Volunteering and Lifelong Learning in Universities in Europe

Final Report   Public Part

Project information

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Beneficiary organisation:		University of Liverpool, UK
Project coordinator:		Carol Stewart
Project coordinator organisation:		University of Liverpool, UK
Project coordinator telephone number:		44 151 794 3640
Project coordinator email address:		cmes1@liv.ac.uk

Executive Summary

The Value Network was conceived as a way of encouraging universities to recognise and harness the rich learning that volunteering experiences can develop, and of encouraging the volunteering sector to think of universities as a resource and potential partner in the development of volunteers.

Beginning in October 2008, the project the Network brought together representatives from the 2 sectors to share ideas and models of working together, and to explore the potential for developing new university lifelong learning opportunities (ULLL) tailored and targeted for the volunteering sector. As the Value national reports on volunteering – university interaction have shown, there are some excellent collaborative practices in place across Europe and it is hoped that Value has inspired colleagues to learn from these and develop new and wider partnerships.

The partnership provided a forum for the exchange of current practice and development of new methodologies. Geographically it represented both member states (12) and 1 candidate country (Turkey). There was also strong representation in Value from the former Communist countries of Eastern Europe. Partners brought a diverse range of expertise and experience – Universities brought their expertise and experience in the development of flexible accreditation and pedagogic structures and voluntary organisations their sophisticated and wide-ranging engagement with EU citizens from every walk of life irrespective of background or educational attainment

In practical terms, the Value workplan included a programme of meetings and individual work. The whole Network met on 4 occasions with partners working also in sub-groups to explore themes of particular relevance and importance to lifelong learning and volunteering in Europe, that is: Older Volunteers as Learners, Citizenship, Intercultural Dialogue and Employability. The Network was deliberately constructed in such as way so as to enable partners to make both collective and individual inputs.

Value also developed an online resource base which includes materials:

- *National (Country) Reports* - providing an overview of University- Volunteering collaboration in the provision of ULLL opportunities
- Details of *experts on ULLL-VO cooperation* which enables users of the Value website to benefit from other individuals' / organisations' experiences
- A *bibliography* which refers users to relevant books, publications, articles, reports etc.
- Edited *web references* which provide links to European and International websites
- A *glossary of terms* used in volunteering – university interaction. This builds on the work of the MOVE project in this area
- *Case studies* providing brief "at a glance" overviews of current practice.
- *Papers and presentations* from the final conference and *useful presentations* from Network meetings

Each sub-group also produced a report on its work and a wide range of discussion documents and resources on its individual webpage.

The culmination of the Network's work was the final conference in Ankara, Turkey which incorporated plenary inputs from invited experts, a wide range of interactive workshops (from both partners and invited stakeholders) and a World Cafe which generated high level debate on the aims and aspirations of the Value network. There were 93 delegates registered for the

conference.

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1.   Project Objectives

The overall aim of the Network was to inspire and encourage universities and the volunteering sector to work together to develop University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) opportunities for volunteers and volunteering organisation staff. This means the provision of learning opportunities that respond to the complex learning that volunteering brings about and to the diverse range of individualised aspirations of learner volunteers.

The Network community comprised i) representatives of Universities: staff with responsibility for adult education (primarily located in centres for lifelong learning) and ii) representatives from volunteering organisations such as volunteer centres/bureaux, volunteering research organisations and local organisations, in a variety of sectors, which use volunteers.

Value's operational objectives were to:

1) organise 4 Network meetings - providing a forum for the personalised exchange of knowledge and experience and the presentation of external expertise.

2) organise the work of 4 sub-groups, each investigating 4 themes key to lifelong learning and volunteering in Europe: Older Volunteer as Learners, Citizenship, Intercultural Dialogue and Employability.

3) produce 12 reports - each providing an overview of ULLL- volunteering interaction in countries represented in the partnership

4) build a web based resource kit to be used as a support tool (within and outside the network) for development of activity of this kind.

5) Disseminate and exploit the work of the network, and to inspire i) the volunteering sector to think of universities as a learning resource and i) universities to recognise volunteering as the rich learning experience that it undoubtedly is.

Meeting these operational targets has impacted in the following ways:

Network members have:

- learnt from each other through both formal and informal discussion at meetings

- added to their knowledge base through the individual work they carried out in producing reports and researching resources for the Network website. Importantly, this also added to the intellectual capital of their organisations

- developed bi-lateral working relationships which can develop into formal cooperation – both at national and cross-border level

- through sub-group work, explored both theoretical and practical approaches to key ULLL themes

- made new national and regional contacts in both sectors through dissemination and exploitation work.

