

Usually, in a crisis the need to clearly identify the issue at hand becomes necessary due to the reduced resources. The need to effectively approach the problem, without causing waste of resources is necessary to avoid more problems and destroy the possibility to come to a conclusion of the crisis.

2 Ability to recognise one’s emotions (emotional intelligence)

The ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to differentiate them and to use this information to guide one's thoughts and actions; i.e. the concept of emotional intelligence, was taken up by Daniel Goleman who, in 1995, made it popular with the following definition: "It is the ability to recognize our feelings and those of others, to motivate ourselves, and to positively manage our emotions , both internally and in social relations". The ability to recognise one's emotions, know what one's limits and resources are and be confident in one's abilities is fundamental. It contains within it those skills of awareness and self-mastery, motivation, empathy and skills in the

management of social relations, which any person can develop, and which prove to be fundamental for every human being who works in organised contexts (companies, social groups, volunteering etc.) and/or in complex situations such as in pandemic situations or in serious social and economic situations.

How does it relate to crisis?

While experiencing a crisis it is crucial to be able to recognise and understand the concerns and goals of each party involved. Empathy needs to be demonstrated by volunteers to show they truly understand what others are going through and what matters to them. Acknowledging their feelings, understanding, and appreciating complaints and/or inputs is at the essence. As a volunteer, one of the main roles in time of crisis is also to remind people to take care of their physical and mental health.

3 Self-awareness (one's behaviour and way of being)

Self-awareness is a soft skill (transversal or existential) that concerns the fact of knowing oneself. Being aware means being able to recognise oneself: one's needs and desires, strengths and weaknesses, ways of reacting to situations, emotions and our reactions to them, habits and thought patterns that we use, our social preferences, our tastes, knowing how to work in action teams, ability to organise and plan activities. Awareness therefore means the ability to intuit, perceive, recognise, and name reality, as much as possible, in every area and aspect of life. Being more aware also increases the ability to analyse and review events, with the consequent greater probability of distinguishing between the representation or map of the world that we make to interpret events and experiences and reality more objectively understood. Things are not as they seem to our senses at first very rapid and instinctive perception, therefore developing awareness also helps to improve our concreteness and effectiveness.

How does it relate to crisis?

Self-awareness is fundamental to regulate one's behaviour when in crisis situation. Thus, it is crucial for volunteers to understand themselves and get in contact with their own emotion and limits to proactively react to situations without being controlled by them. For example, the many uncertainties and unknowns of the Covid-19 crisis have generated collective anxiety that feels like part of the air we breathe. When we allow that anxiety to remain vague and unnamed, we give it power over us. The opposite course is to take the time to identify the emotions we are feeling, accept them, and understand them. This mindful path empowers us to take a crisis that sometimes seems over-whelming and turn it into a challenge we can define (and tackle) on our terms.

4 Teamwork

Working as a team is the key to success. Teamwork is based on the ability to share a goal, the ability to have a common vision, the ability to create a process for collective success, the capability to work towards objectives and the ability to organise and plan activities. The founding elements on which anyone who wants to collaborate in a group in a profitable and satisfactory way are: having clear objectives, well-defined roles based on one's personality and ability, having high motivation as it is what encourages the person to lead to end the job and reach the goal, a relaxed and supportive environment, there must be respect among the various team members, acceptance and also trust in



the skills and competences of the other members and above all: open, simple and clear communication.

How does it relate to crisis?

In a crisis the ability to work in teams becomes crucial due to the need to integrate skills in order to solve complex problems. Also, cohesion into a group becomes fundamental to tackle difficulties and crisis and to be able to face the unexpected, while keeping everyone conscious of their stance in the group.

5 Capacity to work for goals

Working for goals means organising the work based on results that have to be achieved in scheduled times. The two pivots are therefore the objectives and timing, which must be agreed at the beginning, practicable and, above all, shared between the volunteer and the organisation. There are various methods for enhancing our working skills by goals. The most important is certainly the comparison: by talking with colleagues (especially with those with more experience), for example, it is possible to learn more effective organisational methods to achieve the intended purpose. Another method to improve our organisational skills is that of transcription: writing the goals we aim to achieve and the procedural steps to be taken, helps to better organize our working day. Eventually, to enhance our ability to achieve goals it is important to know how to “look back”, that is, to analyse the work already done, to understand what the strengths are and to find methods to correct the mistakes.

How does it relate to crisis?

Working for goals is crucial when in a situation of crisis. To be able to specifically identify goals and work to reach them, helps save resources and time to increment efficacy and efficiency. When in a situation of reduced resources, it is crucial to be able to not waste it in unrelated or useless tasks.

1.4.5 Client-oriented skills

In times of crisis, it is even more important to know and learn about the appropriate social skills tools with which we can alleviate the crisis in a personal psychological, and social sense. To know the tools and recognised skills that are person-oriented is very helpful.

The terminus "Client-oriented Skills" comes from Carl Roger's (the father of humanistic therapies) theory which is based on a non-directive form of talk therapy that allows the client to lead the conversation and does not steer the client. The approach focuses on strengthening clients' ability to make changes for themselves. Rogers believed that every individual is unique and that a one-size-fits-all process would not fit all. He saw the client's personal experience as the most vital factor in the process.

One vital quality of this approach rests in unconditional positive regard. This means that the client is not judged but instead supported and accepted for any reason. A person who gives support needs to accept the client for whom s/he is and provides support and cares no matter what s/he is going through. Further on, s/he needs to feel comfortable sharing his/her feelings with the client and contribute to an open and healthy relationship by providing a model of good communication and, in the next step, empathetic understanding (reflecting the client's thoughts and feelings to him).

The general goals of the client-centered model are to:

- Facilitate personal growth and development;
- Mitigate or eliminate feelings of distress;
- Increase self-esteem and openness to experience;
- Enhance the client's understanding of him- or herself.

How does it relate to the crisis?

With stress, anxiety, and depression at an epidemic level worldwide, personal help (support, psycho-social counseling, therapy, mindfulness techniques) becomes more commonplace and important.

This kind of "help and support" is available in hospitals, schools, municipalities, churches, and helpers' and voluntary work across Europe and the globe. The public health crisis has encouraged the areas of necessary support for people in need by developing new approaches and adapt remote technologies to provide appropriate care in a wider range of social context needs (e.g., social isolation, safety, inclusion, ...) correlated with mental health.

1 Self-awareness

Definition of self-awareness involves being aware of different aspects of the "Self," like personality traits, feelings, and behaviours. It is one of the first components of self-concept.

For someone working in helping professions, it is first and foremost important to have good mental health conditions across the spectrum. Such a person can be described as a fully functioning person who tends to self-actualisation in his/her personal development.

The fully functioning person is an individual who has "ideal emotional health." Generally, s/he will be open to experience, lives with a sense of meaning and purpose, and trusts in self and others. His/her



self-concept is constantly taking on new information and experiences. Such individuals are in touch with their emotions and make a conscious effort to grow as a person.

New scientific outcomes in neuroscience indicate that an area of the brain as the anterior cingulate cortex located in the frontal lobe region plays an important role in developing self-awareness. Studies used brain imaging to show that the region becomes activated in self-aware adults.

How does it relate to a crisis?

The level of self-awareness is at a high enough level where a person who gives support is aware of her/his limitations and strengths. Because s/he encounters vulnerable individuals in work, s/he can demarcate him-/herself in relation to the client. In this sense, potential emotional and other abuses can often result from unplanned and non-intentional manipulations, too tight self-identification with the client's experience, unresolved traumatic events of one's past, and the like. Therefore, one of the most important skills of client-centred help and support on a social level is a sufficiently high level of self-awareness.

2 Authenticity

The characterisation of authenticity describes a person who acts by motives, desires, ideas, or believes that not only hers (as opposed to someone else's) and at the same time expresses who s/he really is. Being human is best achieved through being unique and distinctive, even when these collide with certain social norms.

Authenticity is more about presence, living in the moment with confidence, and staying true to one-self. An authentic person puts the people around them at ease and comforts them. There is no doubt or questioning the integrity of an authentic person. When we are looking to build relationships in life, we want to grow and learn from people of value. It means we identify and desire to find honest, trustworthy and kind people.

Few characteristics of authenticity:

- Be true to yourself.
- Think inward, look outward.
- The way you treat people (kindness and respect).
- Be a good listener.
- Live in the moment.
- Open-mindedness.
- Fairness to opportunities and people.

How does it relate to a crisis?

With the warm, nurturing, and authentic approach, we can hold the space for a client to create a change by showing an honest and deep understanding. Facial expressions and body language match our words. Authenticity allows congruence - to transform the flow of a person's energy from a blocked, dysfunctional pattern to a more open, free, and healthy pattern which corresponds to greater congruence in terms of awareness, openness, and connection with the key dimensions of the person.

3 *Positivity*

We understand positivity in several personality traits, like thinking optimistically, looking for solutions, expecting success and results, focusing, and making life happier. It is a positive state of mind where you:

- don't take things too personally;
- enjoy the present moment;
- do not worry much about the future;
- focus instead of thinking about the past and difficulties rather to doing and achieving (relocation and reframing);
- are tolerant, happy and good-natured.

