



Study on removing obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities

Final report

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Final report

Prepared by PPMI Group
in cooperation with EPRD



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Contents

List of tables, figures and boxes	2
1. Introduction	4
2. Methodology of the study	6
3. Solidarity activities to connect European youth	12
3.1. Definition and relevance of solidarity activities	12
3.1.1. Solidarity as a European value	12
3.1.2. EU strategies and schemes to foster youth solidarity	13
3.1.3. Definitions of solidarity and solidarity activities under the European Solidarity Corps	15
3.2. Scope and focus of (cross-border) solidarity activities in the EU	16
3.2.1. Scope and focus of volunteering activities in the EU	16
3.2.2. Volunteering culture in the Member States	18
3.2.3. Policies to support (cross-border) solidarity at national level	25
3.2.4. Achievements of the European Solidarity Corps so far	31
4. Obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities	37
4.1. Definition problems	37
4.2. Existing regulatory and administrative frameworks	40
4.2.1. Legal framework on volunteering	41
4.2.2. National strategies for volunteering	48
4.2.3. Key definitions	51
4.2.4. Entitlements and benefits	55
4.2.5. Administrative and regulatory framework issues relating to traineeships and jobs	60
4.3. Inadequacies in support at national and organisational level	64
4.3.1. Awareness of volunteering opportunities	64
4.3.2. Recognition of skills and competences	65
4.3.3. Capacity of organisations	68
4.3.4. Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities	72
4.4. Individual reasons	74
5. European Solidarity Corps: specific challenges	79
5.1. Volunteering	79
5.2. Traineeships and jobs	81
5.3. Horizontal challenges	83
6. Overall insights on the impact of the 2008 Council Recommendation	85
6.1. Summary and relevance of the 2008 Council Recommendation	85
6.2. Implementation and impact of the 2008 Council Recommendation	86
7. Conclusions and recommendations	89
7.1. Background: the scope and culture of volunteering	89
7.2. National policy actions to support cross-border solidarity activities	90
7.3. Obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities	91
7.4. Specific challenges for the European Solidarity Corps	100
7.5. Implementation of 2008 Council Recommendation	102
Annexes	103

List of tables, figures and boxes

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Data collection and analysis methods	6
Figure 2. Methodological approach to desk research	6
Figure 3. Interview programme.....	8
Figure 4. Cross border volunteering in the EU (%)	17
Figure 5. Geographical focus of volunteering activities (%).....	18
Figure 6. Popularity of Youth volunteering in the EU	19
Figure 7. Popularity of volunteering in EU by frequency of activities.....	20
Figure 8. Availability of volunteering opportunities	20
Figure 9. Perceived value of volunteering experience	21
Figure 10. Engagement in volunteering, in-country and cross-border, in 2017 (%).....	24
Figure 11. Overview of European Solidarity Corps projects funded in 2018-2019.....	32
Figure 12. Number of European Solidarity Corps-funded projects by year and action. ...	33
Figure 13. Overview of participating organisations by country, 2018-2019.	33
Figure 14. European Solidarity Corps participants by country; corps registrations by nationality.....	34
Figure 15. 2018-2019 European Solidarity Corps projects by topic.	35
Figure 16. Recurring topics by action, 2018-2019.	35
Figure 17. 2018-2019 European Solidarity Corps projects by organisation type.....	35
Figure 18. Clarity of the definition of "Solidarity activities"	40
Figure 19. Actions EU Member States and the European Union (European Commission) should take to further improve the situation regarding cross-border solidarity activities: legal frameworks and definitions	41
Figure 20. Lack of clear legal frameworks defining the field of volunteering	42
Figure 21. Lack of clear legal frameworks defining the volunteering field by country	42
Figure 22. Volunteering as a ground for obtaining visas and residence permits	45
Figure 23. Importance of youth volunteering on the policy agenda	48
Figure 24. Existence of national strategies on volunteering.....	49
Figure 25. Existence of legal definitions relating to volunteering.....	52
Figure 26. Health insurance and welfare payments.....	57
Figure 27. Taxation of reimbursements received	59
Figure 28. Promoting and raising awareness of volunteering activities	65
Figure 29: Recognition by employers of the competences and skills acquired through volunteering	66
Figure 30: Formal Recognition of competences and skills acquired through volunteering	66
Figure 31: Perception of cross-border volunteering as a "lost year"	67
Figure 32: Obstacles for young people in relation to traineeships in the solidarity field (recognition-related issues).....	68
Figure 33: Capacities of organisations to implement volunteering activities	69
Figure 34: Volunteers used as underpaid substitutes for paid staff	70
Figure 35: Obstacles for young people in relation to traineeships in the solidarity field ..	72
Figure 36: Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in solidarity activities (volunteering, traineeships/jobs)	74
Figure 37. Relevance of insufficient foreign language skills among incoming/outgoing trainees	75
Figure 38. Sufficiency of Foreign language skills among incoming/outgoing participants in volunteering activities.....	75

Figure 39. Relevance of lack of remuneration as an obstacle to traineeships	76
Figure 40. Family pressure as a reason for not volunteering	77
Figure 41: Key problems and difficulties when applying for or implementing projects supported by the European Solidarity Corps programme	80
Figure 42: Attractiveness of activities supported by the European Solidarity Corps programme to organisations and young people	81
Figure 43: Reasons that led organisations not to participate in traineeships/jobs projects under the European Solidarity Corps programme	82

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Timeline of the survey programme.....	9
Table 2. Overview of the implementation of the survey programme.....	10
Table 3. Projects/initiatives selected for good-practice case studies	11
Table 4. Percentage of youth who have engaged in organised volunteering activities within the past 12 months.....	17
Table 5. Differences in youth volunteering culture across EU Member States	22
Table 6: Existence of national/regional cross-border volunteering/solidarity schemes in EU member states.....	25
Table 7. Correspondence between national and European solidarity corps definitions of solidarity.....	38
Table 8. Existence of legal acts governing the field of volunteering	44
Table 9. Existence of legal definitions relating to volunteering.....	52
Table 10. terms Most commonly defined in EU members states	53
Table 11. Regulation of open-market traineeships in EU Member States.....	61

LIST OF BOXES

Box 1: Example of a national-level, cross-border volunteering scheme: Polish Aid Volunteering.....	27
Box 2. General objective of the European Solidarity Corps programme	37
Box 3. Examples of different understandings of solidarity	39
Box 4. Data on temporary residence permits for third-country nationals in Slovakia	46
Box 5. Requirements applying to foreign volunteers in Italy	47
Box 6. Countries with dedicated strategies on volunteering	50
Box 7. Legal definitions that mention solidarity	53
Box 8. Specific definitions in France and Luxembourg: bénévolat and volunteering.....	54
Box 9. Allowances in Czechia	56
Box 10. Example of allowances provided under French civic service and International Solidarity Volunteering	56
Box 11. Taxation in Belgium with regard to incoming volunteers	60

1. Introduction

This Final Report was prepared as a result of the study "Removing obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities" (specific contract No EAC-2019-0224, in the context of the framework contract No EAC/47/2014-2). The study was carried out by PPMI Group, with the assistance of the subcontractor EPRD and individual external experts. The project began at the end of June 2019 and concluded in January 2020.

The Final Report of the study was prepared on the basis of requirements set out in the Technical Specifications, agreements reached during meetings of the Steering Group, as well as information gathered and analysed during the execution of the project and comments provided by the Steering Group (both written and during project meetings).

Scope and purpose of the study

Overall, the EU's role in the field of youth generally, and in volunteering and other solidarity activities specifically, is designed to be supportive and complementary to the activities of the Member States, which continue to bear full responsibility for youth policy at national, regional and local level. The framework for the EU's role in the area of youth and solidarity activities was set by the **European Youth Strategy**, which between 2010 and 2018 has focused on equal opportunities for young people and the active participation of young people. Based on a proposal by the European Commission tabled on May 2018, the Council of the EU adopted the new European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027¹. The EU Youth Strategy is implemented voluntarily by EU Member States, with the European Commission providing support.

One of the key European policy initiatives supporting cross-border solidarity activities was the **Council Recommendation of 20 November 2008** on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union.² The Recommendation affirmed the role of solidarity activities, including cross-border solidarity activities, in developing professional and transferable skills and employability, as well as raising cultural awareness and the notion of active citizenship among young people in Europe. The work plan for the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2021³ includes a **review of the 2008 Council Recommendation** on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union (during the second half of 2020) and the establishment of an Expert Group on the subject.

This mixed-method (qualitative and quantitative) **study supports the review of the Council Recommendation**, by complementing the work of the Expert Group. The key objectives of the study are therefore:

- to review and assess the implementation of the 2008 Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union;

¹ 2018/C 456/01, Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027.

² Council Recommendation of 20 November 2008 on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union (2008/C 319/03)

³ Annex 4, 2018/C 456/01, Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027

- to map and analyse existing regulatory and administrative frameworks, as well as to support policies in relation to solidarity activities, including complementarities between national schemes and the European Solidarity Corps programme and any legal, administrative and practical barriers that prevent young people from fully participating in the European Solidarity Corps;
- to identify possible ways and areas for further reinforced cooperation, and to provide an evidence-based assessment of their expected impact; and
- to formulate concrete policy recommendations to feed any possible review of the Council Recommendation.

The study focused on volunteering, but also covered traineeships and jobs within the solidarity field to the extent that they are relevant to the activities of the European Solidarity Corps programme. The study covered all EU Member States at the time of the research⁴ and focused on identifying obstacles at **policy and organisational levels**.

Structure of the report

The Final Report presents the results of the study, its conclusions and recommendations. The report is divided into the following parts:

- Part 1 (the present section) introduces the study report.
- Part 2 briefly presents the key methods of data collection and analysis that informed the preparation of this study.
- Part 3 provides an analysis of the policy background at EU and national level, including the definition and relevance of solidarity activities (sub-section 3.1), as well as the scope and focus of (cross-border) solidarity activities in the EU (sub-section 3.2).
- Part 4 presents an analysis of obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities.
- Part 5 explores the specific challenges facing the European Solidarity Corps programme.
- Part 6 presents overall insights on the impact of the 2008 Council Recommendation.
- Part 7 summarises the key findings of the study and delivers its conclusions and recommendations.

In addition, **seven annexes** are attached to this Report:

- Annex 1: List of completed interviews.
- Annex 2: Geographical distribution of respondents to the survey of organisations.
- Annex 3: Good-practice case studies.
- Annex 4: Country fiches.
- Annex 5: Workshop Report.
- Annex 6: Survey dataset.
- Annex 7: Mapping of national schemes.

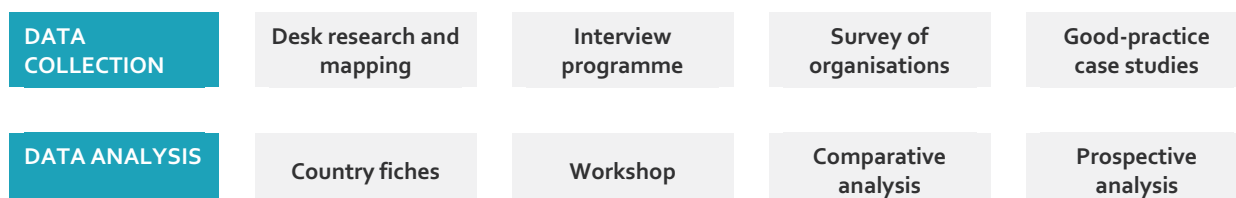
The Final Report and its annexes are also accompanied by the Executive Summary (in English, French and German).

⁴ This study has been conducted before 31 January 2020 and has therefore analysed the situation in the Member States of the EU at the time of the research.

2. Methodology of the study

This study required the collection, processing and synthesising of both qualitative and quantitative data. The study embraced a **mixed-methods** research design, tailored by study team specifically for this assignment.

FIGURE 1. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS METHODS

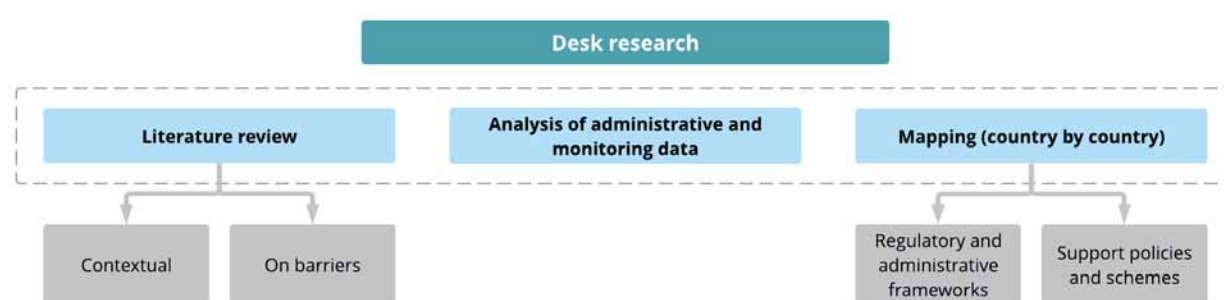


Source: prepared by PPMI

Desk research and mapping

Desk research, and the mapping based upon it, served the purpose of further extending the contextual understanding of the subject of the study. It also informed the conceptual development of questionnaires for stakeholder consultation and, most importantly, fed directly into the preparation of country fiches and the preparation of the study report itself. Structurally, the desk research consisted of three main activities: a literature review, an analysis of administrative and monitoring data, and the mapping and analysis of existing national regulatory frameworks and schemes.

FIGURE 2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO DESK RESEARCH



Source: prepared by PPMI

Literature review and analysis of policy documents

The literature review, which encompassed a variety of studies on the factors that prevent people from taking part in solidarity activities, allowed the principal obstacles to be outlined, along with other, more specific, niche barriers. The study primarily analysed recent studies and evaluations conducted for and by the European Commission, as well as academic research projects on solidarity in Europe (TransSol research results,

ITSSOIN⁵), recent academic literature on cross-border volunteering, and other sources of data (e.g. a national-level survey from the UK⁶). Another important source for analysis was Flash Eurobarometer surveys (455, 478, 409, 319a) on youth policies in general, and volunteering specifically. We included quantitative data from Flash Eurobarometer 455⁷ and Flash Eurobarometer 478⁸, along with some relevant data from Flash Eurobarometer 408⁹ and Flash Eurobarometer 319a¹⁰. The results of this literature review and subsequent analysis of policy documents are integrated throughout the various sections of this report.