Staff in other Universities and volunteering organisations now:

- have access to the Value resource base which incorporates over 200 core resource items (bibliographic references web links and expert contacts) as well as case studies and a glossary of terms. This is in addition to the national country reports on ULLL-volunteering interaction and the sub group webpages which contain a wealth of themed resource materials. The resources cover 18 different languages.

- have access to the experience/expertise of Value experts though contact details on the Value website

- have participated in discussion about ULLL-volunteering issues at a range of events. Amongst others, these include:

  - EUCEN conference (SE, Nov 09)
  - UALL conference (UK, Mar 10)
  - CEV symposium (Dec 10)
  - EUCEN conference (ES, May 2011)
  - Grundtvig conference (PL, Nov,11)
  - Value conference (TR, Jun 2011)
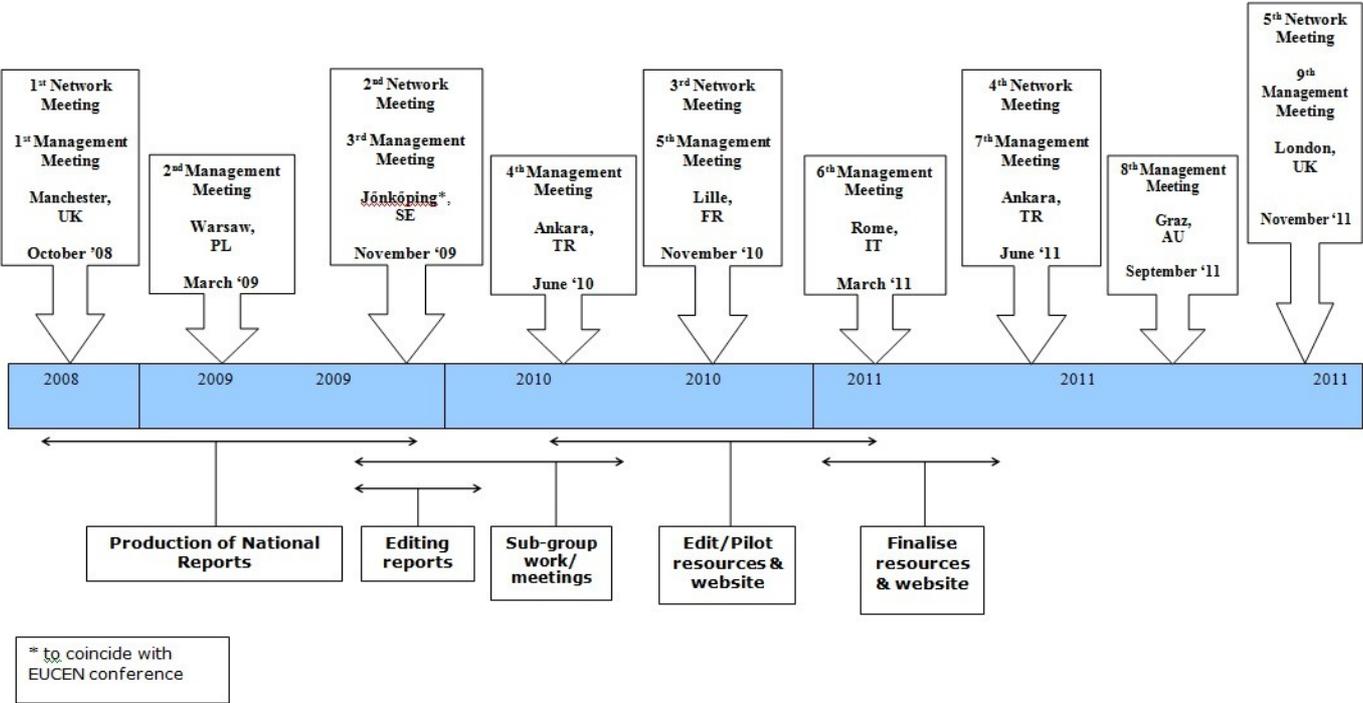 - Conference - service learning and volunteering (Oct 2011)

Overall the high-quality debate generated by the Value networking process has stimulated and encouraged network partners, and those who have come into contact with the network, to change their thinking and to consider the real potential that there is for cross- sectoral working in the development of volunteer learning

2.   Project Approach

2.1   The General Approach

The key approach to Value was to develop a balanced programme of network meetings, sub-group meetings and individual research and report writing work. Over the life of the project, there was sufficient time for the Network as a whole to come together on 5 occasions. The Network was also constructed in such a way as to enable partners to make both collective and individual inputs. The interval between full Network meetings was long enough to allow partners to meet in sub-groups, to research their sub-group theme and to research and write their country report on ULLL-volunteering interaction.