Emotions associated with positivity are inspiration, joy, love.

Thoughts associated with positivity are thoughts of courage, success, certainty, self-esteem.

Positive Psychology Interventions: A great deal of research has been done to support a client in applying positive psychology interventions into their lives. Therapists with a deeper understanding of the benefits of these types of interventions can not only help clients return to health or psychosocial homeostasis. They can also help clients lead lives that are more fulfilled.

Positive psychology interventions, or PPIs, are a set of scientific tools and strategies that focus on increasing happiness, wellbeing, and positive cognitions and emotions.

How does it relate to a crisis?

One of the core elements of positivity in a client-oriented approach of help is unconditional positive regard. It (UPR) is a practice by accepting, respecting, and caring about the clients; the volunteer (therapist) should operate from the perspective that clients are doing the best they can in their circumstances and with the skills and knowledge available to them. S/he cultivates the ability to attend sessions with their clients in a non-judgmental and caring capacity.

4 *Empathy*

The ability to sense, understand and share the feelings of others is empathy. Researchers coupled the terminus with the ability to imagine what someone else might be feeling or thinking.

They also differentiate between:

- Affective empathy – sensations and feelings we get in response to others' emotions;
- Cognitive empathy – ability to identify and understand other people's emotions.

Empathy has deep roots in our brains and bodies and has been associated with two different pathways in the brain:

- one aspect of empathy can be traced to mirror neurons when we observe someone else perform an action in much the same way as we would perform that action by ourselves (so called mapping, mirroring);
- genetic basis to empathy – people can enhance or restrict their natural empathic abilities.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Empathy is a vital ability to show clients that we understand their emotions rather than just feeling sympathy for them. Volunteers helping clients in crisis must possess the ability to understand or feel what their client is experiencing.

5 *Listening Skills*

Listening is the ability to accurately receive and interpret messages in the process of communication (interpersonal communication). Without this ability, messages are easily misunderstood. As a result, communication breaks down, and the sender can quickly become irritated and frustrated.

One of the most crucial listening skills is active listening which involves all senses and giving full attention to the speaker. Interest can be conveyed to the speaker by using both verbal and non-verbal messages such as:

- Attentive listening: eye contact, maintaining good posture, nodding, mirroring speaker's body language, allowing the speaker to complete entire thoughts, be attentive, be attuned to feelings;
- Reflection listening: repeating and paraphrasing to show that you truly understand what was told.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Listening skills are finely tuned. Utilising intuitive and active listening is necessary to serve clients in a transformative way. Through observation and fully attending to clients, we create an environment where they feel safe and heard.

6 *Concrete Communication*

In providing psychosocial support and assistance, some important elements make sense to consider in this process:

- Task-oriented communication: Making sure that the client is the focus of communication without a great deal of self-disclosure is important. Staying in a task-oriented communication focus will help the client move forward;
- Non-directiveness refers to the method of allowing the client to drive the therapy session; therapists should refrain from giving advice or planning activities for their sessions.
- Interpretation is a skill that takes some practice to cultivate well. It is utilised to give clients perspective but should be used sparingly;
- Reflection
- Solution collaboration - solutions coming from clients are more effectively created and later also more likely to be put into practice. However, once a client has exhausted personal resources for finding a solution, a collaborative approach is helpful when forging solutions for behaviour change.

How does it relate to the crisis?

The impact of the pandemic crisis on vulnerable groups would rely in part on the quality of communication regarding health risk, mental health stability, and danger. Concrete communication is proactive, imaginative, compassionate, innovative, creative, constructive, progressive, enabling,

transparent, and technology friendly. However, multiple factors play a key role in accepting information, like social and cultural characteristics, gender, generational contrasts, language inclinations, strict convictions, religious beliefs, and varying literacy influence individuals' actions and behaviours.

7 *Emotional Stability*

In a pandemic crisis, helpers and volunteers are often faced with uncomfortable emotions. Profoundly understanding how providing services to those in need might influence one's emotional state. The ability to compartmentalise the emotions experienced in a setting from one's personal experience is important to the volunteers' well-being. From this point of view it is vital to know personal emotional capacities.

The first step to this is, of course, the knowledge of emotions, and then the knowledge of techniques for regulating emotions and cleansing emotional content and traces that the client's situation triggered in us.

Emotionally stronger people cope with everyday stress and problems more efficiently and recover faster when they face challenges and crisis moments in their lives.

See the Emotions Theory and Plutchnik Wheel of Emotions at:

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Plutchiks-wheel-of-emotions_fig1_309180696

For more, see also the skills Emotional Intelligence, Resilience and Self-management.

How does it relate to a crisis?

Recognising one's emotions, regulating them and relieving oneself is extremely important for working with clients in the field of volunteering during a pandemic. People who have found themselves in a crisis need sovereign, supportive, encouraging, kind, trustworthy and empathetic support in resolving their own distress. By knowing and regulating our own emotions, it is easier to recognise the emotions of others and help them to recognise and regulate them.

8 *Assertiveness*

Providing appropriate parameters within which a helper/volunteer (therapist) works with a client is foundational to success. The ability to set boundaries enables and demarcates the relationship between the person providing social assistance and the person receiving it. One of the most important skills in this process and transfer is assertiveness.

Assertiveness is a broader term for the decisiveness and confidence of a person. At the same time, it includes the qualities of compassion and openness to the needs, interests, and limitations. S/he can compromise when a conflict arises and knows how to put him/herself in somebody else's shoes.

People who act assertively are aware of their virtues and flaws but accept themselves. They try to go beyond their limits while being kind and patient with themselves; they know their needs, interests, emotions, feelings, and limits and do not hide them from others. They are aware of their responsibility to others. They treat them with respect; they understand their flaws and limits but do not surrender to manipulation and aggression.

Table: Distinguish between assertive and non-assertive behaviour

Non - assertive	Assertive	Aggressive
speaking quietly and shy	outspoken and calm speech	speaking loudly and fast
speaking unclearly	speaking clearly	commanding
gestures are modest	gestures are relaxed	gestures are fast and irritating
nervousness and restlessness	calmness	agitation
reservedness	emotional openness	rigid emotions
shyness	confidence	arrogance

How does it relate to a crisis?

Whenever a person uses assertiveness, s/he is aware that the manner of creative communication is significant, and the choice of words is the key. It creates authentic relationships and brings clear and calm messages. People that use assertiveness as a model of creative communication among themselves are honest, respectful, and equal co-speakers.

In the time of a crisis, people may prioritise safety over the connection, resulting in feelings of isolation, hopelessness, fear, depression, anger, or low motivation. In order to find solid ground between these two basic human needs, healthy assertiveness is helpful by balancing these needs.

By behaving assertively, a person inspires trust in others because they know they can count on him/her. Also, we illustrate behaviour that they may come to follow.

Guidelines for creating a portfolio for promotion and self-promotion



2 Guidelines for creating a portfolio for promotion and self-promotion

2.1 Why a portfolio?

Volunteers acquire considerable soft skills in their activities, which can be recorded and evaluated via the CRISISS Identification Tool: <https://crisiss.eu/training/>. Such an evaluation can be part of a so-called personal skills portfolio. There are several benefits from creating a portfolio. On the one hand, it provides information about personal skills, but on the other hand it can also be used to convince future employers of existing skills. Employers, on the other hand, get an assessment of the volunteer work of a job applicant, which may even be decisive when it comes to a job with certain demands.

The benefits for (future) job applicants can be summarised as follows:

- They will have a record of personal learning with documents that prove formal and informal learning.
- They will be able to demonstrate professional growth and show a commitment to continued learning.
- They will have an organised collection of evidence that can be used as a job search tool if needed.
- They will have a tool to showcase skills and knowledge to their future employers when seeking a new position or a promotion.
- They will be able to identify strengths and/or weaknesses to help with future professional development decisions.
- They will be able to assess strengths and make more informed decisions on career options.
- They will have the opportunity to explore more fully who they are and what they know and can do.
- Human Resource specialists will have an effective tool to match employees to job position.
- The E-portfolio is the electronic equivalent to a carefully layouted and printed paper document. It can be sent more easily to prospective employers, and it can also contain information on media which are not possible to include in an analogue document, e.g. videos.

2.2 Use of the portfolio of skills to manage employability and vocational development

Job applicants can develop their employability and their vocational development in the process of developing a portfolio by reviewing and reflecting on their achievements, especially of their soft skills and how they relate to what an employer requires. They can then communicate their attributes, skills and experience to employers in a format and a language that employers will understand and respond to. Portfolios are a way of demonstrating evidence of 'soft skills' to employers, such as teamwork and communication skills

You have been involved in volunteering, but maybe you had other activities such as sport, citizenship and political participation, or supporting school activities.. To highlight them in a -portfolios for presentation has been found to be useful when looking for a job. Some learners felt that having a portfolio gave them an edge when it came to applying for jobs, especially jobs abroad, and that developing CVs using their portfolio was a useful process

Use by employers

In addition to a resume or college transcript, more than eight out of ten employers say an electronic portfolio would be useful to them in ensuring that job applicants have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in their company or organisation.