Analysis of administrative and monitoring data

The analysis of administrative and monitoring data was informed by two key sources: the European Solidarity Corps Projects database¹¹, and a survey of European Voluntary Service (EVS)¹² participants¹³. By summarising the available data from the European Solidarity Corps projects database, we ascertained the current status of the programme and carried out a brief analysis of its most prominent activities, applicants and the subjects of the projects awarded. We also used quantitative data from the survey of EVS participants to identify their main motivations for taking part in volunteering activities, as well as their views on solidarity and Europeanism, etc.

Country by country mapping

Our mapping covered all EU Member States and was based on an extensive analysis of data from the Youth Wiki database.^{14 15} This information was further supplemented by additional information found online, together with data from various sources mentioned by our interviewees. During this mapping we primarily explored existing national-level policies, regulatory and administrative frameworks, national schemes and new policy developments. This helped to establish a foundation for contextual understanding, determining key themes and tendencies, and identifying preliminary obstacles and barriers.

⁵ Bekkers, R., & de Wit, A. (2014). *Participation in volunteering: What helps and hinders. A deliverable of the project: "Impact of the third sector as Social Innovation" (ITSSOIN)*. European Commission, DG Research

⁶ UK Civil Society Almanac 2019. Available at: <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/volunteering/motivations-and-barriers/>

⁷ Flash Eurobarometer 455: European Youth (2017)

⁸ Flash Eurobarometer 478: *How do we build a stronger, more united Europe? The views of young people* (2019)

⁹ Flash Eurobarometer 408: European Youth (2014)

¹⁰ Flash Eurobarometer 319a: *Youth on the move* (2011)

¹¹ https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/projects_en

¹² European Voluntary Service (EVS) was a strand of the European Union's Erasmus+ Programme, which supported young people taking part in voluntary activities abroad.

¹³ These data were received from the European Commission

¹⁴ The Youth Wiki is Europe's online encyclopedia in the area of national youth policies. The platform is a comprehensive database of national structures, policies and actions supporting young people. It covers eight main fields of action: education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being, participation, voluntary activities, social inclusion, youth and the world, and creativity and culture. <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/youthwiki>

¹⁵ Collection of information from the Youth Wiki took place until October 2019.

Several challenges were encountered in performing the mapping. Depending on the specific country involved, different amounts of information of varying quality were available on Youth Wiki. Some countries were covered more substantially in the database, while others were not yet represented on Youth Wiki (i.e. Greece, Ireland, Italy) at the time when the mapping took place. These information deficiencies were remedied through the use of other data sources (web-based research, coupled with interviews and online survey). It should be also acknowledged that the information available on solidarity/open market traineeships was limited.

Interview programme

Our methodology involves the carrying out of three types of interview: (1) exploratory interviews at EU/strategic level; (2) national-level interviews with National Agencies (NAs) and National Authorities (NAUs) for the country fiches; and (3) interviews for the good-practice case studies. A total of 62 interviews were completed, covering all EU Member States. For the full list of completed interviews, please see Annex 1.

FIGURE 3. INTERVIEW PROGRAMME

Level	Target group	Status
Exploratory EU / strategic level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – European Commission (DG EAC, DG EMPL, DG ECHO) – EU-level stakeholders (European Youth Forum, EYCA office, European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre, CEV, ERYICA, Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations, RAY Network, SALTO Inclusion and Diversity) 	12 interviews completed
National level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – National Agencies and/or National Authorities – 1-2 interviews per country to inform country fiches and interpret survey results 	36 interviews completed
Interviews for good-practice case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Persons responsible for implementation and management of the initiatives analysed in the good-practice case studies 	14 interviews completed

Source: prepared by PPMI

National-level interviews were carried out to inform the preparation of the country fiches. These contributed significantly to interpreting and complementing the data collected during the mapping and survey phases. They also helped to identify and outline the major obstacles and barriers to solidarity activities, both in-country and cross-border. These interviews covered volunteering; traineeships and (to a much lesser extent) jobs; the challenges to implementing the European Solidarity Corps programme; as well as possible recommendations and necessary improvements. The interviews to the inform country fiches primarily targeted members of the Expert Group on the mobility of young volunteers and cross-border solidarity activities.

Country fiches

The study team prepared fiches covering each EU Member State. The aim of the country fiches is to summarise findings and existing barriers at national level. Country fiches were informed by our mapping, by the national-level interviews, and by an online survey of organisations. It should be noted that the exhaustiveness of information presented in country fiches differs depending on the country, as the quantity and quality of available information is very diverse. The country fiches are provided in Annex 4 of this report.

Survey

The purpose of the quantitative survey of youth and volunteering organisations was to obtain feedback and gauge perceptions regarding cross-border solidarity activities, particularly in relation to any barriers to participation in solidarity activities. In addition to quantifying the findings from the desk research and interview programme, the main objectives of the survey programme were to:

- provide an overview of volunteering culture in the Member States and a picture of the obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities, especially volunteering, but also traineeships and jobs.
- gather suggestions as to how to overcome the remaining barriers to cross-border solidarity activities.

In order to disseminate this survey, we first obtained the contact details of youth organisations from each EU Member State. The Commission supplied a database containing the contact details of organisations that hold the European solidarity Corps Quality Label or are accredited under Erasmus+ youth volunteering. The database included 5 528 contact email addresses. These were cleaned for any duplicated, invalid and redundant emails (e.g. multiple individuals from the same organisation), resulting in a list of 4,823 email addresses to be used for the dissemination of the survey via *SurveyGizmo*. Personalised invitations were sent to the youth organisations via email. For email addresses with 'generic' usernames (e.g. info@, admin@), generic survey invitations were sent using the Mail-Merge function in Microsoft Word.

The survey was also publicly disseminated via the European Youth Portal. Here, control questions were introduced in order to target only those organisations with experience in the field of solidarity activities for young people. To ensure that the survey was sufficiently widely disseminated in order to achieve an adequate response rate, we frequent reminders were sent to the recipients (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. TIMELINE OF THE SURVEY PROGRAMME

DISSEMINATION TYPE	LAUNCH DATE	1 ST REMINDER DATE	2 ND REMINDER DATE	3 RD REMINDER DATE	CLOSING DATE
Personalised	2 October	9 October	15 October	18 October	18 October
Public	2 October				18 October

Source: PPMI

In total, we received 858 responses to the personalised invitations (613 of which were fully completed questionnaires, 245 partially completed questionnaires). Meanwhile, 136 responses were received from the public dissemination via European Youth Portal (31 complete, 105 partial). Data cleaning involved excluding certain responses based on the extent to which the questionnaires had been completed. This ensured the reliability, validity and adequacy of the data.

After cleaning, 660 valid responses remained from the personalised invitations, with 36 valid responses from the public dissemination. Out of these 696 total responses, 641 were fully completed questionnaires and 55 were partially completed. Table 2 provides an overview of the steps involved in the implementation of the survey programme.

TABLE 2. OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SURVEY PROGRAMME

DISSEMINATION TYPE	Contacts received	Invitations sent	Undeliverable and bounced	Responses submitted	Responses included in the analysis	Response rate
Personalised	5528	4,823	110	858	660	14%
Public	N/A	N/A	N/A	136	36	N/A

Note: Data for undelivered and bounced emails was not available for the invitations that were sent via the Microsoft Word Mail Merge function.

Source: prepared by PPMI

The survey achieved an overall response rate of 14%. However, this varied significantly between countries. Five countries returned a response rate below 10%: Malta (4%); France and Germany (both 7%); and Cyprus and Denmark (both 9%). Notably, Croatia achieved an 82% response rate. See Annex 2 for more details.

Workshop with the Expert Group

A workshop was organised with the members of the Expert Group on the mobility of young volunteers and cross-border solidarity activities on 11 December 2019 in Brussels. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss the key findings of this study and to determine what actions are required at national and EU level to eliminate the persistent obstacles, reinforce cooperation and further support cross-border solidarity activities in the EU. In total, 16 experts from the Expert Group on the mobility of young volunteers and cross-border solidarity activities participated in the workshop. A summary of the results of the workshop is presented in Annex 5.

Good-practice case studies

In line with the approach of the study and the requirements set out in its Technical Specifications, five projects/initiatives were proposed and agreed with the Steering Group that could be further explored in the form of good-practice case studies. These were identified on the basis of expert assessments: interviews with the National Agencies in charge of implementing the EU youth programmes and National Authorities, and consultations with members of the Expert Group on the mobility of young volunteers. These initiatives, and the themes they cover, are listed in Table 3 below. The good-practice case studies are presented in Annex 3.

TABLE 3. PROJECTS/INITIATIVES SELECTED FOR GOOD-PRACTICE CASE STUDIES

THEME	PROJECT/INITIATIVE
National cross-border volunteering scheme	The International Youth Voluntary Service (Internationaler Jugendfreiwilligendienst) (Germany)
Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities	JACTIVE project (Belgium)
Recognition and valuing of volunteering experience	Reconoce project (Spain)
Capacity building and quality assurance	"Coordinator of Volunteers" - qualification standard (Czechia)
Initiative helping to overcome administrative obstacles relating to visas	Visa regulations "Recognised Partnership" (Netherlands)

Source: prepared by study team

3. Solidarity activities to connect European youth

This section reviews and analyses the scope of solidarity activities in the EU, both in-country and cross-border, focusing primarily on volunteering. It begins by introducing the concept of European solidarity, explaining the relevance thereof, and contextualising it within the European Solidarity Corps and other similar EU initiatives in Section 3.1.

Section 3.2 discusses the scope and popularity of both in-country and cross-border solidarity activities in the EU. It provides a general overview of popularity and scope of in-country and cross-border volunteering activities in the EU28, based on Eurobarometer survey data (Section 3.2.1). This overview provides the basis for further analysis by mapping the scope of volunteering activities in the EU as well as the preferences of young Europeans with regard to solidarity activities. Section 3.2.2 shifts the focus to the national level, analysing the volunteering cultures in each Member State to identify explanations for the differences in volunteering activity revealed in the previous section. Section 3.2.3 takes a more specific approach, reviewing the existing national volunteering schemes as well as determining what measures are currently in place in the Member States to promote solidarity activities and volunteering. Section 3.2.4 shifts the focus back to the EU level. It discusses the achievements of the European Solidarity Corps as the main tool to date at EU level for promoting solidarity activities.

Overall, this section sets the scene for the further analysis of obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities. It does so by underlining the importance of European solidarity, and providing a thorough and informed overview of the volunteering sector in the EU; the popularity of both in-country and cross-border volunteering; and the actions taken by the Member States and the EU to promote solidarity activities.

3.1. Definition and relevance of solidarity activities

3.1.1. Solidarity as a European value

Solidarity is one of the core principles upon which the EU is built. According to Jean-Claude Juncker in his 2016 State of the Union Address, "the word solidarity appears 16 times in the Treaties which all our Member States agreed and ratified."¹⁶ As Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) states, "The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail."¹⁷

Based on the findings of two recent research projects, SOLIDUS and TransSOL, **solidarity in Europe is fragile, nuanced and conditional, with large differences and**

¹⁶ Juncker (2016). *State of the Union Address*. Available at: https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-16-3043_en.htm

¹⁷ Art 2, TEU. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12012M%2FTXT>

cleavages across policy sectors and between countries.¹⁸ European solidarity can be split into four broad groups: help for people in need (welfare solidarity); the reduction of wealth disparities (territorial solidarity); willingness to support other countries in difficulty (fiscal solidarity); and support for migrants' right to stay (refugee solidarity). Support for all four types of solidarity exists among European citizens. This is stronger at national and regional levels, but is also present at the transnational level.¹⁹

The recent economic (2008) and refugee (2015) crises demanded quick and coordinated reaction from the Member States, and have resulted in continuing consequences for EU societies. Both crises challenged the idea of European solidarity, as they provoked a "blame game" between Member States rather than a unified EU-wide solution.²⁰ At the same time, the crises have demonstrated the importance of developing a robust civil society infrastructure, since solidarity actions and initiatives have proved to be crucial to the alleviation of poverty, democratic renewal, as well as social interaction and cohesion in Europe.²¹

The development of transnational solidarity actions is limited by the lack of a political space and constituency within which to mobilise support. It is also limited by differing social traditions, as well as more technical barriers such as diverse legal definitions, organisational norms, and funding.²² Furthermore, European solidarity, unlike national solidarity, must rely on more spontaneous public support rather than institutional facilitation.²³ This does not mean that European solidarity is weak = rather, it is "soft" and fragile. Multi-level and multi-actor policy responses are required to harness its potential.²⁴

3.1.2. EU strategies and schemes to foster youth solidarity

The European Solidarity Corps is one of the latest additions to EU policy encouraging the development of cross-border European solidarity. The concept of solidarity has already been a central component of, among others, the European Youth Strategy (EUYs) and the European Voluntary Service (EVS) under Erasmus+.

The aim of the EU Youth Strategy (EUYs) 2010-2018 was to set out a framework for youth cooperation at EU level, with the promotion of active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity among all young people as one of its

¹⁸ Ross, M. (2018). *Solidarity in Europe: Alive and active*. European Commission, DG Research. Available at: <http://dx.publications.europa.eu/10.2777/6935>, p. 5

¹⁹ Gerhards, J., Lengfeld, H., Ignacz, Z., Kley, F. K., & Priem, M. (2018). *How Strong is European Solidarity?* Berlin Studies on the Sociology of Europe, Working paper (37). Available at: https://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/soziologie/arbeitsbereiche/makrosoziologie/arbeitspapiere/pdf/BSSE-Nr_-37.pdf

²⁰ Genschel, P., & Hemerijck, A. (2018). *Solidarity in Europe*. Policy Brief. Florence: European University Institute, School of Transnational Governance, p.1.

²¹ SOLIDUS. (2018). *European Policy Brief*. Available at: <https://solidush2020.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/D1.3-Policy-Brief.pdf>, p. 3

²² Ross, M. (2018). *Solidarity in Europe: Alive and active*, p. 5

²³ Genschel, P., & Hemerijck, A. (2018). *Solidarity in Europe*. Policy Brief. Florence: European University Institute, School of Transnational Governance, p.3.