VALUE Timeline: October 2008 – November 2011

1st Network Meeting 1st Management Meeting Manchester, UK October '08	2nd Management Meeting Warsaw, PL March '09	2nd Network Meeting 3rd Management Meeting Jönköping*, SE November '09	4th Management Meeting Ankara, TR June '10	3rd Network Meeting 5th Management Meeting Lille, FR November '10	6th Management Meeting Rome, IT March '11	4th Network Meeting 7th Management Meeting Ankara, TR June '11	8th Management Meeting Graz, AU September '11	5th Network Meeting 9th Management Meeting London, UK November '11

2008	2009	2009	2010	2010	2011	2011	2011

Production of National Reports   Editing reports   Sub-group work/ meetings   Edit/Pilot resources & website   Finalise resources & website

* to coincide with EUCEN conference

U:\CPD\AAVALUE\Overviews Descriptions etc\UpdatedValue Timeline.doc   31/01/2012

An important feature of Value was the sub-groups which were devised to allow partners to come together in small groups and to exchange experiences and ideas in a less formal environment than full meetings. Not only did we aim to increase knowledge and awareness in partner organisations but we wanted to facilitate lasting relationships – particularly on a cross–sectoral basis. In this way, barriers would be broken down and the potential further collaboration maximised. The groups were allocated themes of particular interest and relevance to both the volunteering and university sectors and which contribute to debate at European level. Through meetings and individual desk research, individuals investigated and reflected on their theme, both conceptually and in terms of practice in their own countries.

Generally the groups contained both novice and more experienced partners to help transfer experience and promote learning.

Network meetings offered the opportunity for partners to share and discuss individual and sub-group work with the whole partnership, and for the Management Group and the wider partnership to discuss the direction of the Network. They also offered the opportunity to *import* expertise for the benefit of members. At network meetings 2 and 3 invited experts contributed to the workshops led by the sub-groups and the conference (network meeting 4) involved formal input from 14 invited speakers.

The overall direction and management of the project was undertaken by the co-ordinating organisation, the University of Liverpool, supported by the Management Group (4 other partners) which met 9 times during the period both at full network meetings (on 5 occasions) and independently.

Roles of individual Management Group members were allocated in such a way as to build on their experiences and expertise eg the Institute for Volunteering Research was the designated Resource Coordinator with specific responsibility for supporting the production of reports and research of resources. Other Management Group members led the sub-groups which investigated areas of particular professional interest to them.

It is important to note that representatives from 2 formal Network members (P10 SGF and P15 ILKYAR) were unsalaried volunteers in their organisations and contributed their time to VALUE on a voluntary basis. In addition, unsalaried volunteers assisted informally by providing translation services for small pieces of text (through P20, OTS and P19, CEV) and we would like to acknowledge this and thank them for their contributions.

2.2 Approaches to Quality and Evaluation

There were 3 strands to the evaluation activities/achievements which each tackled separate aspects of the Network.

i) Role of the Coordinator and Management Group

The Coordinator and the Management Group were responsible for monitoring progress towards outcomes and the ways in which partners were participating in and learning from the Network. Feedback was regularly gathered, for example through:

- Informal verbal feedback at meetings and via regular email contact
- formal feedback via a questionnaire at Network meeting 1
- Informal feedback via a "comments wall" on to which partners posted anonymous brief reflective notes about eg. things they had learnt, "spin-off" ideas, issues for further discussion (3rd network meeting, FR Nov 2010)
- Formal and informal conference feedback

ii) The Role of the Resource Piloting Group

Evaluation of the web resources was undertaken by a Resource Piloting Group (RPG) (5 partners) which worked both collectively and as individual partners. The RPG met at network meetings to review the web pages and made recommendations to the Management Group. The group made recommendations about both the design and functionality of the site and changes were made as a result.

iii) The Role of the External Evaluator

An external evaluator was appointed whose role was to evaluate Network processes with a view to identifying the key issues for consideration in the future development of the Network. The Evaluator liaised with the Contractor and reported to the Management Group. He produced 2 formal reports which are available on the Value website.

