

# ESN's opinion on the stakeholders' meeting for the implementation report of the ESC 2021-2023

Organized by the Vice-Chair of CULT, MEP Sojdrova

Tuesday, May 23th 2023

The **European Solidarity Corps (ESC)** programme plays a vital role in **enhancing mobility experiences of young learners**. By providing accessible and inclusive opportunities for solidarity activities, ESC strengthens the **active engagement** of youth in the democratic life of the European Union and in parallel shows the global dimension of European citizenship; facilitates **inter-cultural dialogue** and **understanding** and amplifies the impact of mobility experiences, **contributing to the personal, professional, and social development** of European citizens. This **opinion to the stakeholders' meeting** for the implementation report of the ESC covering the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2023 highlights the importance of the ESC program, outlines its benefits for learners and hosting organizations, and proposes recommendations for its improvement and expansion.

## I. Importance of the European Solidarity Corps programme

### 1.1. Complementing Academic Mobility

The ESC programme **complements academic mobility programmes** like Erasmus+ by offering learners the chance to actively contribute to host communities and extend their impact beyond the classroom. Additionally, **it distinguishes itself through the unique offering of long-term learning mobility in informal and non-formal settings**. This distinct feature sets ESC apart from other mobility programs, providing young learners with an immersive experience that fosters the development of vital life skills and intercultural competencies. Moreover, it provides a unique space for young people to engage in **community-oriented solidarity projects** across Europe and beyond.

### 1.2. Fostering Intercultural Understanding

Participation in the ESC program enhances learners' integration within local communities, allowing them to immerse themselves in the culture and societal challenges of their host countries. These experiences foster intercultural understanding, empathy, and resilience, shaping learners into global citizens equipped to navigate diverse environments.

### 1.3. Benefits for Hosting Organizations

Hosting organizations benefit from the presence of learners within the ESC program through access to diverse talent, fresh perspectives, and innovative ideas. Learners bring unique cultural insights, different languages, and diverse academic backgrounds that enrich the

projects and initiatives undertaken by hosting organizations, contributing to their growth and success.

#### **1.4. Erasmus+ & ESC: Complementary purposes, more opportunities**

The participation of Erasmus+ students within the ESC program strengthens the ties between the two programs, creating a seamless continuum of learning and engagement. On the one hand, it allows students to extend their Erasmus+ experience by engaging in solidarity activities, deepening their connection with local communities and broadening their understanding of social challenges. On the other hand, ESC can target a larger non-student audience and give mobility opportunities to students and young people in general who for different reasons did not participate in Erasmus+.

## **II. Areas for Improvement**

### **2.1. Clearly Defined Target Audience**

To ensure the effectiveness and success of the ESC program, there is a need for a clear definition of the target groups and well-defined learning outcomes. By identifying the specific learners and their intended learning outcomes, the program can tailor its activities to meet their needs, providing a more focused and impactful experience.

### **2.2. Transparency and Clarity in Financial Support**

Greater transparency and clarity regarding the financial support provided to participants is essential. Clear guidelines should be established to prevent any misuse or exploitation of the program, ensuring participants receive the necessary financial support throughout their involvement.

### **2.3. Specifying Solidarity Objectives**

Should be better specified, accompanied by comprehensive guidelines that outline the expected learning outcomes for participants. Clear objectives and guidelines will enable participants to understand the purpose and expected impact of their involvement, enhancing their motivation and commitment to the program's goals.

### **2.4. Recognition of the learning outcomes in view of the European Year of Skills**

The recognition of learning outcomes achieved through participation in the ESC takes on even greater significance in light of the European Year of Skills. It presents an opportune moment to underscore the valuable skills and competencies that participants acquire during their engagement in solidarity activities. By explicitly recognizing and highlighting these outcomes, the European Solidarity Corps program can effectively contribute to the overarching goals of the European Year of Skills, which aims to enhance the acquisition, validation, and recognition of skills across Europe.

## **2.5. Inclusion of Non-EU Participants**

Enhancing the program's scope to encompass non-EU participants is vital in promoting diversity and fostering global collaboration. It is essential to prioritize and enhance the recruitment process for individuals from non-EU countries, both from non-EU program countries and partner countries. This entails creating accessible pathways and streamlining procedures to reduce complexity and eliminate barriers that could impede their active involvement.

## **2.6. Securing Adequate Funding**

To expand the ESC programme's activities and enhance support for learners and hosting organizations securing additional funding is necessary. Adequate financial resources for hosting organizations will enable accommodating a larger number of participants, offering a wider range of projects, and providing comprehensive support throughout the involvement of participants.

## **Conclusion**

**European Solidarity Corps, alongside Erasmus+, empowers young people and contributes to a Europe that embraces solidarity, inclusivity, and collaboration.** Recognizing the value of EU programs like the ESC program is crucial for enhancing the experiences of young learners, promoting intercultural understanding, and building a stronger, more cohesive European society. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this opinion note, the ESC program can further amplify its impact and ensure the success of its objectives during the active years of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) covering 2021-2023.