²⁴ *Ibid* p. 6, 11

main goals.²⁵ Volunteering activities were identified as one of eight fields of action for the EUYS. An evaluation of the EUYS has shown that most Member States followed one or more of the EUYS objectives in their national policies, especially those countries without their own national youth strategies. Our evaluation also revealed that the EUYS was regarded as relevant by 80% of European youth organisations surveyed.²⁶ To an extent, it has contributed to the shaping of common EU youth policy goals across the MS; however, this may be because the goals of the EUYS were very broadly defined.²⁷ Of the organisations surveyed for the study on the impact of the EUYS, 76% agreed that it had achieved positive effects on the recognition of the value of volunteering.²⁸ It was also found to have put volunteering on the policy agenda in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and the United Kingdom.²⁹

2011 was declared the **European Year of Volunteering**. This year-long focus provided **incentives to create a specific legal framework on volunteering** in Slovakia, Slovenia and Lithuania. Bulgaria also adopted such law in 2012, while Poland drafted a new strategy on volunteering; Austria renewed its volunteering law; and Portugal updated its legislation.³⁰ Furthermore, the Romanian Law on Volunteering adopted in 2014 is consistent with the EUYS and the 2008 Council Recommendation with regard to the recognition and quality assurance of volunteering activities.³¹

In his 2016 'State of the Union' address, the then-president of the European Commission, Jean Claude Juncker, identified solidarity as "the glue that keeps our Union together". He also underlined that solidarity cannot be forced, and emphasised the need to invest in young people and to foster solidarity within the EU. He then announced that the Commission proposed to create the European Solidarity Corps programme, enabling young people across Europe to volunteer their help where it is needed most, or in response to crisis situations. Juncker foresaw as many as one million young Europeans taking part in the European Solidarity Corps by 2020.³²

The European Solidarity Corps, established in 2016, replaced one of the EU's best known and most popular solidarity initiatives to date, the European Voluntary Service (EVS).³³ One of the key difference between these schemes is that, while the EVS focused only on promoting volunteering, the Corps has a broader scope that also covers solidarity traineeships and jobs. **One of the main aims of the European Solidarity Corps is to provide a single entry point for solidarity**

²⁵ European Commission (2009). *An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering. A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities*. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009DC0200&from=EN>

²⁶ European Commission, & ICF International. (2016). *Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU [Final report]*. Brussels, pp. 22-23

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 53

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 56

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 57

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 58

³² Juncker (2016). *State of the Union Address*.

³³ The EVS started as a pilot project in 1996 and was one of the flagship activities under the YOUTH programme (2000-2006), Youth in Action programme (2007-2013) and later under Erasmus+, providing almost 100,000 young people with opportunities to take part in international volunteering (more information under https://europa.eu/youth/node/33119_en).

activities across the European Union. It builds on the strengths and synergies established by Erasmus+ and Youth in Action,³⁴ and complements the Youth Guarantee scheme established in 2013. Furthermore, for the next programming period, EU Aid Volunteers, a scheme that supports participation in humanitarian aid projects outside the EU, was proposed to be incorporated into the European Solidarity Corps and expand the scope of its actions.³⁵ The funds previously allocated to the EVS under Erasmus+ were redeployed to the Corps, with up to 90% being used to support volunteering activities, with the remainder to be spent on traineeships and jobs.³⁶

Not only does the new **EU Youth Strategy for 2019-2027** underline the importance of youth solidarity; it specifically includes among its objectives the removal of obstacles to, and the facilitation of, volunteering. Among its main actions, the strategy also recognises the need to **specifically reinforce the link between EU youth policy and the European Solidarity Corps**. This falls under the action area "Connect". The strategy aims to **expand the 2008 Council Recommendation** on the cross-border mobility of volunteers, and to strengthen the potential and inclusiveness of the Corps through policy cooperation and community-building. It also encourages Member States to promote the engagement of youth in solidarity activities, and to review and remove legal and administrative barriers to cross-border solidarity as well as improving the recognition of such experiences.³⁷

3.1.3. Definitions of solidarity and solidarity activities under the European Solidarity Corps

Regulation (EU) 2018/1475 of the European Parliament and of the Council lays down the legal framework for the European Solidarity Corps. It also provides definitions of solidarity and solidarity activities. Within the context of the regulation, **"solidarity may be understood as a sense of responsibility on the part of everyone with regard to everyone to commit oneself to the common good, which is expressed through concrete actions without consideration of return service."**

As specified in Art. 2 of the Regulation, "solidarity activity" refers to a high-quality, temporary activity (up to 12 months) that:

- does not interfere with the functioning of the labour market;
- addresses important societal challenges to the benefit of a community or society as a whole, thereby contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the European Solidarity Corps;

³⁴ Youth in Action was a programme that ran from 2007 to 2013. It aimed to inspire active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young people by supporting around 8,000 projects involving 150,000 young people. The programme was incorporated under Erasmus+ in 2014 (more information at https://ec.europa.eu/youth/success-stories/youth-in-action_en).

³⁵ European Commission (2018). Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Solidarity Corps programme and repealing the European Solidarity Corps Regulation and Regulation (EU) No 375/2014. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:f3d4ea2b-6e31-11e8-9483-01aa75ed71a1.0002.03/DOC_1&format=PDF.

³⁶ Art 9, Regulation (EU) 2018/1475

³⁷ European Commission (2018). Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy, p. 2. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/youth_com_269_1_en_act_part1_v9.pdf

- takes the form of volunteering, traineeships, jobs, solidarity projects³⁸ and networking activities³⁹ in various fields;
- ensures European added value and compliance with health and safety regulations, includes a solid learning and training dimension through relevant activities that can be offered to participants before, during and after the activity;
- takes place in a broad range of areas, such as in the fields of environmental protection, climate change mitigation and greater social inclusion;
- does not include activities that are part of curricula in formal education, vocational education and training systems and activities for emergency response.⁴⁰

More specifically, the European Solidarity Corps should not be a substitute for similar national schemes relating to solidarity, volunteering, civic service and mobility. The Regulation also establishes that volunteering should not be substitute for traineeships or jobs, and that traineeships should not be a substitute for jobs. Volunteering and solidarity projects should cover the participant's expenses that arise from participation but **should not provide them with salaries or economic benefits**. In the case of **solidarity traineeships and jobs, the hosting organisations should cover the salaries of participants**. Furthermore, attention should be given to the inclusion of participants from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with fewer opportunities, and the international mobility of participants should be encouraged. Finally, the European Solidarity Corps should be complementary with other national or EU schemes such as the Youth Guarantee, the European Network of Public Employment Services or the European job mobility portal, EURES.⁴¹

3.2. Scope and focus of (cross-border) solidarity activities in the EU

3.2.1. Scope and focus of volunteering activities in the EU

In this section, we review the results of Flash Eurobarometer surveys 319a, 408, 455 and 478, which include questions on youth volunteering, European solidarity, and the European Solidarity Corps specifically. These data enable us to make a general assessment of the scope of participation in solidarity activities of people aged 15 to 30 across the EU, as well as their views on the European solidarity and the European Solidarity Corps.

³⁸ A solidarity project is an unpaid in-country solidarity activity set up and carried out by a group of at least five people for a period of 2-12 months. It must aim to address key challenges within the community and present clear European added value.

³⁹ Networking activities aim to reinforce the capacity of participating organisations.

⁴⁰ Art. 2, Regulation (EU) 2018/1475

⁴¹ Art. 9 of Regulation (EU) 2018/1475

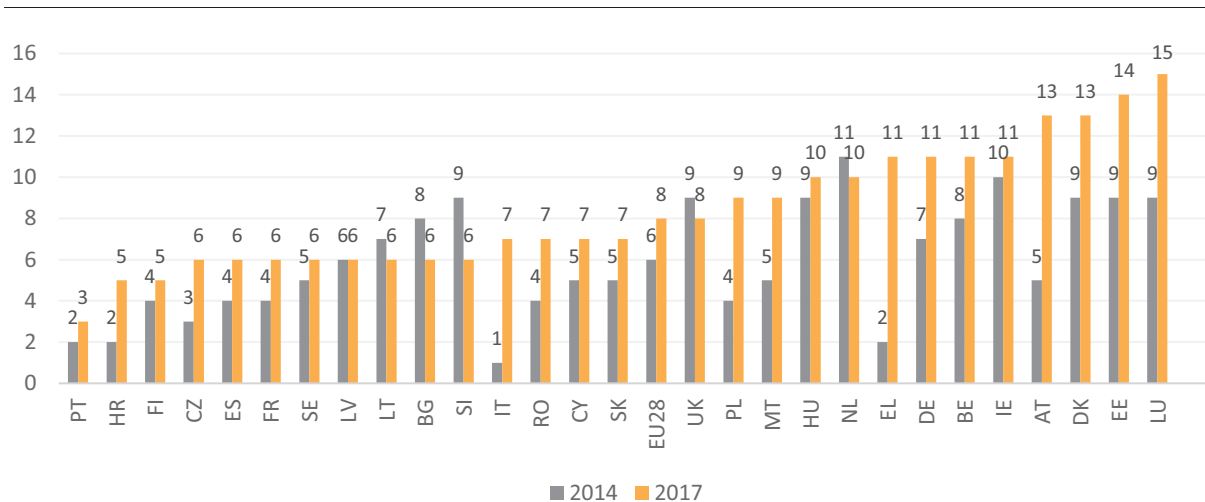
TABLE 4. PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH WHO HAVE ENGAGED IN ORGANISED VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

	FLASH EB 319A* 2011, EU27	FLASH EB 408 2014, EU28	FLASH EB 455 2017, EU28	FLASH EB 478 2019, EU28
Yes	24%	25%	31%	34%
No	76%	75%	69%	66%

Sources: Flash Eurobarometer surveys 319a, 408, 455 and 478. *Does not include Croatia.

As shown in Table 1, youth participation in organised volunteering activities has been increasing since 2011. However, even at the level of 34% seen in 2019, young people who volunteer still constitute a minority. Furthermore, volunteering is more popular among younger survey respondents: 37% of those aged 15 to 19 volunteered in 2017, compared with 31% of 25 to 30-year-olds. People who held positive opinions about the EU, as well as those who had learning or volunteering experiences abroad, were more likely to be involved in the aforementioned activities.

Figure 4 depicts changes in the number of volunteers going abroad between 2014 and 2017. In most countries, the number of volunteers going abroad increased. The sharpest increases were observed in Greece and Austria (both 8%). In five countries (Lithuania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands) the number decreased, and in one country (Latvia) it remained the same. Overall, the share of cross-border volunteers remains relatively low (at 8%) when compared to in-country solidarity activities, although the overall increase of 2% between 2014 and 2017 demonstrates a positive trend.

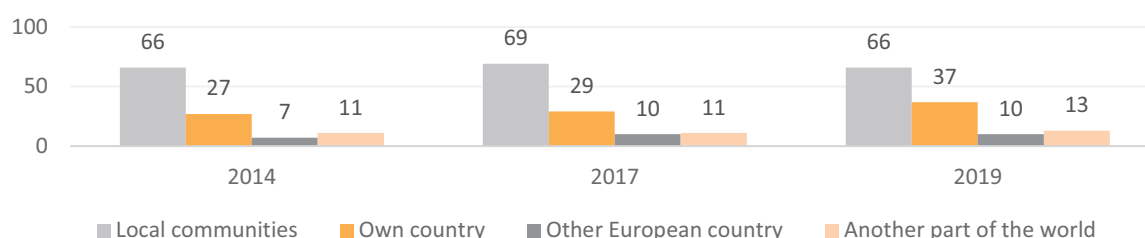
FIGURE 4. CROSS BORDER VOLUNTEERING IN THE EU (%)

Source: Flash Eurobarometers 408 and 455

As shown in Figure 5, of those EU citizens who engaged in volunteering activities between 2014 and 2019, two-thirds aimed to bring about change within their local communities. This decreased slightly between 2017 and 2019 as a greater proportion of

volunteers began to participate in schemes at a national level or in another part of the world. The share of volunteers whose activities aimed to promote change in other European countries has increased slightly since 2014, but remains lower than any of the other focus areas. Along with this observation, more than two-thirds of respondents agreed that programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps make them feel more European. Young people see such schemes as an integral element in strengthening and uniting the European Union. Over 60% of former EVS participants agreed that taking part in EVS mobility made them feel more European, and over 70% expressed greater interest in European topics than before.⁴²

FIGURE 5. GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS OF VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES (%)



Source: Flash Eurobarometer surveys 408, 455 and 478. Multiple answers possible.

The young people surveyed in the Eurobarometer surveys indicated that they believed fighting climate change and protecting the environment (67%); improving education and training, including youth mobility (56%); as well as fighting poverty and economic and social inequalities (56%), should be the priorities of the EU in the years to come. Compared to previous surveys, environmental issues gained importance. **When asked in what areas the EU should encourage young people to express their solidarity, most indicated education and training (68%), employment (40%), and welfare and social assistance (37%).**⁴³

3.2.2. Volunteering culture in the Member States

In addition to the scope of volunteering, analysed in the section above, it is important to assess the diversity of volunteering cultures and traditions within the EU Member States, as it allows us to better understand the national contexts. This study first examines how the respondents of the survey of organisations conducted by PPMI assess the tradition of volunteering in their country, and how volunteering is valued across the EU. To account for cross-country differences, these insights are combined with Eurobarometer data on the popularity of volunteering in each Member State.

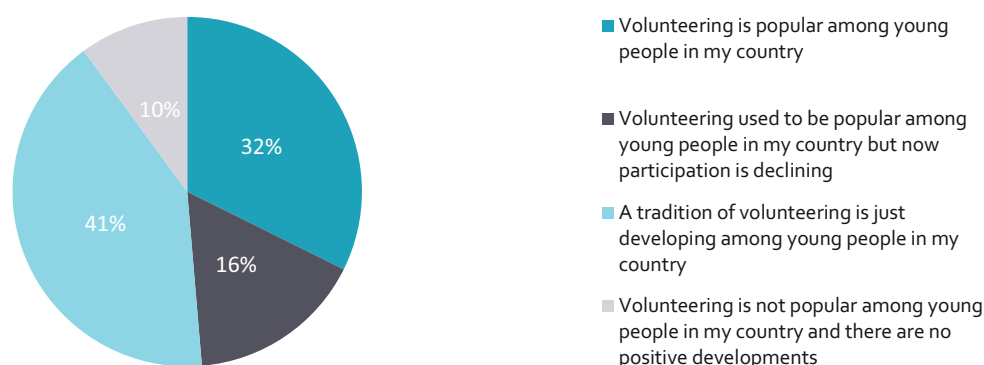
⁴² EVS participant survey, p. 34

⁴³ Data from Flash Eurobarometers 455 and 478.