2.3   Approaches to Dissemination

All Value partners had a responsibility to disseminate the Network's work. A key strategy was to utilise the networks subsumed within the network membership ie.

- National networks for ULLL

- Partners which act as associations or federations at either European or national level ie. EUCEN, CEV, CEVnet, IVR (Volunteering England)

- National and regional volunteering networks eg Volunteering England, CSVnet

To support dissemination activity, materials were produced by the Coordinator eg   leaflets, a bookmark for distribution (both electronic and printed versions) via a range of outlets: websites, newsletter, meetings, conferences, symposia

The Value website at www.valuenetwork.org was also a key dissemination tool.

2.4   Approaches to Exploitation

There were 5 key activities in exploiting and disseminating Value:

i)   *The Value Conference, June 8th-9th 2011 Ankara, TR*

As anticipated in the proposal, the conference was a key activity in exploiting the work of Value. Post conference evaluation reveals that conference participation had a strong impact on participants and opened up new channels and directions for volunteer – ULLL collaboration, new thinking and a greater understanding of the potential of university support for volunteer learning and development. The conference was promoted widely both before and after the conference, spreading awareness beyond just those participating in the event. 400 conference flyers, 400 printed copies and 400 CD versions of the proceedings were distributed via partners and their associated networks. This is in addition to a high volume of informal email contacts with a range of organisations, networks and individuals. Marian Harkin MEP provided a video welcome to the conference (available on the website in video and in transcript format) plus the foreword to the proceedings and this assisted in raising the profile of the event

ii)   *Individual work by partners*

Work included activities such as making presentations and leading discussions at conferences and meetings, writing and publishing articles in newsletters and distributing Value materials across local regional and national networks. Although it may take time for these initial contacts to come to active fruition we are hopeful that there will be real and meaningful progress arising out of raising awareness of Value aims. Importantly many Value network members have taken up Value aims and objectives as key discussion and development issues with their regional and local contacts.

iii) *Web Based Resources and Activities*

- The Value website

The Value website is a key dissemination/exploitation platform. It is available at:

[Value Volunteering and Lifelong Learning in Universities in Europe](http://www.valuenetwork.org.uk)

(http://www.valuenetwork.org.uk)

The web pages now contain over 200 core resource items (bibliographic references web links and expert contacts) as well as case studies and a glossary of terms. This is in addition to the National country reports on ULLL- volunteering interaction and the sub group webpages which contain a wealth of resource materials

- Facebook

Value has its own Facebook page (see http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Value-Volunteering-Lifelong-Learning-in-Universities-in-Europe/172097822803031) This was set up in an attempt to reach audiences and countries beyond the Value membership and was largely experimental Although large numbers of individuals have not yet been reached, it was felt important to try to use new methods and there was some success including "likes" in non-Value countries such as, Lithuania, Ireland, Greece and Estonia and countries outside Europe such as India, Morocco and Tanzania.

iv) *Printed materials*

Value produced in printed form a variety of materials including: an introductory leaflet, a resources leaflet, a bookmark, a conference flyer, conference proceedings (with CD version) a summary of the national reports on ULLL-volunteering interaction and a summary of the sub-group thematic reports. These have been distributed widely across partner and European level networks

v) *Exploitation meeting*

By the beginning of year three it became clear that there was high potential for the exploitation of Value. This was partly because of strong interest being shown in the Value conference (due to take place in June 2011) but also because of the high quality of discussion and debate in Value network meetings and subgroups. As a result an exploitation meeting took place in November 2011 (to which all partners were invited) to reflect upon the ways in which Value had impacted upon partner organisations, to explore the longer term potential for developing the role of universities as a resource from volunteering sector and to discuss the detail of new concrete projects suggested by participants.

A rich and wide-ranging discussion took place which captured the ways in which Value has caught the imagination of the network partners and the ways in which organisations might begin to take forward Value ideas. 10 specific project proposals were also discussed in terms of approach, content, activities, timescales, target audiences and potential partners.

3.   Project Outcomes and Results

The outcomes of the Value project fell into 3 categories:

1. Meetings - including a final conference in TR in June 2011 (plus associated documents/materials).   As Value is a Network project, collective meeting/debate were a <u>substantive</u> part of its work.