Use for career development

The link between personal development plan and employability is the acquisition, articulation and collection of evidence of key skills and attributes. Employers expect applicants to be able to define and explain the skills and attributes that they have, and to be able to communicate and provide evidence of the development of them. Engaging in personal development enables applicants to identify the development of their skills and attributes, and to collect and present evidence of that development.

2.3 When and how to use a portfolio

The portfolio is your portfolio, it shows examples of activities you are able to perform, practical experiences that you have acquired. It is your mirror. The self-assessment which you performed using the CRISISS Assessment Tool will allow you to promote yourself while developing positive attitudes.

To check what you have learned

In one place, at your hand, you have the summary and the trace of your main learning out-comes.

To develop self-esteem and self-confidence the portfolio is a concrete realisation. It can be materialised by a real object, a cardboard box, and by a virtual environment, e.g. a web site.

As a result, it is your achievement that demonstrates your combativeness to produce it and that can mirror your creativity. As a process and through its content it proves your competences. It can be particularly helpful if you have little or no paid work experience.

To elaborate CVs

The portfolio of competences is the basic ground for elaborating a CV. You can select pieces of information that will be useful for the type of job application you are targeting. The CV is a one shot tool: you write a CV each time you apply for a job and each CV is different to be adapted to the expectations of the recruiter. The portfolio is a lifelong tool. It grows with your experiences.

To obtain an interview

If you have an online portfolio, it is useful to show the link in your CV. Not all recruiters will have a look at it but some will do, especially if your CV is short-listed. They will obtain a more concrete idea of yourself as they will visualise what you are able to do.

To assist during job interviews

You can use your portfolio to prepare the inter-view, to remember you of previous work experiences and activities that you have realised. But you can also bring your portfolio or part of it to the inter-view and show it to illustrate what you are saying.

To make the link between different periods of your working life

Your portfolio will help you to maintain a link between the various steps of your vocational path. By tracing the organisations that may have accompanied you, the companies in which you have done practice periods, the steps you have undertaken, it will make efficient the support of counsellors/tutors/trainers.

To undertake accreditation of prior experiential learning

Accreditation of prior experiential learning is in line with lifelong learning. It allows responding more flexibly to the changes at work in two ways: 1) by giving access to a diploma, it increases the potential for mobility and hence adaptability to change, and 2) by favouring reflection on experience and thinking in terms of transferable skills, it helps individuals get back on their feet in changing jobs. Any acquisition of knowledge or skills is accorded equal legitimacy. Your portfolio is the basic tool to undertake the accreditation of your prior learning.

2.4 What should be included in the portfolio?

There are no set rules on what to include in your E-portfolio because it is your creative outlet to showcase your abilities and goals. But to help you get started, consider including the following sections recommended by the CRISIS consortium:

Welcome	Summarize who you are and a bit about what visitors will find in your E-portfolio. Give your readers a flavour for what you're all about and let them know what you value.
Career objective/profile	Write a statement summarizing your objective. To be meaningful, your objective should be specific and clear.
CV	Summarize your education, achievements, and work experience. Include detailed information on your skills including soft skills.
Work samples	This information is as diverse as your background. Upload articles, papers, projects, reports, and publications so your readers can see your work. Consider including graphics, audio and video for further illustration.
Study Abroad/ International Experience	Explanation of what you learned that will benefit the employer; specifics about projects and photos.
Awards and honours	Scan certificates of awards and honours that you might have obtained in your professional or academic work.
Additional education	List conferences, seminars, workshops and any other professional development. Add courses, degrees, certifications, and licenses.
Volunteer and extracurricular activities	List and explain your activities or illustrate them by photos. Such activities can reveal a number of skills, such as organisational skills, personal skills etc. that are not standing out in your CV but may be important in a working environment. Add here the certificate which was generated by the CRISIS Identification Tool which shows specifically your soft skills gained in a volunteering work during a crisis.
References	List three to five people who have agreed to talk about your strengths, abilities and experience. Be sure to include full contact information. Letters of recommendation and testimonials may also be added. Include feedback you've received from employers, customers, professors, and colleagues. You can also link to professional sites that allow such feedback such as LinkedIn. In case you are operating professionally a website include the URL here.

Operative Tools



3 Operative Tools

The operative tools section is intended for volunteers who will create an E-portfolio focused on a promotional strategy. The tools mentioned below are mostly in English, some of them are only available in other European languages. They are nevertheless listed below because they contain a wealth of inspiration for volunteers.

3.1 Implementing an E-portfolio

An E-portfolio is a collection of digital files that are shared electronically for the purpose of reflection, comment, evaluation and to increase your visibility. It is supported by a website that enables users to collate digital evidences. E-portfolios can contain a wide range of digital files, including text or PDF documents, videos, sound files, images and links to other websites or online resources. Some parts of the portfolio can remain private before being published (or even can never be published), if you estimate they are not “finished” or not relevant to your current objective.

There are several free options for creating E-portfolios:

- non specialised tools such as content management tools;
- specialised E-portfolio tools;
- social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Xing (depending on the country).


Several specialised tools are oriented towards career assessment or course assessment. You might prefer tools that are more oriented towards showing and sharing, and also prefer the tools that give some space and freedom to the user to customize them. Thus they will show that they master IT skills.

3.1.1 Social networks

For employment purposes, the more appropriate tools are probably the professional social networks such as LinkedIn. Although they give little space to creativity and do not reflect any IT skills from the user side, as they do not allow an easy management of public vs private part of your portfolio., they are really powerful for networking, in particular with the “Push” approach that they are implementing.


Even if you manage your own blog we advise you create a detailed profile on a professional social network important in your country (e.g. LinkedIn, Xing in Germany, etc.). Other networks you should consider are: LinkedIn Recruiter, Facebook job application, My Resume Builder and Visual CV.


3.2 Specialised E-portfolio tools for volunteers

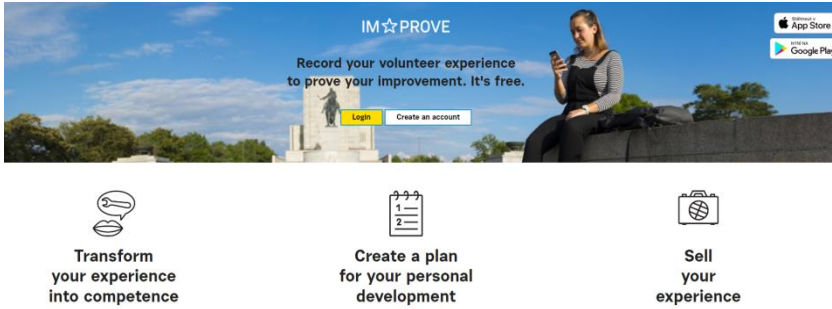
<p>Title of the tool</p>	<p>ProfilPASS</p> 
<p>Author/company</p>	<p>Adult Education – Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning</p>
<p>Target groups and (pre)condition of the use</p>	<p>Volunteers The download is free.</p>
<p>Short description</p>	<p>The ProfilPASS was developed by the German Institute for Adult Education - Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning e. V. . It is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 DE and can be used freely under the terms of the license, for example for translations.</p> <p>Also available are a ProfilPASS for young people, ProfilPASS for self-employment or ProfilPASS in plain language.</p> <p>The ProfilPASS supports persons in systematically determining and presenting their competences. Their role in the family, leisure time and voluntary work is just as important as their professional career. By examining what persons are doing and how they act, they can recognise their competences. The result is a person's own personal competence profile. Finding out more about a person's skills and competences will give him/her a better awareness of his/her personal strengths and weaknesses. Knowing strengths and weaknesses will help people to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plan their professional development • prepare for employee reviews • prepare for (re)entering professional life • plan future courses, trainings <p>The ProfilPASS also offers valuable help in the creation of the CV. At the back of the ProfilPASS volunteers can collect reports and certificates, and any other forms of proof or certifications.</p> <p>In connection to a crisis, on page 97 volunteers can find extraordinary circumstances – which supports the evaluation of the gained skills during extraordinary times which are part of a person's competences review.</p> <p>After the review of competences, ProfilPASS supports the person with future plans - what competences should he/she pursue or what to develop or improve.</p>