Popularity, availability and value of volunteering in the EU

Overall, as shown in Figure 6, our survey provided a fairly positive assessment of the popularity and culture of volunteering in the EU. Almost one-third (32%) of respondents stated that volunteering is popular in their country, while 41% said that the tradition of volunteering is just developing. Adding up the two groups, almost three-quarters of respondents offered a positive assessment of volunteering culture in their countries. Just over a quarter thought that volunteering was unpopular, or that its popularity was in decline.

FIGURE 6. POPULARITY OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERING IN THE EU



Source: PPMI survey of organisations, N=674

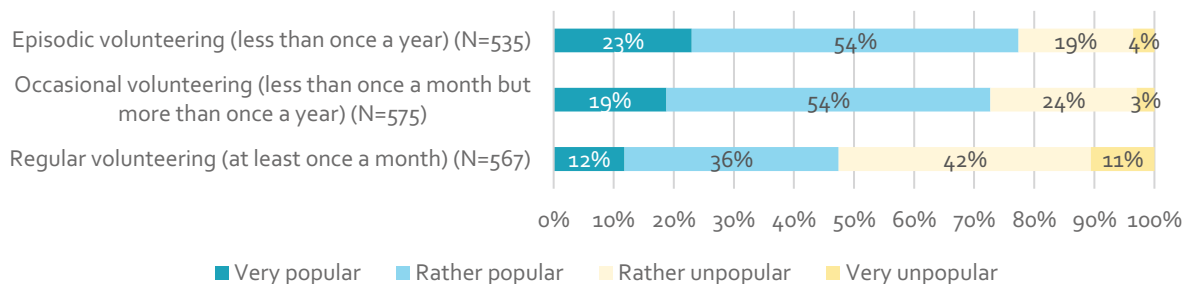
Our survey also found that volunteering in the EU tends to be fairly short-term and spontaneous, as seen in Figure 7. Over 70% of respondents indicated that episodic volunteering (less than once a year) and occasional volunteering (occurring less than once a month but more than once a year) are popular in their countries. Fewer than half stated that regular organised volunteering (at least once a month) is popular. These results confirm the concerns found in previous studies on volunteering activities in Europe, which have identified the problem of finding dedicated long-term volunteers willing to take on responsibilities and commitment.⁴⁴ Among the main determinants of engagement in solidarity activities are past volunteering experience (leading to a certain familiarity with the field)⁴⁵, as well as being actively asked to contribute.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ European Volunteer Centre (2017); GHK. (2010). *Volunteering in the European Union*. DG Education and Culture, Educational, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency; UK Civil Society Almanac 2019. Available at: <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/volunteering/motivations-and-barriers/>

⁴⁵ Jurgen Willems & Sarah Dury (2017). *Reasons for not volunteering: overcoming boundaries to attract volunteers*, *The Service Industries Journal*.

⁴⁶ Bekkers, R. & de Wit, A. (2014). *Participation in volunteering: What helps and hinders. A deliverable of the project: "Impact of the third sector as Social Innovation" (ITSSOIN)*. European Commission, DG Research.

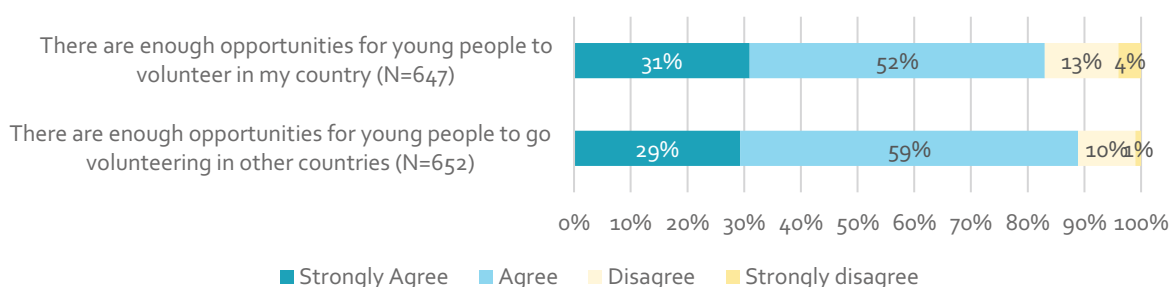
FIGURE 7. POPULARITY OF VOLUNTEERING IN EU BY FREQUENCY OF ACTIVITIES



Source: PPMI survey of organisations

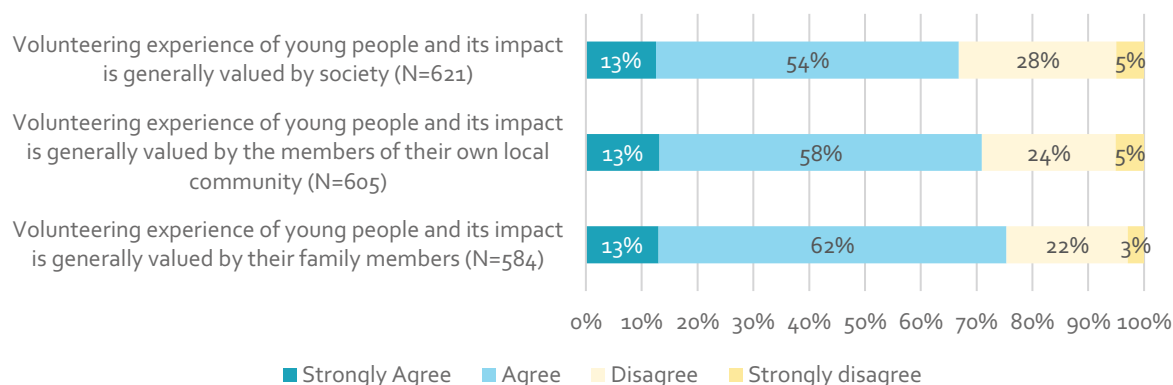
As to the perceived availability of volunteering opportunities, the organisations surveyed perceive a sufficient supply of both in-country and cross-border opportunities, as seen in Figure 8. Over 80% of respondents claim that there are enough opportunities for young people to volunteer in their country, and almost 90% agree that there are enough opportunities for young people to volunteer abroad.

FIGURE 8. AVAILABILITY OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES



Source: PPMI survey of organisations

Based on our survey results, volunteering experience is generally valued in the EU Member States, as shown in Figure 9. Around 70% of the respondents agree that the volunteering experiences of young people are valued by society, by the local community and by their family members. These results suggest that the awareness and recognition of the benefits of volunteering is deeply rooted in the perceptions of EU citizens.

FIGURE 9. PERCEIVED VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE

Source: PPMI survey of organisations

Cross-country differences in volunteering culture⁴⁷

Apart from the low popularity of cross-border volunteering, the tradition and culture of volunteering in the EU appear to be well-developed and favourable to both volunteers and volunteering organisations. However, important differences exist between countries, which need to be addressed. By combining and triangulating country-level survey results with data gathered via interviews and desk research, this section develops a **four-fold classification of EU Member States based on how highly developed the culture and tradition of volunteering are in each country, and how popular volunteering is**. The development of volunteering culture and tradition in a Member State relate to the historical roots of volunteering in that country: how long and how widely the concept has been known to the society in question, and whether any important milestones or interruptions have occurred in the development of volunteering. The popularity of volunteering refers to the youth engagement in volunteering activities, based on data from Flash Eurobarometer 478. Volunteering is regarded as relatively popular if 30% or more of survey respondents from a particular country have reported volunteering during the preceding 12 months in 2019. Otherwise, it was regarded as relatively unpopular.

Table 5 divides EU Member States into four groups, which are further characterised below. These groupings enable us to better understand the different types of obstacles to solidarity activities faced in each country.

⁴⁷ This section provides a synthesis of relevant information. For details on volunteering culture in the individual Member States, see the country fiches in Annex 4.

TABLE 5. DIFFERENCES IN YOUTH VOLUNTEERING CULTURE ACROSS EU MEMBER STATES

PARTICIPATION TRADITION	Volunteering relatively popular	Volunteering relatively unpopular
Developed	<p>GROUP 1</p> <p>Austria Italy</p> <p>Belgium Luxembourg</p> <p>Denmark Netherlands</p> <p>Estonia Slovenia</p> <p>Germany United Kingdom</p>	<p>GROUP 2</p> <p>Finland</p> <p>Malta</p> <p>Sweden</p>
Developing	<p>GROUP 3</p> <p>Cyprus Lithuania</p> <p>France Portugal</p> <p>Greece Spain</p> <p>Ireland</p>	<p>GROUP 4</p> <p>Bulgaria Latvia</p> <p>Croatia Poland</p> <p>Czechia Romania</p> <p>Hungary Slovakia</p>

Source: compiled by PPMI on the basis of desk research, interview findings and survey data.

The **first group of countries consists of Member States that have a comparatively well-developed tradition of volunteering in which volunteering activities are popular and valued by society**. Most of these countries, including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia and the United Kingdom, have a long-standing tradition of volunteering. The volunteering tradition in these countries frequently stems from the middle ages, when it was mostly organised by religious organisations, with volunteering becoming secularised and encouraged by the state by the 20th century.⁴⁸ In some of these countries, a significant portion of community services such as ambulances or fire protection are currently run by bodies that engage volunteers. Societies in these countries are well-aware of and recognise the value of voluntary work. These countries also tend to possess a well-established institutional and regulatory structure regarding volunteering activities.⁴⁹ Estonia presents more of an outlier in the sense that its volunteering tradition was interrupted by Communist rule during the 20th century, but considering the high popularity and good organisation of volunteering activities, as well as the popularity of cross-border volunteering (14%; one of the highest shares in the EU28), the volunteering tradition can be classified as developed.⁵⁰

The **second group consists of countries that possess a volunteering tradition, but in which solidarity activities are relatively unpopular**. This group consists of Finland, Malta, and Sweden. All of these countries have a deep-rooted tradition of volunteering, which in the past was organised by religious organisations; however, the popularity of solidarity activities is now low due to the declining importance of the church or a lack of interest and involvement by the state. As a result of the latter, volunteering is also not strictly legally regulated or promoted. In Sweden, volunteering is often linked

⁴⁸ GHK Consulting, *Study on Volunteering in the European Union. Country Report. Italy, Youth Wiki*

⁴⁹ GHK Consulting, *Study on Volunteering in the European Union. Country Report. Italy*

⁵⁰ *Youth Wiki Estonia*

to political, community or civil society organisations.⁵¹ In Finland, the economic crisis in the 1990s and the resulting implementation of neo-liberal policies in a traditionally strong welfare state contributed to the development of the volunteering sector.⁵² Although volunteering has found itself a place in Finnish society, its popularity remains low. Finland ranks last among the EU28 for youth engagement in volunteering activities, based on Eurobarometer data.

The **third group is made up of countries whose tradition of volunteering is just developing, but in which it is nevertheless a popular activity.** Cyprus, France, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Spain and Portugal fall into this category. The group is diverse in terms of its volunteering tradition. Some countries, such as Cyprus, France and Ireland, have a long-standing tradition of volunteering largely based on the involvement of religious organisations, which has had to be reformed with the decreasing influence of the church.⁵³ Others, such as Lithuania, Portugal and Spain, have seen the development of their volunteering tradition interrupted by unfavourable political regimes during the 20th century. In Lithuania, for instance, non-governmental organisations were banned by the Communist regime. In Spain, the Franco-regime provided unfavourable ground for the development of a volunteering tradition.⁵⁴ Greece did not possess a long-standing tradition of volunteering, and has only begun to develop one recently with the advent of the Athens Olympics and the economic crisis.⁵⁵ What connects these countries, though, is the popularity of volunteering, despite the lack of a tradition or recognition. In all countries, recent positive developments were reported in the volunteering sector, and youth engagement in solidarity activities is comparatively high and rising.