2. Reports generated by partners individually and in sub-groups.

3. A website containing support resources, reports, links and references. Produced and maintained by the Coordinator, all partners contributed materials to this.

There were also a range of intangible outputs – skills, knowledge, networking etc – which have built capacity in the organisations (partners and others) which have participated in Value and its events.

1. <u>Meetings</u>

The network comprised 20 organisations which came together for meetings on five different occasions. Additionally however partners worked together in different ways:

- Small numbers ofpartners came together to work in subgroups. Each group worked autonomously and developed its own approach to its work but all produced a final report and disseminated their work to targeted organisations/institutions in their own country and beyond.
- a different mix of partners came together to work in the resources piloting group which looked at the resource base
- partners in the same country worked together to produce a national report on ULLL-volunteering interaction

In this way the partnership allowed bi- and multi-lateral relationships to develop across countries and across sectors

The mixture of large and small group working ensured sufficient opportunities for in-depth discussion and for partners to establish ongoing working relationships. The differing formats of these meetings also allowed for debate, exposure to external views and exploitation of the network (exposing external speakers and other colleagues to the network activities). All partners participated and contributed to the discussions.

The four sub-groups explored key themes for the development of ULLL and volunteering: *Employability* (Group A), *Older Volunteer Learners* (Group B), *Citizenship* (Group C), and *Intercultural Dialogue* (Group D). All sub groups members contributed data and perspectives from their own country. Because each group represented the 2 sectors, the small group allowed individuals to begin to understand, for example, different working environments, organisational cultures, sectoral language/terminology and systems.

2. <u>Reports</u>

   i)   National Reports on volunteering organisation-ULLL interaction

A key output of the Value Network was the production of national reports on volunteering organisation-ULLL interaction. The reports are available separately (as well as having been drawn together into a single document which is available on the website). A consolidated

summary has also been produced in printed and electronic format. There is one report for every country represented in the Network (except BE because the partners from this country has a specialised contribution to Value). In countries represented by 2 partners the report has been written jointly – thus reinforcing collaborative working.

The production of the reports provides a resource for learning outside the Network. It has also stimulated individual and organisational learning (both knowledge and research skills) and, by providing a focus for dialogue, encouraged Universities and volunteering organisations to make personalised links and exchange information at both national and local levels.

One of the key findings of the reports is the enormous diversity of experience across Europe. Some countries, for example, have a tradition of volunteering dating back many years; in others the activity can have cultural and political associations with enforced voluntary activity during the Communist era. Similarly, many countries have higher education systems which have started to recognise the value of practical means of learning; others have resisted such developments and maintain a focus on traditional, academic forms of assessment and education. While the National Reports highlight much innovative and good practice in linking up volunteering and ULLL, it also appears that, in some instances, there are still barriers and challenges to be overcome if such co-operation is to become more widespread.

Final versions of the reports are in English and the language of the partner country. Some reports are also available in 3rd languages eg the UK report is available 5 languages.

> ii) Sub-group Papers and Reports

In the course of their discussions, the sub-groups produced a range of resources such as discussion papers, glossaries, case studies and bibliographies. These are available on the Value website. In addition, the groups' final reports are available both separately and in a printed summary version. The web versions of the summaries are also available in the languages of the sub-group. The reports produced by the groups reflect the diversity of volunteering groups, motivations and experiences. However a common theme emerges. This is the huge potential that volunteering, supported by ULLL, has to change not only individuals but society as a whole.

3. **The Value Website**

All produced materials are available on the project website at http://www.valuenetwork.org.uk

This provides a platform for all the resources developed by the network including an extensive bibliography, a list of experts who are available to engage with enquirers, links to other relevant websites and other resources.

Each partner language has a separate web page containing a description of Value and links to documents/resources in the relevant language.

The website will be maintained as a resource beyond the life f the project.

4. **Intangible outputs**

In addition to these tangible outcomes, it is important to recognise the other results arising from Value. These include:

- Increased knowledge

Network members not only learnt about issues related to their own sector in other countries, *university* partners developed their knowledge of the volunteering world and *volunteering* partners developed their knowledge of the academic world. Partners also learnt more about their own national environment through the research work for the National Report and for web resources. This increased the overall capacity of partner organisations to work more effectively not only at national and regional level but cross-sector and cross-border.