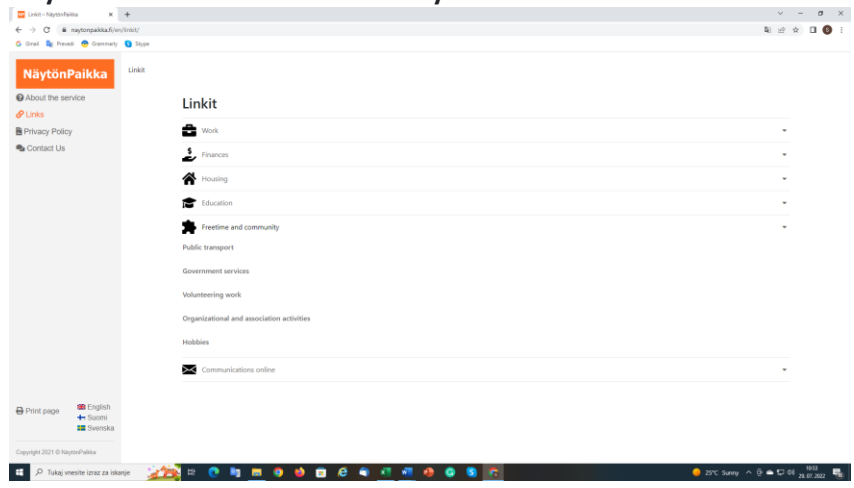
Language(s)	German, English, French, Greek, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Ukrainian
URL	https://www.profilpass.de/media/pp_english.pdf https://www.profilpass.de/download

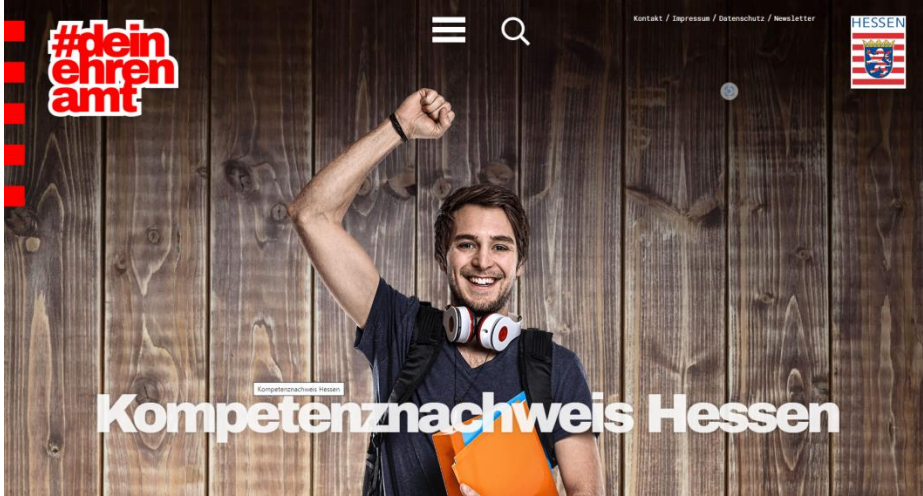
<p>Title of the tool</p>	<p>The CORE-Toolkit</p> 
<p>Author/company</p>	<p>DIE – German Institute for Adult Education</p>
<p>Target groups and (pre)condition of use</p>	<p>Counsellors Young adults</p>
<p>Short description</p>	<p>The CORE-Toolkit is a project linked to the developments related to the ProfilPASS as an instrument for competence assessment. The CORE-Toolkit intends to offer counsellors the opportunity to find methods of competence assessment, vocational orientation as well as of empowerment and up-skilling that can help them work with disadvantaged young adults who are neither in employment, education and/or training (NEET). These methods are suitable for young NEET adults and aim to help them (back) into education, training and/or employment. A special focus of the COREToolkit is to address counsellors from the Western Balkans, where NEET rates are particularly high and targeted advice much needed.</p> <p>The CORE-Toolkit is a collection of additional competence assessment instruments that are suitable for NEETs. By evaluating different areas like “my life, my activities including volunteering, my qualities, my competences, my future and my applications and documents”, the participant gains a summary of his strengths and can focus on the next steps how to make a good use of the competence profile.</p>
<p>Language(s)</p>	<p>German, English, Slovene, Bulgarian, Bosnian, Macedonian</p>
<p>URL</p>	<p>https://core.profilpass-international.eu/files/core-toolkit_english.pdf https://core.profilpass-international.eu/index.php?article_id=127&clang=1</p>


Title of the tool	<p>Skills-Plus</p> 
Author/company	Volunteer Canada
Target groups and (pre)condition of the use	<p>Volunteers • executive directors, board chairs, CEOs of volunteer-involving organisations • managers of volunteer resources (co-ordinators of volunteers) of organisations • leadership/intermediary organisations (networks, councils, coalitions) • policy makers and funders • volunteer centres • educational institutions • organized labour • corporate community investment directors • small businesses</p> <p>Free use</p>
Short description (<p>The purpose of Skills-Plus is to facilitate the linkage between volunteer experiences and occupational core competences/skills so that workplaces can strategically support employee volunteers to meet community and competence-development goals. The tool can be used as the basis to define and measure benefits of employer-supported volunteering.</p> <p>The Skills-Plus tools include a volunteer opportunity template, 19 sample volunteer opportunities (including crisis intervention, counselling, communication, event coordination, board member etc.), Skills-Plus playing cards and a competency matrix and a training resource for workplaces, employees and non-profit organisations on the purpose and use of the tool. The competence matrix contains a range of competences that can be developed through various types of volunteer opportunities. In this way, volunteers can explore both volunteer types and occupations that either require or develop the competences of interest.</p>
Language(s)	English
URL	https://volunteer.ca/vdemo/EngagingVolunteers_DOCS/skillsplus.pdf
Links to instructional videos	<p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwb7jrjuZnQ (video seminar)</p> <p>https://www.slideshare.net/VolunteerCanada/bridging-volunteer-experience-to-career-development-reva-cooper (in English)</p> <p>https://www.facebook.com/VolunteerCanada/posts/10153731574996384</p> <p>https://volunteer.ca/sbv?fbclid=IwAROXnyOpXaPAYpUCedmKrNTmIVn9ODQIYTMsq_W47NhBOs7DlrZPfri3T9Q (Case Studies)</p>


<p>Title of the tool</p>	<p>IM-PROVE App</p> 
<p>Author/company</p>	<p>Erasmus+ project, coordinator: INEX-SDA, z.s. CZ Partner in Slovenia: Zavod Voluntariat</p>
<p>Target groups and (pre)condition of the use</p>	<p>Everyone who acquires skills through voluntary work</p>
<p>Short description</p>	<p>Volunteering is a great way to learn new things. This app shows which competences you have developed through volunteering and which need some polishing off. It doesn't matter if the person is a part of an organisation or a volunteer on her/his own at a spare moment. This app works for all. The IM-PROVE application is based on an algorithm that shows areas improved through volunteering. Simply record the situation, rate how you dealt with it, add a few more details and that is it. The system automatically connects the data you entered with competences you developed. You can then share your results with your friends, teachers or employers who will then clearly see how volunteering contributed to your personal and professional development. We all have also areas that we could work on to get better. What is important though is to know how to do it! The list of competences gives the person an overview of situations that she/he hasn't been through yet and that are relevant to the skill one wants to master. The app also helps to establish goals for personal learning processes and shows the skills that lead to your goal.</p> <p>Later the app creates a neat profile of the skills one has developed thanks to volunteering. Share the link to a personal profile on social media, in CV or a LinkedIn profile.</p> <p>Available in App Store and Google Play.</p>
<p>Language(s)</p>	<p>English, French, Czech, Slovene</p>
<p>URL</p>	<p>http://improve.inexsda.cz/</p>
<p>Links to instructional videos</p>	<p>IM-PROVE app official video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBc04BFyWPg IM-PROVE Promo video in Czech: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qavf8CnXsBU</p>


Title of the tool	NEFIKS – Index of Informal Knowledge 
Author/company	Zavod NEFIKS, Ljubljana (Slovenia)
Target groups and (pre)condition of the use	1. Everyone who acquires competences and develops a career through volunteering and non-formal education 2. Employers
Short description	<p>System of recording informally acquired knowledge and skills. NEFIks is the leading system for recording informally acquired knowledge in Slovenia, which enables the systematic collection of all formally acquired knowledge and competences confirmed by organisations. The purpose is mainly to help young volunteers in career development and employment. The vision of the development of NEFIks goes in the direction that informally acquired knowledge in youth employment becomes equivalent to the formal one, which young people prove with NEFIks.</p> <p>Supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Public Administration.</p>
Language(s)	Slovene
URL	https://nefiks.si/
Links to instructional videos	<p>Instructions how to use NEFIks - Guide to e-NEFIks https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9EJfTRtjg&list=PLHCZXxUg9HWWxxXVnaEd-FplihUXpX8Pn (Slovene)</p> <p>Video - Career development of young people in the post-Covid-19 period https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrkwgN2Nd2w (in Slovene)</p>