The **fourth group comprises countries developing a volunteering tradition, where solidarity activities are relatively unpopular,** meaning that less than 30% of Eurobarometer survey respondents reported to have volunteered recently. It consists of post-socialist CEE countries, namely Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. The development of a volunteering tradition was interrupted by Communist rule in all of these countries. Civil society organisations were banned for an extended period during the 20th century, and only began to become re-established during the 1990ies.⁵⁶ Despite a developing tradition and culture of volunteering and positive policy developments in some of these countries, the popularity and the recognition of the value of voluntary work remain low. The fields of volunteering and NGOs are often very fragmented and horizontal in these countries, and volunteering is sporadic and occasional rather than regular and organised. There is a lack of recognition of what voluntarism and volunteering are, and what they entail for volunteers.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Youth Wiki Sweden

⁵² Youth Wiki Finland

⁵³ Youth Wiki

⁵⁴ Youth Wiki Lithuania, Spain

⁵⁵ GHK Consulting, *Study on Volunteering in the European Union. National Report Greece*. Available at: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261764/National_report_GR.pdf/609199ff-9753-49df-bed7-32349d3abe91

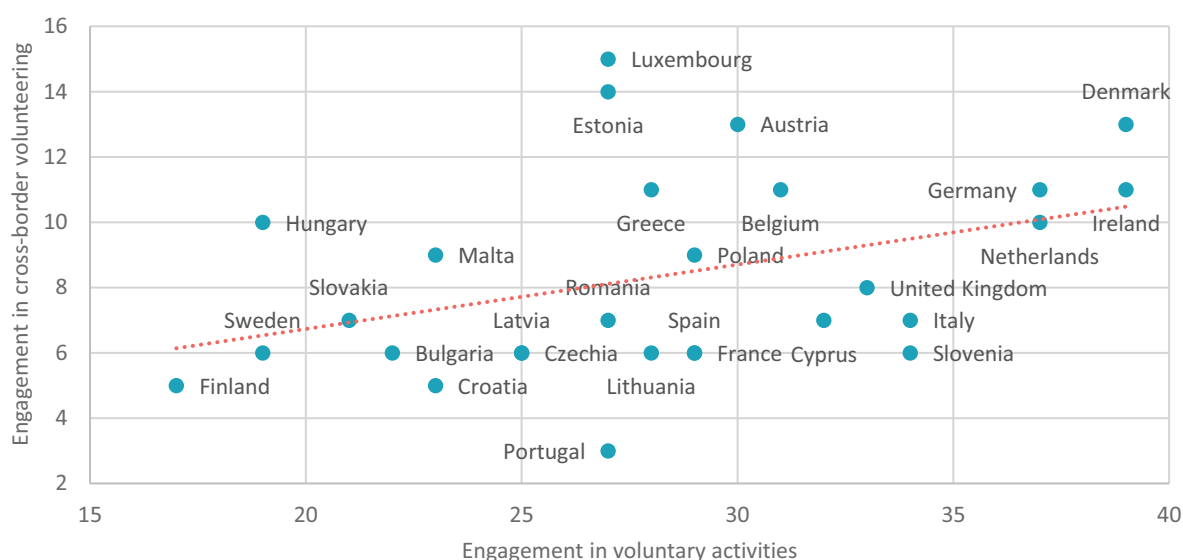
⁵⁶ Youth Wiki

⁵⁷ Interview findings

These four groupings help us to understand the varying nature of the obstacles and challenges faced in different countries, and the need for different measures and priorities to be set in order to address them. Group 1 countries, in which the popularity of volunteering is high and a developed culture of volunteering exists, are able to focus on raising awareness of cross-border solidarity activities, while countries in Group 2 need to adopt measures to popularise volunteering in general. Group 3 need to focus on developing a culture of both national and cross-border volunteering, while Group 4 countries also need to address the issues that make volunteering unpopular in their national contexts.

Looking at the relative popularity of cross-border volunteering specifically, when we compare the statistics on cross-border volunteering in Figure 4 and the groupings in Table 5, we see that, with some outliers, cross-border volunteering tends to be more popular in those countries in which volunteering and solidarity activities are generally popular. For instance, apart from Hungary, all of the countries in which 10% or more Eurobarometer respondents claim to have participated in cross-border volunteering activities in 2017 fall into Groups 1 and 3. Figure 10 shows some correlation between cross-border volunteering and the popularity of volunteering in general in many of the EU28 countries in 2017. The data also reveals some outliers: in countries such as Luxembourg, Estonia and Austria, cross-border volunteering is disproportionately popular compared to general engagement in volunteering.

FIGURE 10. ENGAGEMENT IN VOLUNTEERING, IN-COUNTRY AND CROSS-BORDER, IN 2017 (%)



Source: Flash Eurobarometer 455

3.2.3. Policies to support (cross-border) solidarity at national level

This section presents the study's findings on EU Member States' policies to support (cross-border) solidarity activities at national level. The first sub-section presents the findings on the overall supply of national/regional level schemes supporting cross-border volunteering/solidarity activities in the EU Member States. It details the typology of the schemes, their aims, organisational arrangements, geographical scope, etc. The second sub-section summarises the study's findings on capacity-building policies in the Member States encompassing policies aimed at developing the capacities of organisations to implement (cross-border) solidarity and volunteering activities, and to increase the competences and skills of persons involved in this process. The third sub-section presents the study's findings on existing policies within Member States' aimed at raising awareness raising of/promoting (cross-border) volunteering opportunities among young persons, including the tools and communication strategies used. The findings in this section rely mostly on the qualitative evidence collected through desk research/mapping and interviews with relevant stakeholders.

The overall supply of cross-border volunteering schemes in the EU

Overall, the majority of EU countries possess national/regional-level schemes that support cross-border volunteering and solidarity activities. The mapping exercise revealed that out of 28 EU Member States, 18 countries have one or more national/regional scheme supporting cross-border solidarity activities (although not all of these explicitly target young people). In the remaining 10 countries, no such scheme(s) had been developed (see Table 6)

TABLE 6: EXISTENCE OF NATIONAL/REGIONAL CROSS-BORDER VOLUNTEERING/SOLIDARITY SCHEMES IN EU MEMBER STATES

EU countries with existing national/regional schemes supporting cross-border solidarity/volunteering activities	Italy, UK, Greece, Sweden, Austria, Slovenia, France, Slovakia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Malta, Spain.
EU countries with no existing national/regional schemes supporting cross-border solidarity/volunteering activities	Latvia, Hungary, Netherlands, Cyprus, Denmark, Croatia, Portugal, Lithuania, Romania, Estonia

Source: Compiled by PPMI, based on mapping/desk research

As the above mapping results show, the existence or absence of national/regional-level schemes supporting cross-border volunteering activities does not depend on a country's size, nor on its geographical or economic characteristics. It must also be noted that the scope of such schemes differs very significantly between countries: while some countries possess large-scale civic service schemes administered by public institutions/agencies (e.g. the national civic service in France or Italy) involving thousands of volunteers

annually, in many other Member States the volunteering offer for young people consists of a number of smaller-scale schemes supported by public funds and involving only dozens of beneficiaries annually. In addition, the absence of a national cross-border volunteering scheme does not mean that no volunteering opportunities/activities exist in that country; (cross-border) volunteering activities in these countries may be provided by privately run organisations, some of which are international (e.g. Caritas).

In terms of the specific content of existing national/regional schemes, our mapping of existing national-level (cross-border) volunteering schemes reveals that the supply of cross-border volunteering opportunities/programmes in Europe varies greatly across Europe, both in terms of overall scope and content. Several types of schemes/programmes can be distinguished:

- One of the most common types of cross-border volunteering schemes at national level supports **the mobility of young European volunteers to non-European (usually developing) countries** with the aim of providing humanitarian aid, and support for economic and social development, ecology, cultural heritage, cultural exchange etc. Examples of this type of schemes include the International Youth Voluntary Service (Internationaler Jugendfreiwilligendienst, IJFD); Kulturweit, a cultural volunteering programme run by the German Commission for UNESCO in Germany; VSI – International Solidarity Volunteering in France; and the Polish Aid Volunteering scheme supporting mobility of volunteers to developing countries (described in Box 1).
- In some cases the opportunity to go abroad as a volunteer is **integrated into a broader and more general national civic service scheme**, which has been developed primarily and mainly for in-country volunteering but currently also includes a separate strand providing opportunities for young volunteers to be part of an exchange with a foreign host organisation. This is the case with the National Civic Service in Italy and France.
- **Bilateral agreements on exchanges and volunteering projects between two (usually-neighbouring) European countries**, with the aim of strengthening the mutual understanding of each other's culture, fighting prejudice, supporting economic cooperation, etc. Examples of this type of schemes include the Bilateral Franco-German volunteering scheme, which supports various types of exchange between young people in France and Germany, including language, education, active labour market support, art, the popularisation of science, sports and culture. Another example is TANDEM, the Coordination centre for Czech-German Youth Exchanges.
- Yet another type of cross-border youth volunteering programmes is **support for the organisation of international youth work camps/forums/workshops** and similar projects, where relevant topics such as the knowledge of each other's culture, ecology, cultural heritage and others are discussed among groups of young people from different countries. Examples of this type of scheme include work camps of the CVS programme in Bulgaria; the International Volunteer Fields (Campos de Voluntariado Internacional) in Spain; and KVT, the Finnish Branch of Service Civil International, which organises international youth work camps in Finland.

As mentioned, in some countries (such as Romania, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Portugal, Cyprus, Croatia) there are no national-level schemes supporting cross-border volunteering activities among young people. In the case of these countries, the European Solidarity Corps is the only structured cross-border volunteering programme offering funding for young persons – although some cross-border volunteering opportunities may also be provided in these countries by local organisations (e.g. local religious organisations), ad-hoc projects, etc.

The European Solidarity Corps programme is therefore especially relevant in countries that lack opportunities for young people to engage in cross-border solidarity activities. Even in those Member States where such cross-border schemes do exist, the above analysis reveals that they differ very significantly in scope and content. The Corps is therefore highly relevant, and complements the overall supply of cross-border volunteering opportunities even in the Member States that already possess domestic schemes that support cross-border solidarity activities.

BOX 1: EXAMPLE OF A NATIONAL-LEVEL, CROSS-BORDER VOLUNTEERING SCHEME: POLISH AID VOLUNTEERING

The Polish Aid Volunteering scheme, funded by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), has been in operation since 2008. Its aim is to support the direct involvement of Polish citizens in assisting locals in developing countries, and the dissemination of knowledge about the problems of those countries within Polish society.

Grants issued by the MFA cover the travel, accommodation and insurance costs of volunteers taking part in the programme, as well as funding training sessions and courses adapted to the specifics of the given task and the project. On the ground, volunteers are taken care of by the receiving organisation; their work lasts a minimum of three months. Financial support also covers educational initiatives undertaken by the volunteer after returning to Poland.

The programme brings benefits both for the local community towards whom the aid project is addressed, and for volunteers themselves, who gain experience in a culturally different environment.

Capacity building and quality assurance

Overall, study evidence indicates that efforts are made in most countries to build the capacities of volunteering organisations, improving their organisational practices and the competences/skills of the people who manage groups of volunteers. Usually this support is provided to organisations by public institutions/agencies/ministries; however, in some cases it may also be provided by NGOs/independent bodies.

Both results of both our mapping and interviews indicate that the most common policy instruments used to develop the capacities of volunteering organisations are the **various training and information dissemination initiatives organised by public authorities/agencies and targeting local volunteering organisations**. For example, in Lithuania the Department of Youth Affairs within the Ministry of Social Security and Labour regularly organises training sessions for the staff of volunteering organisations. These sessions are aimed at improving the capacity of staff to mentor young volunteers and help them to develop their personal competences. Since 2018, three sessions of this type have been carried out, targeting host organisations at national

level. In the UK, the Association of Volunteer Managers (AVM), an independent body, aims to support, represent and champion people who manage volunteers in England, regardless of their field, discipline or sector. The AVM regularly organises training for managers of volunteers to improve their skills and the capacities of volunteering organisations. In Latvia, the Agency for International Programs for Youth organises training sessions and seminars for youth workers and the coordinators of volunteering projects in order to develop the quality of international youth projects. In France, France Bénévolat – a national network dedicated to the welcoming and guidance of volunteers – organises training for its members and other stakeholders on volunteering-related issues, in particular on volunteer recruitment, integration, and management. In Spain, under Law 45/2015 on Volunteering, public authorities are bound to support volunteering organisations in the training of volunteers, to ensure the quality of volunteering activities and their compliance with the personal needs of volunteers.

In addition, a number of countries **aim to improve the capacities of volunteering organisations by developing various guidelines and standards, usually of a recommendatory nature**. In 2017, four regional volunteering centres founded the Croatian Volunteer Development Centre (CVDC). This aims to strengthen resources and support the development and promotion of volunteering in Croatia. Within the scope of its work, the CVDC has developed standards for volunteering centres, which will be supported by Croatia's Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy through the implementation of the National Programme for the Development of Volunteering 2020–2024, together with other standards in the volunteering field. In Czechia, the National Register of Qualifications (Národní soustava kvalifikací, NSK) – a public register of complete and partial qualifications and their qualifications and assessment standards – includes a qualification for a Coordinator of Volunteers. This qualification identifies a set of standards that allow the objective verification and recognition of abilities specific to volunteer coordinators. The qualification also specifies 10 competences including the planning and preparation of voluntary work within an organisation; the individual management of volunteers, their motivation, development and appreciation, etc. Similarly, in 2019 Lithuania approved an official quality procedure for organisations involved in organising volunteering activities and hosting volunteers.⁵⁸ This document contains several guidelines and recommendations for organisations on hosting volunteers, providing them with information before and during volunteering period, organising training when necessary, etc. In Austria in order to standardise and ensure the highest quality of training for persons responsible for voluntary engagement, the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection issued a manual for the curricula of courses for persons in charge of volunteers.⁵⁹ In Ireland, the National Agency Volunteer Ireland manages 'Investing in Volunteers' (IiV), a national quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. The standard⁶⁰ provides organisations with a framework to benchmark the quality of their volunteer programme, and guides them through putting in place the necessary steps to improve volunteer retention, manage

⁵⁸ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/e58f16e4895b11e98a8298567570d639?jfwid=-1799zjm998>

⁵⁹ Volunteering in Austria, <

http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/sites/default/files/Volunteering%20in%20Austria_1.pdf>

⁶⁰ https://volunteer.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/The_IiV_Standard.pdf

their volunteering programme more easily and effectively, and enhance their reputation as an organisation.⁶¹

In terms of national policies in relation to quality assurance in volunteering activities, our mapping and interview results show that in most of the EU, besides the general standards and guidelines described above, **no rigid centralised quality assurance frameworks exist for all volunteering organisations and projects. The evaluation of individual projects relies largely on the organisations that implement them.**

In Member States where a quality assurance/project evaluation framework does exist, it is usually linked to a single or major volunteering scheme at national level. For example, volunteering quality assurance in Malta is based on a formal monitoring and evaluation mechanism to assure the quality of the Youth Voluntary Work Scheme. No other quality assurance mechanisms exist in Malta to evaluate all volunteering schemes centrally – quality assurance is applied directly only to the Youth Voluntary Work Scheme. Similarly, in France, although no general quality assurance framework exists for all volunteering activities/organisations, a different situation applies to the national Civic Service scheme: the Agence du Service Civique (Civic Service Agency⁶²) issues a référentiel des missions (mission standards) for bodies wishing to set up a civic service mission, illustrating what can be implemented in line with the principles of the scheme. In the Netherlands, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport⁶³ has ordered a research office to monitor the developments of experimental projects that have begun within the framework of the new social service programme for young people, established in 2018. In Portugal, entities wishing to implement projects within the framework of the 'Now Us' (Agora Nós) and Youth Volunteering for Nature and Forests (Vountariado jovem para a Natureza e Florestas) programmes must first present evidence to the Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth (IPDJ) that they meet a number of criteria and requirements, such as having sufficient human resources available to coordination activities, possessing the necessary materials, etc.