The knowledge base generated by Value is also freely accessible to other stakeholders via the Value web site.

- Skills Development

The process of individual desk research enhanced research skills and increased awareness of the range of resources available to support ULLL development

- Networking and Cooperation processes

A variety of cross-border cooperation processes were in place in Value with different partners coming together for different purposes.

- Exchange of know-how, experience and approaches

This took place both formally and informally. Both sectors benefitted from considerably enhanced networks and more novice partners gained insight from more experienced colleagues.

4.   Partnerships

Multi-Country Working

Multi-country activities were core to the work of Value. Its networking and resource generation activities were the result of individual and collective contributions from each of its 20 partners which represented 13 countries. These were: UK, Austria, Italy, Poland, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia, Turkey, Germany, Spain and Belgium.

The partnership grew out of the fact that both volunteering organisations and universities have their own well-established sectoral networks at European level but none bringing the 2 together. Generally bi-sectoral platforms are not well represented at European level. Value therefore provides a wider forum for exchange of current practice and development of new methodologies within the provision of ULLL to volunteers.

In terms of geographical coverage, the Network represented both member states and 1 candidate country (Turkey).The final network meeting took place in Ankara, TR and was a rich learning experience for both visitors and hosts as it offered the opportunity to exchange both professional and personal cultural experiences.

There was also strong representation in Value from Eastern Europe countries – Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary and Romania. Participation from these counties brought valuable insights into the culture of volunteering and the organisation of lifelong learning in Eastern Europe, for example, the way in which volunteering has some negative associations in the former Communist states.

All meetings took place in different countries. The 2nd network meeting took place in SE within the context of a European conference (EUCEN). This provided the opportunity for partners to exchange ideas and information with colleagues from 21 countries across the EU plus the USA, Canada and China.

The European Partnership

The European *partnership* in Value manifested itself in:

- The breadth of countries represented in the partnership
- The make up of the sub-groups – all groups were multi-national and multi-sector.
- The nature of the outputs - which were representative of experiences in all partner countries
- Decisions concerning the development of the network were taken in a democratic way eg**. i)** the Resources Piloting Group recommended changes to the website structure and content and these were adopted, **ii)** the partnership commented on the profile of individual partners vis-a-vis that of the coordinator/contractor and changes were made to design features to rectify this, **iii)** partners completed a formative questionnaire at the 1st meeting to indicate their key interests and priorities and responses were taken into consideration by the Management Group
- At meetings a consensus was sought at all times
- Although the working language is English, reports produced by partners are also available in their own language. The website also has pages in each of the partner

languages, which links to materials in that language. This allows additional colleagues in partner organisations, who may not be fluent in EN, to access and feel part of Value.

Benefits outside Value

Beyond the network membership, Value's target user groups were firstly - staff in other Universities and volunteering organisations who are interested in developing ULLL pathways for volunteers and secondly – volunteers themselves who may wish to embark on a ULLL pathway.

Value has had a working interface with a range of other networks and groupings. These included, for example:

- The wider membership of its 2 European level association partners, CEV and EUCEN. CEV has a membership of 60 national and regional volunteer organisations and EUCEN has a membership of over 200 universities across Europe. As partner organisations in Value, these organisations ensured that Value outputs were communicated widely across both sectors.
- Other European projects such as *TULIP* (Trade Union and University Lifelong Learning in Partnership (Value was discussed in a presentation to visiting TU delegation from SI) , *VOCH* (Value provided a case study), *Validation of Non formal Learning in Voluntary Work* Value is represented in this project by C.A.R.D.O., SK
- National Networks for ULLL. These are UALL (UK), AUCEN (AT), DGWF (DE), RUEPEC (ES)
- Grundtvig national agencies –eg. discussions with PL agency (Dec 09), TR agency (Jun 10), Romania , UK agency (Nov 09 and May 11)
- Value was represented by IVR at planning discussions for the International Year of the Volunteer + 10
- Organisations such as the German Red Cross and UN Volunteers which provided speakers for the conference.

5.   Plans for the Future

It is anticipated that Value will continue its aspirations and activities beyond the life of the project. This will be achieved in three different ways.