<p>Title of the tool</p>	<p>NäytönPaikka - A Chance to show your Skills</p> 
<p>Author/company</p>	<p>NäytönPaikka-service Miikkael Ringman, Development designer Suomen Setlementtiliitto ry, Helsinki</p>
<p>Target groups and (pre)condition of the use</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unemployed, youth, volunteers 2. educational-, housing-, substance abuse- and mental health -services.
<p>Short description</p>	<p>NäytönPaikka - service is a free of charge, customer oriented and resource-based tool, which empowers and helps a person to reflect on their life comprehensively from different perspectives. With the tools available at the service – such as a life situation mapping-out-tool, a timeline-tool and a network-map – the users of the service can take a closer look at the strengths, challenges, threats and possibilities. Moreover, the user can choose to make them visible to their personal support network. Simultaneously, the service provides workers with a complete and versatile way of customer oriented and professional work against marginalization and in addition to support inclusion, growth and empowerment. The service is widely used around Finland, for example within employment-, youth-, educational-, housing-, substance abuse- and mental health-services.</p> <p>NäytönPaikka -service is a personal tool, which helps you to take a closer look at your own life. You have different kinds of tools in use, such as a network-map, timeline and a ready-made CV-form. You can save your various information to the service and edit them whenever you want. You may also share some of your information to the workers/professionals/support persons, if you want to.</p> <p>You can use the service by registering free of charge. Under the navigation Link Communications online one can find the Free Software: (https://www.ilmaishjelmat.fi/)</p>
<p>Language(s)</p>	<p>English, Finnish, Swedish</p>
<p>URL</p>	<p>https://naytonpaikka.fi/en/linkit/</p>

<p>Title of the tool</p>	<p>Kompetenznachweis Hessen – Competence statement Hessen</p> 
<p>Author/company</p>	<p>Government of the State of Hessen, Germany</p>
<p>Target groups and (pre)condition of the use</p>	<p>Volunteers who want to get a validation about their competences acquired in voluntary work.</p> <p>-> Registration required -> Free use</p>
<p>Short description</p>	<p>This is a very easy and simple to use tool: The German Länder offer validation tools of acquired competences through their volunteering homepages. This is the corresponding page of the Land of Hessen. If a volunteer engages at least 80 hours a year, s/he can get a certificate of competence from the organisation s/he is involved with. Or volunteers can quickly and easily create a certificate of competences themselves. For it to be valid, it must be signed by the responsible organisation.</p> <p>The certificate describes skills and qualifications that have been acquired or used in the course of volunteering (for example, teamwork and communication skills). It documents how a volunteer has developed through volunteering.</p>
<p>Language(s)</p>	<p>German</p>
<p>URL</p>	<p>https://www.deinehrenamt.de/kompetenznachweis</p>


Title of the tool	<p>ValCoVol – Validation of Competences acquired in Volunteering</p> 
Author/company	<p>This tool was an outcome of an ERASMUS+ project which was implemented by a partnership of six institutions from Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Italy and the Czech Republic.</p>
Target groups and (pre)condition of the use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Volunteers who need a meaningful document about their expertise for entering the paid employment market ➤ Organisations which work with volunteers and have to issue certificates on their activities ➤ Employers who want to learn what kind of expertise job applicants have gained in voluntary environments and tasks <p>-> Free use</p>
Short description	<p>Volunteers often have the difficulty of communicating an employer about what knowledge and key qualifications they have acquired. Employers, in turn, often find it difficult to identify the knowledge gained when reading credentials of volunteer organisations, since these certificates usually describe the activities done, but not the acquired competences.</p> <p>ValCoVol offers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An overview of projects, initiatives and methods for the validation of non-formal and informal learning achieved through volunteering. At the same time, instruments, models, and systems are identified that validate the key competencies acquired in an honorary post. You will find these projects, initiatives and methods for validation in a collection 39 good practices here. ▪ An online interactive forum for networking, exchange of experience and good practice, and supporting ideas, foster exchange and assist initiatives that contribute to the European society as a whole. Here you have access to several online interactive fora. ▪ An easily adaptable template (“Key Competences Template”) in six European languages for volunteer organisations to identify competences of volunteers rather than describe volunteer work. This template gives employers meaningful information on competences of job applicants gained in voluntary work. ▪ A summary of findings in a “White Book for recognition of competences acquired through volunteering” that gives an overview about the situation of the specific project environment in the partners’ countries, and presents the initiatives, projects and materials with explanations in all languages of the partnership.
Language(s)	<p>English, German, Slovak, Slovene, Italian</p>
URL	<p>https://valcovol.eu</p>


Title of the tool	<p>Engagementnachweis Baden Württemberg</p>  <p>ENGAGEMENTNACHWEIS BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG</p>
Author/company	Government of Baden-Württemberg
Target groups and (pre)condition of the use	<p>The certificate of voluntary commitment can be obtained by all citizens who are regularly or temporarily (e.g. through project work) engaged in voluntary or civic work in an organisation, association, institution or municipality. Those who are committed, contact the office where they perform or have performed their voluntary work.</p> <p>-> Registration required -> Free use</p>
Short description	<p>The state-wide Baden-Württemberg Certificate of Commitment documents volunteer and civic involvement and serves to recognize voluntary achievements. In addition, the proof of commitment makes visible and certifies important social and professional competencies that volunteers have used and acquired during their commitment.</p> <p>For professional activities or when applying for training, study, or job, the key qualifications acquired in the commitment, such as teamwork or communication skills, can be decisive.</p> <p>Volunteers receive proof of commitment from their organisation, club, association, or municipality in which they were or are active. The proof of commitment can be issued by those organisations that are authorized to do so by five ministries of Baden-Württemberg.</p>
Language(s)	German
URL	https://www.engagementnachweis-bw.de/


Title of the tool	You Rock 
Author/company	Yourock Online Ltd (UK)
Target groups and (pre)condition of the use	Young job seekers who want to demonstrate their voluntary work Free use
Short description	<p>YouRock reflects building a dynamic job profile, showing a full range of skills, pulling them together, polishing them up and presenting them in a dynamic and attractive way. It helps users to identify their professional work skills; to build a dynamic profile showing their primary skill groups; and to create a portfolio of online content showing their skills.</p> <p>Once the user creates an account, s/he will start with an empty diamond divided into six parts: creative, communication, organisation, leadership, analytical and technical. As activities are added to the skills section of the profile, bubbles will start to appear below the diamond. Depending on the number of activities and skills, the dominant skill areas will move to the top and the diamond will change depending on the user's experience. If activities involving creative skills are added, the creative part of the diamond will be filled with skill bubbles. If activities requiring communication skills are added, the communication part of the diamond will be filled with skill bubbles, and so on. The bubbles can be displayed by clicking on the different sections of the diamond. The profile will contain a 'diamond' of these skills groups, endorsed with individual skills.</p> <p>This tool also offers the option to block a skill if the user doesn't want it applies to give an accurate picture and not 'skill collecting'.</p> <p>YouRock provides a summary of primary competencies that we put into practice in our day-to-day lives, making it an ideal complement to the CRISIS Identification Tool Certifications, which provide an assessment of the soft skills that are key to coping in crisis situations.</p>
Language(s)	All languages
URL	https://www.yourockjobs.org/en/user


Title of the tool	Modelo Curriculum 
Author/company	SUBSTRATE AI S.A.
Target groups and (pre)condition of the use	Job-seekers, graduates and young professionals. Free use
Short description (<p>A resume is the first impression of you so it is important to know how to structure it in a way that best fits and showcases your experience and accomplishments. Besides to acquired and improved competences it is essential to know how to communicate them.</p> <p>Before starting to write the CV, it is essential to have a clear idea of the information to be given, as well as the order in which it is to be given. The CV should present the information concisely, well explained and without beating around the bush.</p> <p>Modelo curriculum is a helpful website containing employment and vocational orientation with a wide variety of examples and specific guidelines that are very useful when we start to create our own CV for the first time or we want to change our career.</p> <p>The user will find, with no registration required, several resources as examples of different professional curricula as functional, chronologic or combined models.</p> <p>ModeloCurriculum also offers recommendations and strategies to prepare an interview, the most frequently asked questions and answers on job interviews to be prepared, the red flags that are often presented, recommendations on what to do and what not to do in the job interview and recommendations on how to follow up on the offer after the interview.</p> <p>The users will find also guides and models to elaborate a Portfolio and a cover letter, and recent articles about self-promotion.</p>
Language(s)	Spanish
URL	https://www.modelocurriculum.net/blog