In some countries, quality assurance is implemented via the **conditions required for organisations to receive public funding**. For example, in Croatia, the beneficiaries of public funding (regional volunteer centres and local volunteer centres) are obliged to submit descriptive and financial reports twice a year to the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy (MDFYSP). These reports detail project achievements and outcomes, co-operation, the organisation's capacities and the project's performance. Every four years, the Youth Department of the French-Speaking Community in Belgium evaluates the activities of youth associations. In order to receive financial support from the administration, associations must submit a report of their activities and gain approval from the department. In the UK, organisations in receipt of government funding are expected to provide value for money. The National Audit Office⁶⁴ uses three criteria to assess value for money:

⁶¹ <https://www.volunteer.ie/organisations/quality-in-volunteer-management-iiiv/>

⁶² <http://www.service-civique.gouv.fr/page/le-referentiel-des-missions>

⁶³ <https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-health-welfare-and-sport>

⁶⁴ <https://www.nao.org.uk/about-us/>

- Economy: minimising the cost of resources used or required (inputs); that is, spending less.
- Efficiency: the relationship between the output from goods or services and the resources to produce them; that is, spending well.
- Effectiveness: the relationship between the intended and actual results of public spending (outcomes); that is, spending wisely.

Awareness-raising policies

Our analysis shows that in **most European countries there are attempts and instruments aimed at popularising and raising awareness of (cross-border) volunteering opportunities for young people. However, most countries have several sources of information on available volunteering opportunities that are usually not integrated into a single system.**

Most countries possess some kind of centralised **youth information portal/online volunteering database offering detailed information on currently available (cross-border) volunteering opportunities.** Very often, these websites are developed as a joint effort by an association/umbrella organisation/network of national volunteering organisations. In Austria, the online platform (www.freiwilligenweb.at), dedicated to volunteering activities, provides information on any topic relating to voluntary engagement in the country. The Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth (IPDJ) publicises all volunteering activities for young people via its multi-channel communication system, including the online National Youth Portal. In Estonia, a publicly funded and coordinated portal advertises voluntary work opportunities⁶⁵, while several private portals offer information about jobs and volunteering opportunities that are available. Similarly, in Croatia, information contact points include the web portal of the Croatian Volunteer Centres Network, which consolidates information from regional and local volunteer centres. In Lithuania, several online platforms provide information on (cross-border) volunteering opportunities. The Non-Governmental Organisation Information and Support Centre (NISC) provides detailed information on volunteering on its website. Information on youth volunteering opportunities is also provided in a free database at www.buksavanoriu.lt. Two other websites – www.savanoriaujam.lt ('We volunteer') and www.kulturossavanoriai.lt ('Culture volunteers') – provide links and information on volunteering organisations and activities available in Lithuania and abroad. In Denmark, no single unit is responsible for volunteering, so several bodies supply information via their social media accounts and websites, and invest funds to improve these services. In Spain, although there is no single, integrated online provider of information on (cross-border) volunteering activities, a number of entities offer information regarding volunteering opportunities in the country and abroad. These include the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo); the Spanish Youth Institute (INJUVE); the websites of the Fundación Vicente Ferrer, Plataforma de Voluntariado and Asociación Española de Fundaciones; as well as other entities such as the Red Cross (Cruz Roja) or UNICEF.

⁶⁵ www.vabatahtlikud.ee

Some countries organise **regular, dedicated events aimed at popularising raising awareness of volunteering**, emphasising the benefits of volunteering activities to society and to the individuals involved. For example, Latvia celebrates International Volunteer Day each year on 5 December. A special ceremony honours and rewards the year's most active volunteers – individuals who have carried out remarkable and selfless work for the benefit of the community – as well as volunteer-friendly non-governmental organisations and local governments from all over Latvia. Similarly, in 2016 the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector launched its National Campaign for Volunteer Awareness. One of its three main target audiences of the campaign was young people. As part of this campaign, the National Volunteer Awards⁶⁶ are held annually in December, and include an award for Youth Volunteer of the Year. The main aims of this award are to promote volunteering among young people. In Denmark, the main initiative to raise awareness about volunteering is Voluntary Friday, Denmark's national volunteering day. This is coordinated by FriSe (Frivilligcentre & Selvhjælp an independent volunteer centres' membership organisation), and its main objectives are to educate, provide information and improve the recognition of experience and skills acquired through volunteering activities.

In addition to online sources and promotional campaigns, in some countries information on volunteering opportunities is **disseminated directly to young people via local/municipal volunteering and information centres**. France has a network of around 1,500 youth information points and offices (Réseau Information Jeunesse) at national, regional and local level, at which young people are informed of the volunteering opportunities available. In Slovakia, young people can receive information at regional volunteer centres. The first of these were established in Banská Bystrica, Bratislava, Prešov and Nitra. In 2015, additional centres opened in Trnava, Trenčín and Žilina, and another in Košice was re-opened. Over recent years, the MESRS (Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport) made financial support available to these centres via the Programmes for Youth, within a specific programme called 'Services for Youth'. In Austria, as part of the pilot scheme GEMA – Active Together, an independent volunteer centre is being established which provides a professional infrastructure for the placement, networking, training and further training of volunteers. In Romania, although there are no state-funded national and/or regional volunteer centres or agencies, volunteer centres have been opened in some municipalities, promoting volunteering at local level and matching volunteers up with local institutions.

3.2.4. Achievements of the European Solidarity Corps so far

As discussed in previous sections, the European Solidarity Corps programme is the main initiative at EU level to enable cross-border solidarity activities. The programme's accomplishments can thus be used to review the state of play and prevailing trends, both at EU and national level. This is especially relevant in the case of those countries outlined in section 3.2.3, in which the European Solidarity Corps is the only available option for young people wishing to participate in cross-border solidarity activities. Before this report discusses the specific obstacles to participation in the programme in section 5, in this

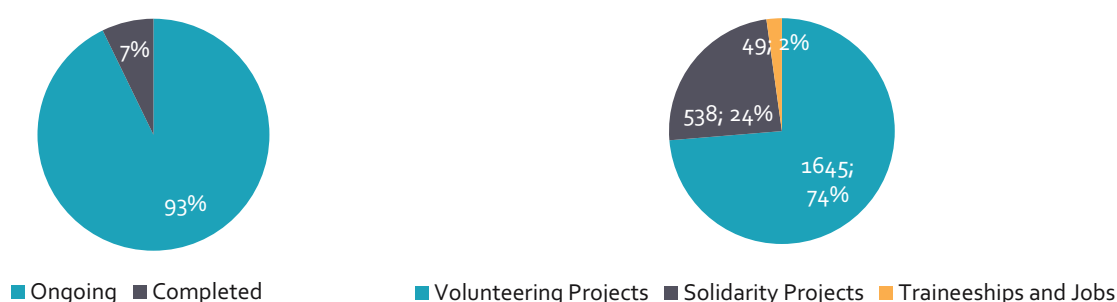
⁶⁶ <https://maltacvs.org/national-volunteer-award/>

section we provide an overview of the current state of play for the Corps. This is achieved through an analysis of the projects awarded in 2018 and 2019. This evaluates the achievements of the programme's most prominent actions, examines the types of applicants attracted and projects carried out, and outlines the key trends behind each operational action.

Based on the information available in the **European Solidarity Corps Projects database in November 2019**⁶⁷, the Corps currently has 2,071 ongoing projects. Another 161 projects have already been completed. According to the latest official factsheet on the programme's state of play⁶⁸, more than 161,000 people have expressed an interest in taking part in the programme, and more than 20,000 people have already commenced solidarity activities since the inception of the programme in December 2016.

Within the framework of the programme, young people are encouraged to carry out volunteering activities, take part in traineeships and jobs, as well as implementing their own solidarity projects. As seen in Figure 11, the dominant activity for projects funded in 2018 and 2019 is volunteering projects. These account for approximately 74% of all activities. This is followed by solidarity projects (24% of all projects). Only a small share of all projects, approximately 2%, are organised around the activities of traineeships and jobs.

FIGURE 11. OVERVIEW OF EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS PROJECTS FUNDED IN 2018-2019.

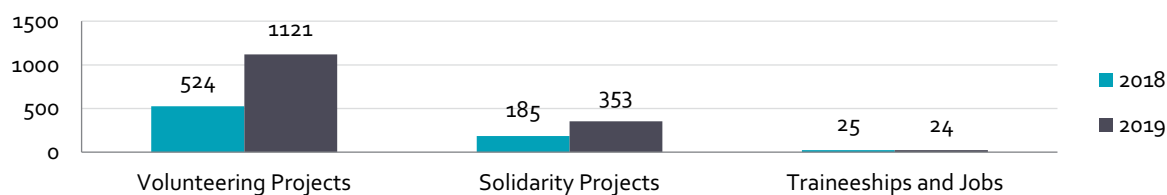


Source: Compiled by PPMI, based on the European Solidarity Corps Projects database. Last accessed on November 27, 2019.

As illustrated in Figure 12, the number of volunteering and solidarity projects more than doubled between 2018 and 2019. This was not the case for traineeships and jobs strand, where the number of projects decreased slightly.

⁶⁷ Available at <https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/projects>. The overview is based on data last accessed on November 27, 2019, 10:00.





⁶⁸ European Solidarity Corps - State of play September 2019. Available at https://europa.eu/youth/sites/default/files/european_solidarity_corps_factsheet.pdf

FIGURE 12. NUMBER OF EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS-FUNDED PROJECTS BY YEAR AND ACTION.

Source: PPMI, based on the European Solidarity Corps Projects database. Last accessed on November 27, 2019.

According to the Programme Guide⁶⁹, European Solidarity Corps activities are primarily available to the EU Member States. In addition, volunteers from three other groups of countries, namely the EFTA countries, Candidate countries, and Partner countries neighbouring the EU (the Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership countries, South-Mediterranean countries and the Russian Federation), are also allowed to participate in certain actions. The available project data in November 2019 shows that projects are organised by a total of 31 countries and territories. Spain leads the way with the greatest number of projects (297), followed by France (235), Germany (228), Italy (183) and Poland (141). These five countries account for nearly half of all European Solidarity Corps projects. The lowest number of projects are coordinated by the Overseas Territories of the Netherlands, Curaçao (two projects), Iceland and Aruba (one project each).

FIGURE 13. OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS BY COUNTRY, 2018-2019.

European Solidarity Corps projects			Volunteering Projects			Solidarity Projects			Traineeships and Jobs		
	ES	13% (297)		ES	16% (262)		PL	10% (52)		PL	10% (5)
	FR	11% (235)		FR	13% (218)		EE	9% (49)		IT	10% (5)
	DE	10% (228)		DE	12% (200)		RO	7% (38)	FR, CZ, BG, HR, SI	8% (4) each	

Source: Compiled by PPMI, based on the European Solidarity Corps Projects database. Last accessed on November 27, 2019.

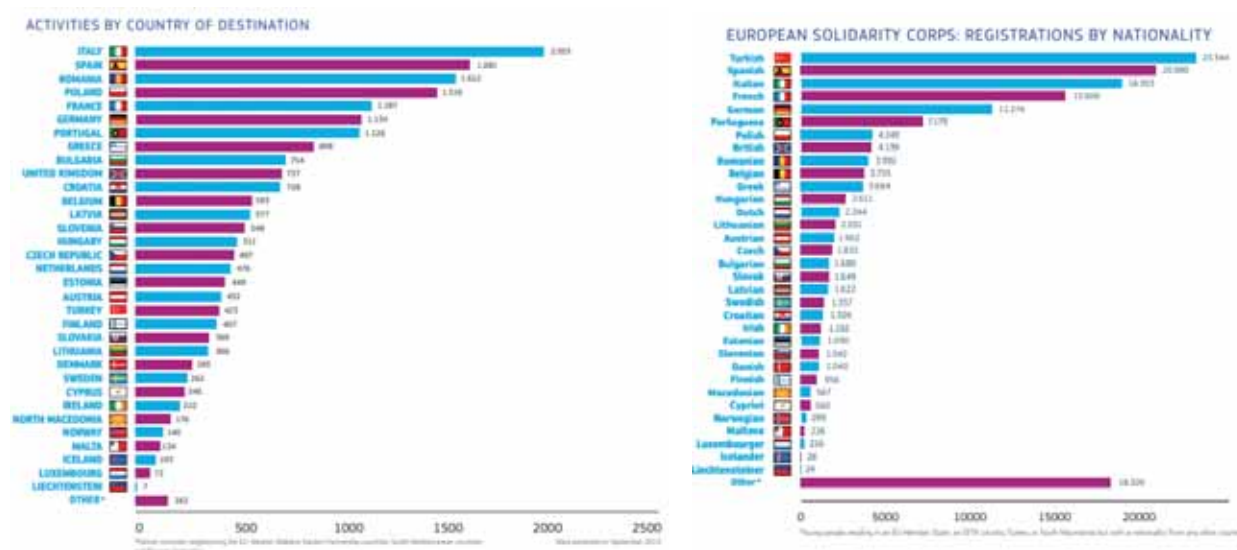
Figure 14 below, taken from the most recent 'state of play' factsheet at the time of our research⁷⁰ reveals the situation from the perspective of participants. The most active countries in terms of youth participation are Italy (2,053 active participants), Spain and Romania (1,681 and 1,612 active participants, respectively). According to the data from the aforementioned factsheet, it can be assumed that Turkish youth is the most interested in the programme, based on their willingness expressed by registering on the European Solidarity Corps Portal. As of September 2019, a total of 23,344 Turkish students had expressed their interest in joining the pool of participants hoping to enrol in a project. Applications from Turkish youth therefore make up approximately 14% of all

⁶⁹ Programme Guide (p. 12-13). Available at <http://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/library/documents/2018-european-solidarity-corps-guide.pdf>

⁷⁰ European Solidarity Corps - State of play September 2019. Available at https://europa.eu/youth/sites/default/files/european_solidarity_corps_factsheet.pdf

registrations since the inception of the programme at the end of 2016. Other nationalities active in terms of registration are Spanish (20,980 people, or 13% of all registered candidates) and Italians (18,953, or 12% of all registered candidates).