Firstly, individual partners are currently pursuing the development of new projects and collaborations. These also often involve Value conference participants. In some cases the development will take the form of formal applications to the EC for funding.10 individual project proposals were discussed at the exploitation meeting which took place in London in November 2011. Some may go forward for funding in 2012 whilst others may take a little longer to develop to their full potential. In other cases collaborative activity will be bilateral informal cooperation agreements to explore areas of mutual interest. The formal evaluation feedback submitted to the Evaluator contained many suggestions of this kind of activity

Secondly partners in the network are beginning to open new dialogue with a view to establishing developmental relationships with either volunteering or university organisations. These initial discussions may take some time to become fully fledged projects or activities, but feedback indicates that some fruitful initial discussions are taking place.

Finally the coordinator will continue to maintain the Value resource base which will act as a referral point for both website visitors and Value partners. The coordinator will also continue to act as a relay point for all Value associates to keep in touch and disseminate information and ideas

6.   Contribution to EU policies

Value's focus on the development of collaboration between Universities and volunteering organisations in order to promote flexible learning pathways makes important contributions to EU policies.

In general terms, participation in Value enabled its partners to reflect upon their organisations' approaches to LLL and to consider how they meet the learning needs of volunteers in more effective ways – as providers or as organisers of training/education. The themes of the working groups: Employability, Older Volunteers as Learners, Citizenship and Intercultural Dialogue encouraged reflection within a focused context. The Value themes are priorities for the EU eg the European Year of Volunteering (2011), the European Year of Active Ageing (2012) and the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008)

Within the context of the Bologna Process and the harmonisation across the EU of qualifications (EQF - ECVET), Value - by simply engaging (within a formal structure) 2 key sectors in the LLL debate - promoted engagement and commitment to lifelong learning as a reality for EU citizens. With approximately 100 million volunteers across EU Member States, the skills and experience generated by volunteers (but not currently academically captured in a systematic way) provides huge potential for accessing ULLL opportunities. In particular, Value supports the key strategic objectives outlined in Education and Training 2020 - specifically the aim of making lifelong learning a reality – by transferring, from universities to the voluntary sector, an understanding of accreditation routes which take account of and recognise informal learning.

The work of 2 of the sub-groups focusing on Citizenship and Intercultural Dialogue directly underpin a second Education and Training 2020 strategic objective of promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship. The papers, bibliographies, references and other materials produced by these groups add to the general debate whilst participation in Value, by enhancing the knowledge and skills of its members, will contribute to the improvement of quality in education and training.

The work of the sub-group focusing on Employability supports the principles reflected in New Skills for New Jobs. The group's work confirms the way in which volunteering does not necessarily always generate job-specific skills but encourages and develops generic skills such as team working or problem solving.

Value's work contributes to the European Parliament's resolution on the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion (2007/2149(INI)). In particular call (16) "…to encourage links between the voluntary sector and the education sector at all levels and to promote volunteering and recognise learning in volunteering as part of lifelong learning" and call 12 "…to increase the recognition of volunteering as an appropriate activity through which to acquire competence and skill.."

In addition, the European Guidelines for the validation of Non Formal and Informal Learning specifically recognises the field of volunteering as a huge source of "knowledge, skill and wider competences that often remains invisible". The key aim of Value is to facilitate the development of ULLL pathways for volunteers through the formal recognition of their volunteer learning within the academic context.

The interest in Value taken by Marian Harkin MEP, will assist in promoting its aims in terms of the development of policy and priority areas.

7. How Value has Inspired People

Thanks to VALUE I have started some discussions about formal connections / future formal relations between universities and NGO's.

......but it was really for me one of the best conferences I have ever attended.

…I will suggest to launch a survey to see with what universities, colleges etc, are in touch, in view of creating a European momentum for such cooperation

..the conference opened (at least for me) a new perspective on how NGO training fits into the continuous education concept

[I have been able to]..develop better skills at working productively with colleagues from different sectors/ countries / professional backgrounds

After this conference I have begun speaking with some colleagues about the outcomes and the inspiration that I have got by participating.

I am inspired to establish an experimental service-learning at our faculty as a separate course

Having such a platform gives an opportunity for continuous exchange and comparison and may bring new activities to those centres that have already started such a work, but it may be as well a very good inspiration and therefore initiator of ULLL developments in countries and realities where there is none

For me the linking thread was the way in which continuing education and University education provision can inform and develop volunteering and provide inputs that go beyond volunteer training

The most valuable element of the conference for me was the exchange and networking aspects. We found a lot of common ground between ULLL and volunteering and there is significant scope for future cooperation

These quotations have been taken from internal monitoring and conference evaluation feedback.