3.3 Content management and other “technical” tools

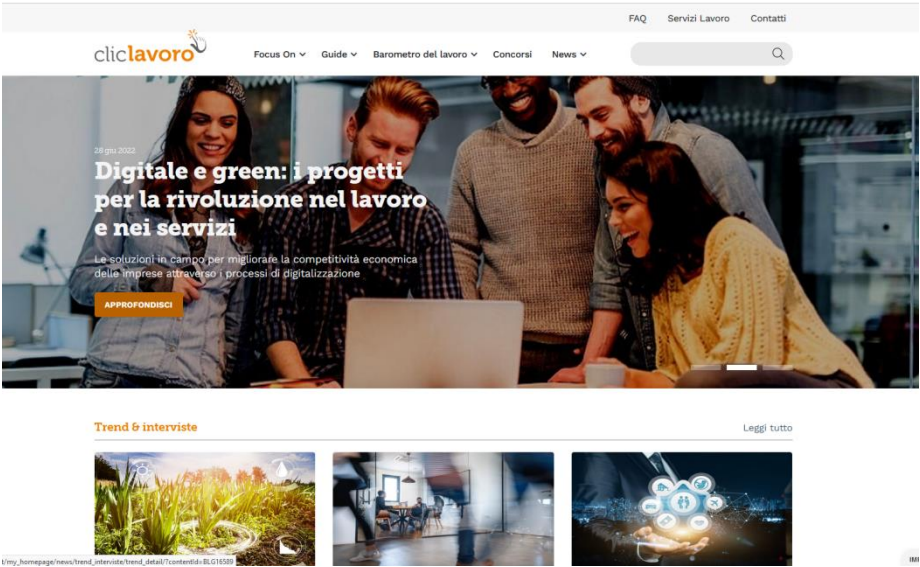
Title of the tool	Quick Response (QR) Code for Business and Personal Card  QR Code Generator <small>CREATE YOUR QR CODE FOR FREE</small>
Author/company	Denso Wave Incorporated
Target groups and (pre)condition of the use	Anyone who wants a business card (Entrepreneurs, artists,...)
Short description	<p>"QR" stands for "Quick Response", which refers to the instant access to the information hidden in the Code. They are gaining popularity because of their versatility. You can use them to gather feedback to improve your products or services, increase customer engagement with images or videos, or even promote your business via events and coupons. All of these can be done with just a single scan!</p> <p>For many years, QR codes were seen simply as a way for companies to share information in a contactless way. Then came the pandemic and with it, the accelerated digitization of industries and a significant rise in the adoption of QR Codes. We're now seeing brands and businesses of all sizes building QR Codes into their marketing strategy and creating new ways to interact with customers and audiences. As you consider your strategy for the rapidly-evolving QR Code landscape, here are some key insights to help you understand the developments coming down the line so you can successfully build them into your marketing (networking) activities.</p> <p>The presence of a QR code is also gaining ground in the field of supply and demand of the labor market, as this very tool can be a more innovative approach to personal presentation, where a person's website, video presentation, posters, etc. can be included in the CV or/and portfolio.</p>
Language(s)	English
URL	QR code for business card: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsreVn05jFg QR code for personal use: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCc6C7Gillg QR code for Nonprofits: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSoXI0LGMEo
Links to instructional videos	COVID-19 Brought QR Codes from Niche to Mass Adoption: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-mFyCVeSG4



Title of the tool	<p>Canva</p> 
Author/company	StartUp teams Canva
Target groups and (pre)condition of the use	For anyone wanting to design anything, on your own or with others. No design experience required, and it's possible to use it for free.
Short description	<p>The Canva tool allows you to easily prepare graphics for various documents, presentations, Facebook photos, infographics and many other matters where you need quick and easy design. Canva contains many ready-made templates and motifs that can be assembled into an attractive design.</p> <p>What is Canva? It is an online tool that allows users to choose from hundreds of professionally designed layouts or create their own projects from start to finish for free. Canva makes it easy to design presentations, posters, infographics, social media posts, business cards and much more. This online tool is suitable for occasional home use as well as for companies that need new and well-designed visual materials on a daily basis.</p> <p>The Canva application will be of great help to all those who are not design experts, but it would still be useful in your work if you could prepare at least some basic graphic elements in a quick and easy way.</p> <p>You can use Canva to enhance your stories or your feed posts. Canva offers loads of design features in a really easy-to-use format, allowing anyone to become a champion designer. One of the best things about using Canva is that you can access plenty of templates, fonts, and design elements. This allows you to make your personal presentation really stand out, and create a clear and consistent identity to help others (users) recognize your content.</p>
Language(s)	All languages
URL	https://www.canva.com/ https://www.canva.com/careers/
Links to instructional videos	<p>Canva for beginners: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJSgUx5K6V0</p> <p>How to create an impressive portfolio in Canva: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sna3VzDoQGY</p>


Title of the tool	DoYouBuzz 
Author/company	DoYouBuzz, Inc., a Delaware corporation
Target groups and (pre)condition of the use	<p>Job-seekers, volunteers, unexperienced graduates, young professionals, career changers.</p> <p>Free and payable subscription.</p>
Short description	<p>Importing the LinkedIn data, DoYouBuzz offers a CV of the classics, but modern, and with a link so that everyone can see it online. It can be downloaded in pdf, word and open office and shared on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Doyoubuzz gives numerous customization options.</p> <p>DoYouBuzz offers different types of CV templates to facilitate the aspects and information to be highlighted. There are CV templates for professionals, beginners, inexperienced students, career changers and seniors.</p> <p>After creating an account, with the free version, the user can choose among several templates with information and guidance for writing the CV section by section. It has a simple interface with a variety of design options that can be customised by adjusting the location of sections, colours, font size, etc. This service also offers t Guidelines to facilitate and support the creation of the CV.</p>
Language(s)	English, French, Italian, German
URL	http://www.doyoubuzz.com/us/
Links to instructional videos	<p>e.g. How to set up DoYouBuzz</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYQL8i3AY0</p>

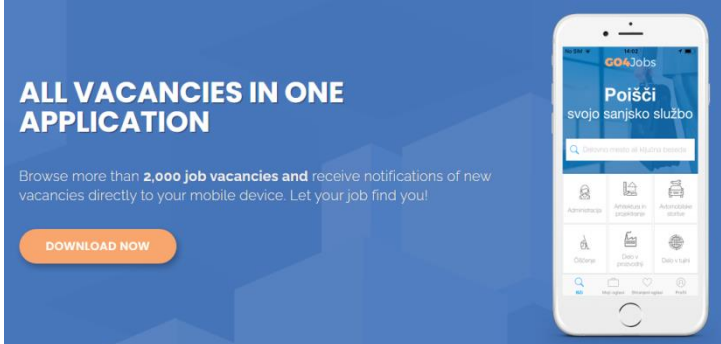
Title of the tool	<p>Resume Builder CV Maker App</p> 
Author/company	Magnetic Lab
Target groups and (pre)condition of the use	Job-seekers, volunteers, graduates, young professionals, career changers.
Short description	<p>"Resume Builder - Professional CV Maker helps you to create professional resumes that support your career ambitions' goals, covers job descriptions that describe your skills.</p> <p>Resume Builder - Professional CV Maker app created for Experienced/Fresher's (First job application / Entry Level job seekers) and Experts/Veterans because the app also has advanced features. Currently, the app provides more than 8+ professional formats/resume templates which are suitable for interns, fresher, and experienced job seekers.</p> <p>Resume Builder - Professional CV Maker includes following sections :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - objective - contact information, photograph - academic information - work experience - projects - skills, strength, certifications, hobbies, area of interests, and curricular activities - industrial exposures - references - declarations
Language(s)	English
URL	https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.mlab.resumebuilder&hl=en_US&gl=US


3.4 Other helpful tools


<p>Title of the tool</p>	<p>CLICLAVORO</p> 
<p>Author/company</p>	<p>ANPAL – National Agency for Labour Policies</p>
<p>Target groups and (pre)condition of use</p>	<p>Individuals, Training Institutions, Businesses Access is free</p>
<p>Short description (</p>	<p>A tool available to citizens, employers and public and private operators to make full use of the services for matching job demand and supply, connected with the Clic Lavoro Nazionale system. It can be used by business to promote their search for new employees and by individuals to promote their profile in the labour market.</p> <p>The portal was created to facilitate the intermediation between labour supply and demand and collaboration between businesses, education, training and social policies. Through the portal, citizens and businesses can publish applications and job offers and do research to get in touch with those looking for or offering work through the direct link to the services. The site also offers a series of additional services (part relating to mandatory communications; connection to EURES; flexi-database; list of Italians abroad, etc.), surveys and statistics, information on public competitions.</p>
<p>Language(s)</p>	<p>Italian</p>
<p>URL</p>	<p>https://www.cliclavoro.gov.it/</p>