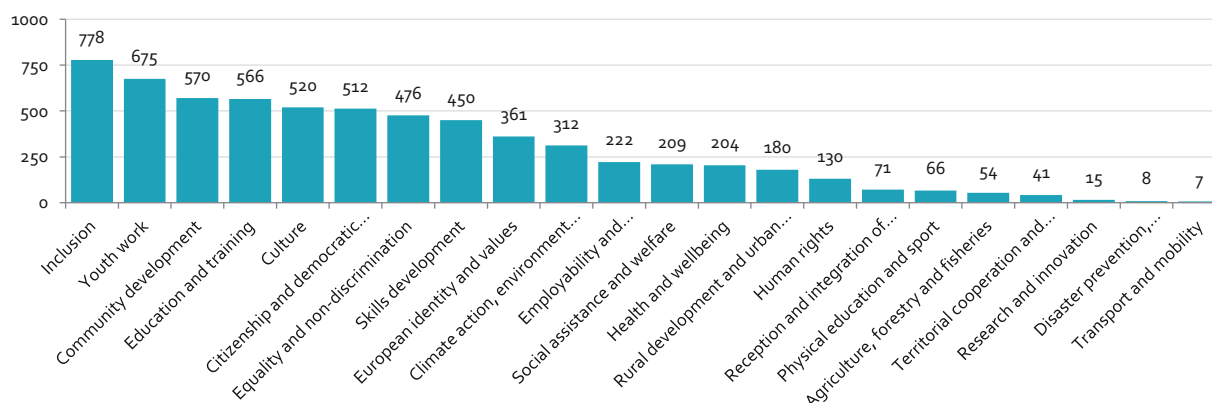
FIGURE 14. EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS PARTICIPANTS BY COUNTRY; CORPS REGISTRATIONS BY NATIONALITY



Source: 'European Solidarity Corps - State of play September 2019' factsheet.

Based on the descriptions of 2,232 projects available in the database in November 2019, the range of project topics is immense. Participating organisations choose to coordinate projects that concern a variety of fields – agriculture, education and training, health and culture, to name a few. The most prominent theme throughout all ongoing and completed projects, however, is **inclusion**. This is identified as a topic in 35% of all projects. Projects indicating inclusion as one of their topics most often paired it with **equality and non-discrimination** (paired with 34% of all inclusion projects) and **community development** (paired with 19% of all inclusion projects), which provides a better view of prevailing activities.

The two other most frequently used categories were **youth work** and **community development**, representing 30% and 26% of all projects, respectively. The least often applied topics were **transport and mobility** and **disaster prevention** – seven and eight projects, respectively. European Solidarity Corps projects are detailed by topic in Figure 15 below.

FIGURE 15. 2018-2019 EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS PROJECTS BY TOPIC.

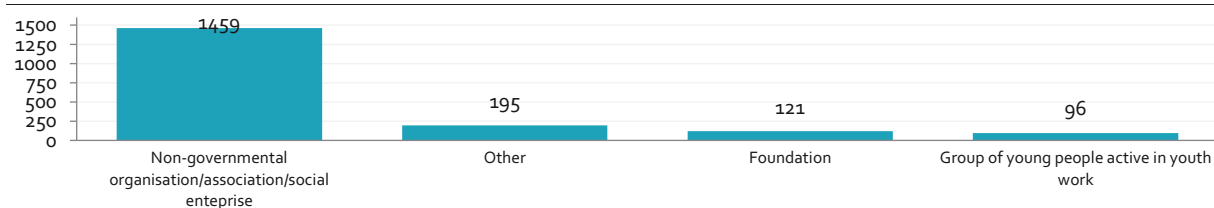
Source: Compiled by PPMI, based on the European Solidarity Corps Projects database. Last accessed on November 27, 2019.

FIGURE 16. RECURRING TOPICS BY ACTION, 2018-2019.

European Solidarity Corps projects		Volunteering Projects		Solidarity Projects		Traineeships and Jobs	
Inclusion	35% (778)	Inclusion	36% (599)	Community development	42% (229)	Employability and entrepreneurship	45% (22)
Youthwork	30% (675)	Youthwork	33% (538)	Inclusion	30% (164)	Youth work	45% (22)
Community development	26% (570)	Education and training	26% (434)	Skills development	24% (128)	Education and training	41% (20)

Source: PPMI, based on the European Solidarity Corps Projects database. Last accessed on November 27, 2019.

Projects are primarily coordinated by non-governmental organisations, associations and social enterprises – projects coordinated by such bodies account for nearly two-thirds of all of those funded, as can be seen from Figure 17. The second most prevalent type of applicant is categorised as 'Other' (9%). This category includes entities such as non-profit-making cultural organisations, civil society organisations, cultural operators, art associations and others. Other frequently occurring applicants are foundations (5%), groups of young people active in youth work (4%), and local public bodies (4%).

FIGURE 17. 2018-2019 EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS PROJECTS BY ORGANISATION TYPE

Source: Compiled by PPMI, based on the European Solidarity Corps Projects database. Last accessed on November 27, 2019.

Non-governmental organisations are the most frequent applicants throughout all participating countries and territories. The second most frequently occurring players in European Solidarity Corps activities, foundations, are most active in Poland, where they account for 30% of all beneficiaries.

The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of the three types of action.

Volunteering projects

Volunteering projects make up the majority of all European Solidarity Corps projects, accounting for 1,645 (74%) of all projects funded during the period 2018- 2019. Spain, France and Germany are the countries with greatest numbers of organisations participating in this type of action, and together make up more than 40% of all volunteering projects. As reflected in Figure 15, the prevailing topics are **inclusion**, **youth work** and **education and training**. The main applicants and organisers of projects in this action are non-governmental organisations/associations/social enterprises, which make up approximately 68% of all volunteering projects. Other applicants include entities categorised as 'Other', including foundations, local public bodies and European NGOs.

Solidarity projects

The category of solidarity projects showcases 538 projects, or 24% of all European Solidarity Corps projects, as seen in Figure 11. Participating organisations most frequently choose to create change in the form of **community development**, with 43% of all solidarity projects including this topic. Other popular topics for solidarity projects are **inclusion** (30%) and **skills development** (24%). The greatest numbers of solidarity projects are organised in Poland (52 projects), Estonia (49 projects) and Romania (38 projects). Approximately 56% of solidarity projects are carried out by non-governmental organisations/associations/social enterprises, followed by groups of young people active in youth work (18% of solidarity projects).

Traineeships and jobs

A total of 49 projects fall under the category of traineeships and jobs. Trainees and employees primarily target their skills in fields related to **employability and entrepreneurship** and **youth work**, with each of these topics assigned to approximately 45% of all traineeships and jobs projects. Another popular topic is **education and training** (42% of projects). The organisations responsible for traineeships or employment are usually non-governmental organisations/ associations/ social enterprises, which account for 76% of all cases. Other applicants include foundations, social enterprises and other entities. Poland and Italy are the countries with most projects under this action (five projects each), followed by France, Czechia, Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovenia – all with four projects each.

4. Obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities

The previous sections of the study have presented a definition of solidarity in Europe, introduced the overall policy context, analysed the scope and popularity of volunteering and provided an overview of national policy actions to support (cross-border) solidarity activities at national and EU levels. This section focuses on and explores the specific obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities.

4.1. Definition problems

The aim of the European Solidarity Corps is to promote and fund solidarity activities for young people in the EU and beyond. While its predecessor, the European Voluntary Service, had a clearly defined title that pointed to the programme's focus on volunteering, the term "solidarity" is broader and less straightforward. In this section, the study explores how "solidarity" and "solidarity activities" are understood in the Member States, whether any differences exist between Member States, and whether their definitions pose any misunderstandings or difficulties. The concepts of "solidarity" and "solidarity activities" were introduced and discussed in Section 3.1. This section compares the European Solidarity Corps definition of solidarity with definitions applied in the national contexts of the Member States.

BOX 2. GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS PROGRAMME

The general objective of the European Solidarity Corps is to promote solidarity as a value, mainly through volunteering, enhance the engagement of young people and organisations in accessible and high-quality solidarity activities as a means to contribute to strengthening cohesion, solidarity, democracy and citizenship in Europe, while also responding to societal challenges and strengthening communities, with particular effort to promote social inclusion. It shall also contribute to European cooperation that is relevant to young people.

Source: European Solidarity Corps Regulation, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018R1475>

Differing definitions of solidarity across the Member States

Based on extensive evidence from interviews, this study has found that **significant differences exist between Member States as to how solidarity is defined and understood**. We can divide the countries into three distinct groups on the basis of how far their local concept of solidarity overlaps with that promoted by the Corps. The first group consists of **countries in which solidarity is understood differently. In these Member States, national definition conflict somewhat with that of the Corps, representing different values or having different connotations**. The second group is made up of **countries whose national definition of solidarity partially overlaps with that of the Corps**, or which lack a national definition. There may be disagreements, the national concept of solidarity might relate to a different context or concepts, or be used only by a narrow group of actors in connection with the Corps. However, the two definitions are not in conflict, and solidarity does not have a negative connotation. The third group comprises **countries in which there is substantial overlap between the national definition and European Solidarity Corps**

definitions and understanding of solidarity, and where the concept is widely known and used in a national context.

TABLE 7. CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS DEFINITIONS OF SOLIDARITY

CORRESPONDENCE OF NATIONAL AND CORPS DEFINITIONS OF SOLIDARITY	DIFFERING DEFINITIONS	PARTIAL OVERLAP	SUBSTANTIAL OVERLAP
Country	Bulgaria, Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden	Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, United Kingdom	Italy, Netherlands, Slovenia, Portugal, Spain

Source: Compiled by PPMI based on desk research and interviews.

The countries in the first group are Bulgaria, Finland, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. In Poland the term is somewhat connected with the famous Solidarity trade union rather than with volunteering and the NGO field. In Finland, while the term solidarity is understood by the beneficiaries of the Corps, it is most frequently related to the radical left. Furthermore, the term "corps" has a military connotation in Finland and Lithuania. In Lithuania, the terms "active citizenship" or "volunteering" are used instead to describe solidarity activities. In Bulgaria, the term does not have a negative connotation but is not perceived as an equivalent of volunteering or related activities. In Sweden, there is no corresponding definition of solidarity, and a lack of understanding as to what it entails.

The second group is the largest of the three. In Austria, there is no definition of solidarity that is equivalent to that of the European Solidarity Corps, but the concept is widely understood in connection with volunteering. In France, solidarity is largely understood to mean non-profit activities, and this latter term is used instead in connection with volunteering. However, there is a lack of understanding of what solidarity jobs and traineeships entail. In Croatia, Czechia, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Romania and Slovakia, the concept of solidarity is used only in the context of the Corps, and is either not well, or not defined or used at all nationally. In Germany, the term solidarity is understood and used nationally but lacks a European or international solidarity component. In Cyprus, the concept behind the European Solidarity Corps is clear, but the national understanding of solidarity refers to the activities of charities. The situation is similar in Malta, where solidarity traditionally relates to religious organisations. In the UK, the term resilience rather than solidarity is used in connection with volunteering. In Hungary, the term solidarity is included in the legal definition of volunteering but in the public context, it is often related to the

country's pre-1989 socialist past and trade unions, and is a politically sensitive concept not used in connection with volunteering.

In Italy, Slovenia and Spain, members of the third group, the term of solidarity is used to describe the purpose of volunteering activities. It is used in volunteering laws and regulations. In Italy, however, solidarity is understood as a broad value, so some confusion still exists as to what solidarity and solidarity activities really entail among the beneficiaries of the Corps. In Slovenia, solidarity is only used to describe volunteering and not traineeships or jobs. In the Netherlands, solidarity is used to describe volunteering and community activities at the local level. The definition largely overlaps with that of the Corps, but the Dutch understanding is very much community-based rather than international. Similarly, in Portugal voluntary organisations are described as solidarity organisations, but solidarity is understood in terms of a narrower definition, as assistance to others in need.

BOX 3. EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF SOLIDARITY

Finland: The term solidarity was closely linked with the left wing and some radical movements in the 1970s and 1990s. The term "corps" is used in a military context. The combination of these two words is therefore strange in Finland. The European Solidarity Corps is explained as something that benefits society and brings common good. However, this meaning is not well received or easily understood.

France: No official definition of solidarity activities exists in France. Usually a distinction is made between non-profit and for-profit activity and "solidarity" is understood to describe everything that falls under the first category and is done for the "general good". However, the term is not frequently used in France; two other official terms are more commonly used: "bénévolat" and volunteering.

Spain: In the Spanish legal framework, the word "solidarity" is linked to the concept of volunteering. Article 3 of Law 45/2015 on Volunteering states that volunteering activities must be solidary.

Source: Interview programme, mapping

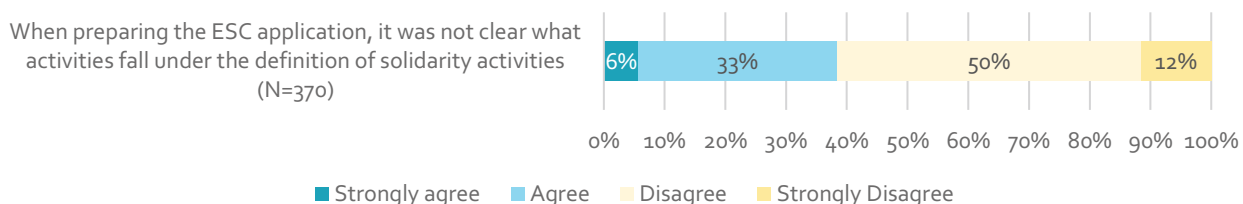
One feature common to all three groups is that **national definitions of solidarity rarely include any cross-border dimension of solidarity activities** (regardless of the level of overlap with the European Solidarity Corps' own definition). European solidarity, or cross-border solidarity in general, is not a widely known or applied concept in the Member States. According to an interviewee representing an EU-level association, in the context of the recent refugee crisis, some national volunteering schemes in larger Member States such as Italy or France even started promoting national identity and solidarity, thus somewhat conflicting with the purpose of the European Solidarity Corps.

Whereas solidarity in general at least broadly connects with the concept of volunteering in many countries, according to many interviewees there is a **lack of clarity as to what solidarity traineeships and jobs stand for, and what their relationship is to solidarity**. Some of our interview and survey respondents pointed out that the transition from the narrower definition of the European Voluntary Service to the wider understanding of solidarity and solidarity activities under the European Solidarity Corps

was too abrupt. They indicate that there was no transition phase that would have allowed the beneficiaries to familiarise themselves with the new concept, and that this has led to some confusion.