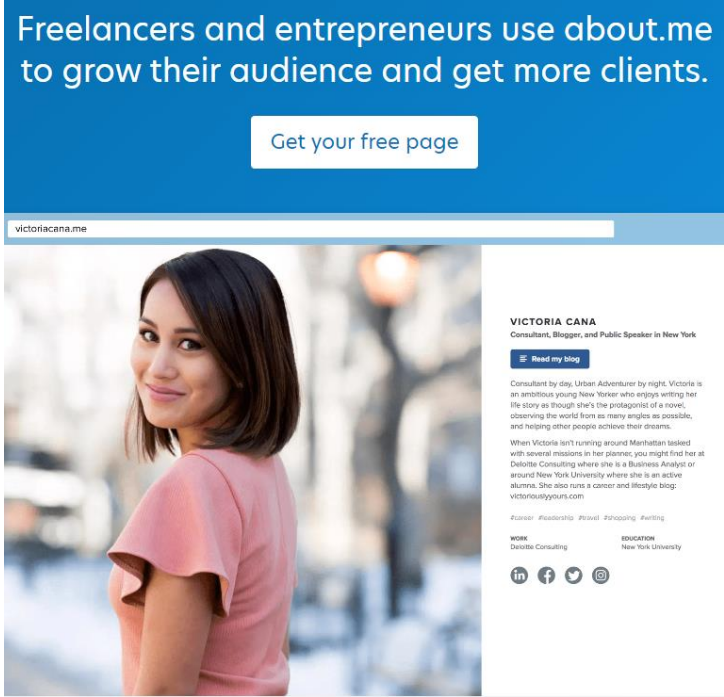
<p>Title of the tool</p>	<p>ATLANTE DEL LAVORO</p>  <p>Le Qualificazioni nel Repertorio Nazionale</p> <p>116 Secondo ciclo di istruzione</p> <p>29 Istruzione superiore</p> <p>4951 Formazione professionale regionale e IFTS</p> <p>CONSULTA ATLANTE E QUALIFICAZIONI</p>  <p>Le Qualificazioni contenute nel Repertorio Nazionale sono organizzate in tre sezioni:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Secondo ciclo di istruzione che contiene le Qualificazioni di istruzione e formazione generale e dell'Istruzione e Formazione Professionale (IeFP) > Istruzione superiore che contiene le Qualificazioni dell'Università, dell'Alta Formazione Artistica, Musicale e Coreutica (AFAM), dell'Istruzione Tecnica Superiore (ITS) > Formazione professionale regionale e IFTS che contiene le qualificazioni della formazione regionale, del Quadro Nazionale delle Qualificazioni Regionali (QNQR) e dell'Istruzione e Formazione Tecnica Superiore (IFTS)
<p>Author/company</p>	<p>INAPP (https://www.inapp.org/) National Agency for Public Policies</p>
<p>Target groups and (pre)condition of use</p>	<p>Individuals, trainers, training organisations, businesses. Access is free.</p>
<p>Short description</p>	<p>Atlante describes the content of the work in terms of activities and the products and services potentially available in the performance of the same through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 economic - professional sectors (SEP) • 1 sector e common area: processes to support the production of goods and services • The SEPs and the common area are described by processes, process sequences, areas of activity (ADA). <p>The ADA is the main information unit of Atlante and contains the description of the individual activities that constitute it, the expected products and services as well as references to the statistical codes of the ISTAT classifications of economic activities and professions.</p> <p>Specifically, for each ADA the following can be consulted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the list of individual activities (minimum 4, maximum 12) - products and services and their performance (expected results) - the exemplified cases of the contents of the ADA (case sheets) - references to the ISTAT codes of the 2011 Classification of Professions - references to the ISTAT codes of economic activities (ATECO) 2007. <p>The Work Atlas aims at favouring the exploration of the professional, training and life experiences of people in support of orientation processes in the field of services for employability and lifelong learning. It gives a common framework for institutions and businesses related to work profiles, skills and competences.</p>
<p>Language(s)</p>	<p>Italian</p>
<p>URL</p>	<p>https://atlantelavoro.inapp.org/atlante_repertori.php</p>


<p>Title of the tool</p>	<p>MojeDelo.com (Mobile Application)</p> 
<p>Author/company</p>	<p>Styria Digital Marketplaces d.o.o.</p>
<p>Target groups and (pre)condition of the use</p>	<p>Job seekers, volunteers, unemployed, people who want to change careers</p>
<p>Short description</p>	<p>MojeDelo.com is the largest and most recognizable career and employment portal in Slovenia. It is the first (top of mind) choice of users who are ready to take the next step in their career path. For more than 18 years, the portal has been recognized as a professional and effective partner in the search for new talents by the majority of Slovenian companies, for which it develops tools and training that best meet the modern challenges of personnel management and recruitment. With the professional survey Employer Reputation, the success of investments in employer branding is measured and successfully matched with the right candidates.</p> <p>With the MojeDelo.com mobile application, career management is easier. Edit personal career profile and the application will offer jobs that suit experience and desires of the applicant. Browse and search the largest database of vacancies in Slovenia. Set up an e-reminder that will deliver vacancies to personal e-mail addresses daily according to one's criteria.</p>
<p>Language(s)</p>	<p>Slovene</p>
<p>URL</p>	<p>https://www.mojedelo.com/app</p>

<p>Title of the tool</p>	<p>GO4Jobs</p> 
<p>Author/company</p>	<p>Go4Jobs.d.o.o.</p>
<p>Target groups and (pre)condition of the use</p>	<p>Anyone looking for a new career challenge, volunteers, employers</p>
<p>Short description</p>	<p>The career portal Optius.com has partnered with the developers of the mobile application GO4 Jobs.</p> <p>The GO4 Jobs application combines all vacancies in Slovenia. With GO4 Jobs, everything exists in one place. The selection of the field of work and the setting of the location ensure that the application is fully adapted to each user, who can locate only those ads that interest him most. All job seeker information remains completely hidden from employers until the person agrees to share it with them. As soon as a suitable vacancy is found, the application (system) sends you a confirmation email. Only with the confirmation of the job seeker is the application forwarded to the recruiter. In the case that the criteria for the position also meet the recruiter, he will arrange for contact.</p> <p>GO4 Jobs is completely free for job seekers, all you have to do is fill in the application form! Nearly 20.000 different companies have already searched for personnel in the database. So far, Go4Jobs has published around 140,000 job advertisements.</p> <p>Companies can become partners, employers are also offered paid advertising space when looking for new staff.</p> <p>Available for Android and iOS devices. The application is available in the APP Store and Google Play.</p>
<p>Language(s)</p>	<p>Slovene</p>
<p>URL</p>	<p>https://www.go4.jobs/</p>
<p>Links to instructional videos</p>	<p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsqLjJjNJlw (in Dutch)</p>

Title of the tool	FlexClip 
Author/company	PearlMountain
Target groups and (pre)condition of the use	Personal and professional use. Free and payable
Short description	<p>FlexClip is a simple yet powerful online video maker that allows to create professional and promotional videos and stories in high quality. FlexClip's functions are excellent in the field of video editing, here are some of them describing what it can be used for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Video editing: is an online platform for digital video editing that accepts various types of extensions. - Watermarking: you can watermark your edits to promote your personal logo. - Voice editing: not only can you do video editing, you can also edit audio so that you can implement it later in your videos. - Create animated slideshows and screen recordings to make your own video tutorials. <p>The features of this editing software are numerous and easy to manipulate to create high quality professional portfolio videos. It offers an extensive collection of text animations, elements, transitions, etc., predesigned text animations and styles, dynamic vector elements, transitions and overlays, free stock resources of music, videos and high-quality royalty free photos.</p> <p>Flexclip uses a simple interface to edit videos addressed to users without previous experience in using other programs. It offers several tools to effortlessly cut, trim and customize videos, or find related professional clips for multiple edits.</p> <p>FlexClip gives the option to save the video project to an online account and you can continue editing in any other device. After creating the video, it can be easily shared via a link or post on social media.</p>
Language(s)	Multilingual (English, German, Portuguese, Italian, French, Chinese, Japanese)
URL	https://www.flexclip.com
Links to instructional videos	English: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=video&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwizlPpg1uz4AhUB8xoKHfuZBVkQtwJ6BAGQEAI&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DC8mzVU5aholI&usg=AOvVaw2YSD7FcbbxcseOYrsjnAr3 Spanish: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BG2ObyJaQgI

Title of the tool	Karrierebibel 
Author/company	Founded by the journalist, author, and speaker Jochen Mai supported by an editorial team
Target groups and (pre)condition of the use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban professionals between the ages of 18 and 58. • Job-seekers or people who are looking for a change in their professional life • Graduates and young professionals, from specialists and executives, Decision-makers from Human Resources Management • Influencers <p>-> Free use</p>
Short description	<p>This is a German blog platform about planning and improving a career with many detailed practical tips for application, job, labour law, finances, self-employment, vocational education, study or psychological support. The platform also deals with the topic how to implement competencies of voluntary work in a CV or job application.</p> <p>The Career Bible is a detailed guide for job and career topics and has around 4000 specialist articles as well as more than 500 templates, checklists and tests. A job exchange platform with job offers is also accessible via the link.</p>
Language(s)	German
URL	https://karrierebibel.de https://karrierebibel.de/ehrenamt-lebenslauf/
Links to instructional videos	<p>Some of the articles are also published in short videos which are lively lectures of interesting job topics.</p> <p>The site also offers a video archive with Interviews, mini-keynotes, guidelines and guest contributions from experts: https://karrierebibel.de/tv</p>

<p>Title of the tool</p>	<p>About me</p>  <p>Create a page to present who you are and what you</p>
<p>Author/company</p>	<p>About.me, Inc.</p>
<p>Target groups and (pre)condition of the use</p>	<p>Job-seekers and self-employed</p> <p>Free and payable subscription</p>
<p>Short description</p>	<p>About.me is an online hosting service that allows creating a personal website to group all your activity, social networks and profiles scattered on other websites.</p> <p>One of its many uses is that it can serve as a presentation of your profile as a dynamic business card improving your personal brand. This service gives the possibility of linking and unifying all the social network profiles in one place and under the same URL. It is a perfect tool to present all your profiles, your work, your professional portfolio (Facebook, Google+, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Twitter, Tumblr, Youtube, etc.). In this way, anyone who shows interest in your profile will be able to have all your information on this platform. For example: a recruiter, a client, a company, a job contact...</p> <p>Among the tools and features offered: the possibility to customize the background; a simple and friendly interface to set up a complete profile in minutes; to display your online presence through visual icons; it offers an email signature which is a snapshot of your page that is added to every email message; and a Spotlight Button to help visitors take action on what's most important (link to your podcasts, videos, portfolio, etc.).</p>
<p>Language(s)</p>	<p>English</p>
<p>URL</p>	<p>https://about.me</p>

<p>Title of the tool</p>	<p>Recognition of non-formal knowledge</p> 
<p>Author/company</p>	<p>Adult Education Institute of Republic of Slovenia</p>
<p>Target groups and (pre)condition of the use</p>	<p>Everyone who wants to confirm the competences of informal learning, especially acquired while performing voluntary work</p>
<p>Short description</p>	<p>In the Slovenian education system, adult knowledge is valued and recognized for two purposes: to participate in formal education and to obtain national vocational qualifications (NPK). ACS supports a third purpose with development projects: documenting and evaluating the knowledge and experience of adults with the aim of ensuring greater flexibility in the labour market, personal growth and the development of key competences (e.g. soft skills from volunteering).</p> <p>The system follows international professional recommendations in the development and implementation of the process of evaluating informally and occasionally acquired adult knowledge. The result of the evaluation process is a portfolio in physical or electronic form, the opinion of an expert in adult education on the individual's competences, a plan for further education, employment, career development. Activities are described in a comprehensive way in a professional manual. The E-portfolio is accessible at: https://eportfolijo.acs.si/</p> <p>The web portal 'Evaluation and recognition of non-formal knowledge' is available through evaluation tools at: https://vpnz.acs.si/</p>
<p>Language(s)</p>	<p>Slovene, English</p>
<p>URL</p>	<p>E-Portfolio accessible at: https://eportfolijo.acs.si/ The web portal 'Evaluation and recognition of non-formal knowledge' is available through evaluation tools at: https://vpnz.acs.si/ ACS link: https://www.acs.si/podrocja-dela/vrednotenje/</p>
<p>Links to instructional videos</p>	<p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=adgTRvUJ_XI</p>



3.5 Video CV

The following section will outline the main practical steps and provide useful tips for creating a successful video CV.

3.5.1 What is a video CV

Video CVs are becoming popular in working environments. However, video CVs do not replace traditional CVs, but rather enhance job applications by providing employers with more insight into what an individual has to offer and shows some of the soft skills that a person possesses, such as communication and presentation skills in realistic ways. Furthermore it can create a lasting first impression of the job applicant. A traditional CV outlines skills, qualifications and experience, whereas a video CV shows light into your personality and shows skills that cannot be seen in a traditional CV. Moreover, having taken the time to prepare a video CV shows to the employers that you are prepared to go the extra mile to success and that you are not afraid to put extra effort into a task.

The video CV will be included in your portfolio. Depending on the employment that you target, in the same way that you will make several CVs adapted to the need of the moment, based on your portfolio, you can make several video CVs.

3.5.2 How to make a video CV

Keep it short. It is advised to make a short video CV (VCV): no more than 2-3 minutes.

Content: Develop your VCV like a story, with a structured beginning, middle and end. Script it before you begin, but don't just read staccato from an autocue. Don't forget to introduce yourself properly at the start of the video and explain why you've produced the clip. Leave contact details at the end of the video, too – email address, phone number, and any professional social media sites you have.

Body language is also important. Maintain eye contact with the camera and have a happy, smiling disposition.

It is important to dress as though you're attending an interview. Wear a suit if you are seeking a formal position for which you will be expected to dress formally, but wear casual clothes if the environment you are seeking to join is more relaxed and creative.

Practicalities: Before you send off your application to an employer, try to get objective, honest feedback from a friend, family member or colleague. It's a good idea to enclose a paper CV too, should anyone want your details for quick reference.

Technical considerations: However you decide to produce your video, make sure the video is clear, well-lit and in focus.

While a shaky mobile phone recording might not be the best production method, you don't need to pay a lot for video editing software. Free software can do just the job these days. As there are constantly new solutions popping up, we recommend that you start a short Internet search to find a suitable product.



3.5.3 What are the common mistakes to avoid?

Filming in an untidy environment. The environment should be tidy and professional and the background should be either clear or work related or professional like an office space or a bookshelf or a computer etc.

Not speaking clearly. You have to communicate clearly your ideas like when talking in a professional environment. Avoid mumbling and use professional language.

Shuffling paper. Avoid holding paper notes. This gives the impression that you are not able to present out of notes which is important when you try to demonstrate presentation skills.

Having a script 'off camera' that you refer to while recording your video. It is really obvious if you look away from the camera to read notes and it creates a bad impression showing that you cannot speech off notes for a few minutes.

Try to approach recording your video CV in the same way you would a face-to-face meeting. Don't do anything you wouldn't do in an interview.

3.5.4 Tips to create an attractive video CV

Make sure it is appropriate! Don't just create a video resume because you can, create one because it is relevant to the job you want to do. If you're applying for a role in the online, media, social or creative professions, then it's more likely that a decent video resume will have the desired effect, i.e. getting you invited for an interview. Don't send a video resume to a more traditional type of company that won't "get it." You might do your chances more harm than good.

Work from a script (but avoid reading directly from it)! Once you've finalized what exactly you want to cover, plan the main points you'd like to convey and jot down clear ways to say them.

Writing your ideas ahead of time encourages intention and clarity—and helps eliminate run-on sentences and excessive "ums" and "likes."

Do not just read your CV! The whole point of a video presentation is to offer a potential employer greater insight into you than a traditional resume can, so just reading aloud the contents of your CV is a waste of everyone's time. Use the video to help the employer get a sense of not just what you have achieved, but what you are capable of achieving in the future and show skills that is very difficult to show in a normal CV, such as communication skills. Tell them why you would be the right person to hire and what you can do for them. You can, however, highlight particularly relevant info from your resume. Focus on your experience and skill set (and possible education/training) especially relevant to the position.

Keep it short! Keep your video resume short and think of your video resume as your own personal teaser trailer. Make sure your video is clear and audible. Employers want to see you and hear what you have to say! Reduce background noise, choose a well-lit setting, and avoid having the camera pointing up your nose. These things sound obvious, but they can make a difference.

Shoot several takes if necessary! The beauty of an application video is that you don't have to settle on a bad take. If something went wrong or there was noise in the background or you get off track, do it again. Do it as many times as necessary until you get a perfect result.



Watch your own video! Have you ever read through a document you've just written to discover spelling errors, run-on sentences, or a few overused adjectives? The same applies to a video CV. You should watch your video for the same reason: catching mistakes. Consider having a friend check it out too—a fresh set of eyes can help notice mistakes or idiosyncrasies that you may have overlooked.

Do not be afraid to be creative! If you're opting for a video resume, then go the whole hog and make it spectacular. Be creative, whether that's with the concept of your pitch, use of humour, clever production values or brilliant editing. However, be creative, but professional. Do not deviate too much from the behaviour you would have in the workplace.

3.2.5 Equipment needed for a video CV

Camera: In order to create your own video resume, there are a few essential pieces of equipment you will need. The most essential piece of equipment will be your camera.

You don't need to spend a lot of money on a camera; most cameras now can produce a very clean image with enough light. You can use any of DSLR camera or even a smart phone camera since most smartphones shoot video in a quality high enough for the web and it works great! If you don't have access to one of these devices, ask your family or friends if they know of one you can borrow.

Lights: Once you have a camera picked out, the next piece of gear highly recommended is lights. Natural room lighting can work in some cases, but for the best results you should find a room with no windows so you can have complete control over the lighting setup.

Microphone: The final piece of recommend equipment is a quality microphone or external audio recording device. For the most part, built-in audio recorders on cameras are very limited. If you're recording with a smartphone, try a lapel (clip on) mic like the Rode SmartLav. For camcorders or DSLR cameras with a microphone jack, you could use the TechSmith lapel mic or any other good quality mic you might have.

4 References

Cluster 1 Collaboration Skills

Soft skill	References
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5 The CRISSS partnership

The transnational CRISSS partnership consists of seven European institutions from voluntary organisations, disability institutions, youth and family guidance organisations, social partners, adult education institutions, social research centres and experts in the development of digital educational resources.

- media k GmbH > Germany (coordinator)
www.media-k.eu
- CESCOT Veneto > Italy
www.cescotveneto.it
- Wissenschaftsinitiative Niederösterreich > Austria
www.wissenschaftsinitiative.at
- ALDAIMA > Spain
www.aldaima.org
- INTEGRA INSTITUTE > Slovenia
www.eu-integra.eu
- QUALED > Slovakia
www.qualified.net
- AKADIMAIKO DIADIKTYO – GUNET > Greece
www.gunet.gr