With regard to the **European Solidarity Corps specifically, our survey results indicate that as many as 62% of participating organisations had no problem understanding what types of activity fall under "solidarity activities"**, as seen in Figure 18. However, it is concerning that more than one-third of respondents struggled to understand the definition of "solidarity activities", despite the elaborate explanations provided in the European Solidarity Corps Regulation (EU) 2018/1475. It should be noted, however, this finding relates specifically to "solidarity activities" rather than general concept of solidarity.

FIGURE 18. CLARITY OF THE DEFINITION OF "SOLIDARITY ACTIVITIES"



Source: PPMI survey of organisations

This section of the report has focused on a broad definition of solidarity and solidarity activities, specifically in relation to the work of the European Solidarity Corps. For a more elaborate and detailed exploration of the differences in understandings of the concept of solidarity and what it entails within various contexts in the EU, refer to the recent study by the European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre.⁷¹

4.2. Existing regulatory and administrative frameworks

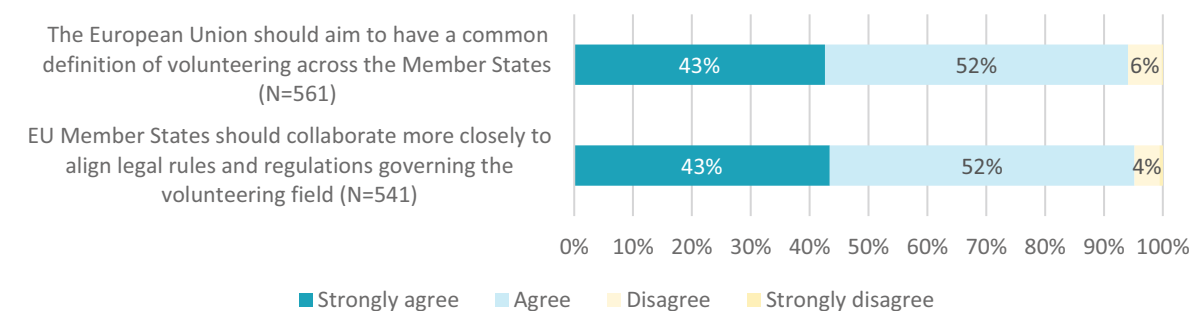
This section of the report explores the existing national administrative and regulatory frameworks that govern in-country and cross-border volunteering. The aspects discussed below include an analysis of the legal basis governing the field of solidarity; the existence of national strategies and strategic documents on volunteering; key definitions; and various issues relating to the entitlements of volunteers. We also briefly describe the existence of solidarity traineeships/jobs, and their legal status. By synthesising data from our mapping, interviews, fiches and survey, we identify the administrative and legal barriers to solidarity at policy level.

Our consultations with stakeholders (through interviews and the survey of organisations) reveal strong support for further actions to be taken by the European Commission and the Member States, with the aim of increasing collaboration at policy level and to better aligning the legal frameworks that govern the field of solidarity. The majority of those

⁷¹ Baclija, S., Nicodemi, S. (2020). *4thought for Solidarity (future thinking) – Analysis and reflection for a common narrative and strategic future for the Solidarity Corps*. European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre.

who participated in our exploratory interviews were positive about the need for an EU-wide legal status for volunteers/trainees. Respondents claimed that common guidelines would bring added value and would facilitate the implementation of solidarity activities. At the same time, interviewees acknowledged that it could be difficult to achieve a common or more closely aligned legal status for volunteers/trainees among all EU Member States, due to differing national contexts. Even so, these interviewees supported the aim of setting minimum requirements to define the legal framework at EU level. The organisations that participated in our survey were also very much in support of a better defined and more coherent legal framework governing the volunteering field: 94% of respondents agreed with the statement that the EU should aim to have a common definition of volunteering across the Member States, and 95% of survey respondents agreed that EU Member States should collaborate more closely to align legal rules and regulations governing the field of volunteering.

FIGURE 19. ACTIONS EU MEMBER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN UNION (EUROPEAN COMMISSION) SHOULD TAKE TO FURTHER IMPROVE THE SITUATION REGARDING CROSS-BORDER SOLIDARITY ACTIVITIES: LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND DEFINITIONS



Source: PPMI survey of organisations

Such strong support for further actions regarding the existing regulatory and administrative frameworks indicates that certain problems and barriers still persist. The key issues in this regard are analysed and presented in the sections that follow.

4.2.1. Legal framework on volunteering

The literature identifies that the lack of a comprehensive legal framework to regulate volunteering and solidarity activities is a further obstacle to participation.⁷² National legal frameworks for the regulation of volunteering that are defined too loosely or too rigidly lead to barriers and obstacles in relation to adequate working conditions and the definition of the roles of volunteers or trainees.⁷³ Without an adequate definition, there is

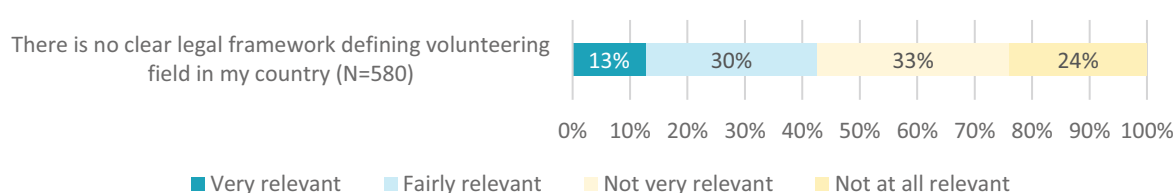
⁷² Bekkers, R. & de Wit, A. (2014). *Participation in volunteering: What helps and hinders. A deliverable of the project: "Impact of the third sector as Social Innovation" (ITSSOIN)*. European Commission, DG Research; Del Montte, M., Zandstra & T. (2015). *Cross-Border Volunteering: Cost of Non-Europe Report*, European Parliamentary Research Service.

⁷³ Angermann, A. & Sittermann, B. (2010). *Volunteering in the European Union—An Overview (Working Paper No. 2)*. Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe.

a danger that volunteering might be misused, e.g. to replace paid employment.⁷⁴ Compatible legal frameworks across the participating countries were identified as one of the key prerequisites for the successful development of cross-border solidarity activities.⁷⁵

Our survey results indicate that the lack of clear legal frameworks governing the field of volunteering is perceived as a relevant obstacle to volunteering. Of the organisations surveyed, 43% indicated the lack of a clear legal framework defining the volunteering field as very or fairly relevant obstacle in their country.

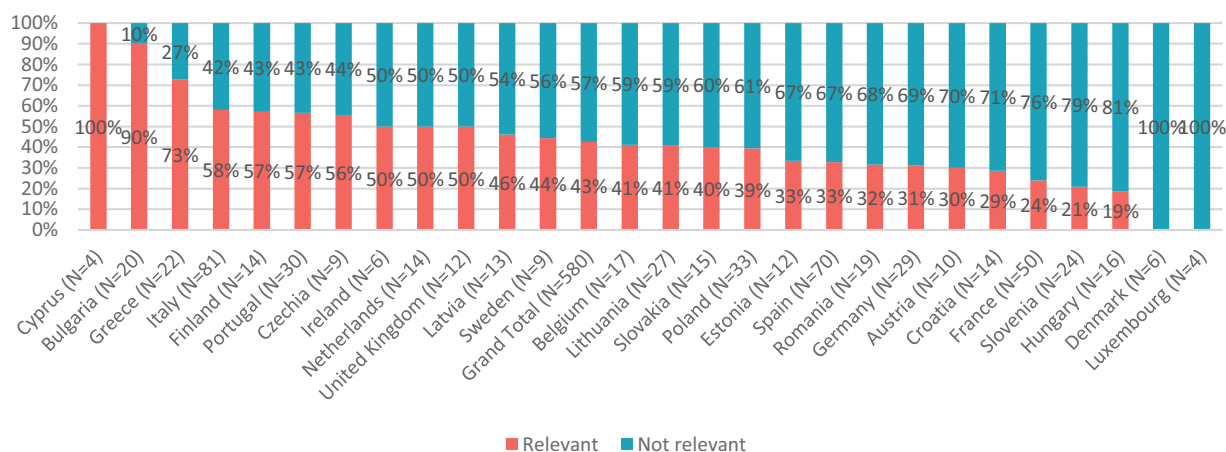
FIGURE 20. LACK OF CLEAR LEGAL FRAMEWORKS DEFINING THE FIELD OF VOLUNTEERING



Source: PPMI survey of organisations

Breaking down these responses by country reveals that 50% or more respondents in Cyprus, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Finland, Portugal, Czechia, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom identified an unclear legal framework for volunteering as a relevant obstacle in their country.

FIGURE 21. LACK OF CLEAR LEGAL FRAMEWORKS DEFINING THE VOLUNTEERING FIELD BY COUNTRY



Note: for some countries, very few responses were received, which limits the generalisation of results

Source: PPMI survey of organisations

⁷⁴ European Volunteer Centre. (2017). *Volunteering in Europe: More than a challenge [Final report of the Policy conference]*.

⁷⁵ Bekkers, R. & de Wit, A. (2014). *Participation in volunteering: What helps and hinders. A deliverable of the project: "Impact of the third sector as Social Innovation" (ITSSOIN)*. European Commission, DG Research

Interviews with National Agencies and National Authorities reveal mixed opinions on the clarity of legal frameworks. Some interviewees noted the existence of legal acts that clearly define the field of volunteering at a national level. Others indicated that the existing framework is clear, but that issues may exist in relation to knowledge of it. Others, meanwhile, agreed that no clear legal framework existed. For example, there is no real legal framework on volunteering in Ireland, because of a strong culture of informal volunteering. In Poland, the existing legal framework does not reflect the nature of volunteering because volunteering, in very simple terms, can be divided into two types: formal and informal volunteering, and this distinction is not included in the Polish legislation.

Legal frameworks are dynamic and changes to existing volunteering laws are not uncommon.⁷⁶ In Cyprus, for example, just a few years ago volunteering was associated only with charities. As a result of recent changes, the definition of volunteering now encompasses several fields horizontally (civil society, environment, youth, human rights, sports, culture, etc.). In Croatia, the volunteering system was initially defined by the Law on Volunteering in 2007. Amendments to the Law on Volunteering were adopted in 2013, with the aim of improving this initial legal framework. Significant changes were made to improve the status of volunteers and the organisers of volunteering: definitions were introduced for long-term and short-term volunteering, as well as for volunteers and the organisers of volunteering, and so on. The legal changes also introduced the principle of inclusive volunteering. Further revisions to the Law are also expected in 2020. In Romania, the Law on Volunteering was updated and approved by parliament in 2014 (Law 74/2014); this law came about as a result of cooperation between several actors (including the NA and the Federation "VOLUM", an umbrella organisation for all Romanian NGOs dealing with volunteers) initiated during the European Year of Volunteering.

In some countries, however, the development of legal frameworks has not progressed as successfully. Several draft laws on volunteering have been introduced to the Bulgarian parliament over recent years⁷⁷, but it appears that there is insufficient political will to adopt such a legal framework. The current draft law has been stuck in parliament for already two years.

Our literature review identified three approaches to laws and policies on volunteering could be identified across Europe.⁷⁸ In Northern European countries such as Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Ireland, volunteering tends to be based upon well-established traditions and cultures – and governments have generally sought to regulate it by removing obstacles to volunteering and creating policies on volunteering. However, for the most part, these countries have not adopted comprehensive, unified laws on volunteering. Mediterranean countries such as Italy, Spain, Portugal, and France often possess rich traditions of informal volunteering and have used volunteering laws and policies to support and further expand these existing traditions. Finally, in many countries of Eastern Europe, traditions of

⁷⁶ Further examples are informed by interviews.

⁷⁷ <https://www.parliament.bg/bg/bills/ID/77919>

⁷⁸ International Center for Not-for Profit Law (ICNL) and the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL), *Laws and Policies Affecting Volunteerism Since 2001, Report for UN Volunteers, 2009*

volunteering (both formal and informal) are limited or short. Such countries have sought to use law and policy to define and promote volunteering.⁷⁹

This categorisation of countries corresponds quite well with our findings on volunteering culture and tradition (presented in section 3.2.2), as well as the existence of legal acts governing the field of volunteering (see Table 8 below). Through the mapping, we identified that the majority of countries possess laws dedicated specifically to volunteering. A number of countries do not have a dedicated law on volunteering, but provisions on volunteering are included in other policy documents. The study did not identify any national legal acts on volunteering in Greece or Sweden.

TABLE 8. EXISTENCE OF LEGAL ACTS GOVERNING THE FIELD OF VOLUNTEERING

EXISTENCE OF LAWS ON VOLUNTEERING	COUNTRIES
Specific law on volunteering exists	Italy, Latvia, Malta, Hungary, Cyprus, Croatia, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia, Belgium, Czechia, Germany, Luxembourg, Romania, Spain, France, Lithuania, Slovakia
No dedicated law on volunteering, but incorporated under other laws	Netherlands, United Kingdom, Denmark, Estonia, Bulgaria, Finland, Ireland, Poland
No clear legal framework for volunteering	Greece, Sweden

Source: PPMI

Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers

In the previous section, we defined the general legal frameworks governing the field of volunteering in Member States. The present section focuses on the existence of legal frameworks that apply to international volunteers – mainly those who come from countries outside the EU. This legal framework is defined in the context of obtaining visas (relevant only for third-country nationals) and residence permits (relevant for both third-country and EU nationals).

Rules for obtaining residence permits and visas differentiate between persons who come from the EU, and those who come from a third country.⁸⁰ For nationals of EU/EEA countries and Switzerland, no visas are required. Residence permits are only needed in cases where the volunteering activity and the stay in the country lasts for more than three months. For third-country nationals, as visa is required. If they stay for more than three months, they may be also requested to obtain a permanent residence permit. The Nordic countries (Finland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Iceland) have a special agreement among themselves that allows citizens of Nordic countries to freely live and

⁷⁹ International Center for Not-for Profit Law (ICNL) and the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL), *Laws and Policies Affecting Volunteerism Since 2001, Report for UN Volunteers, 2009*

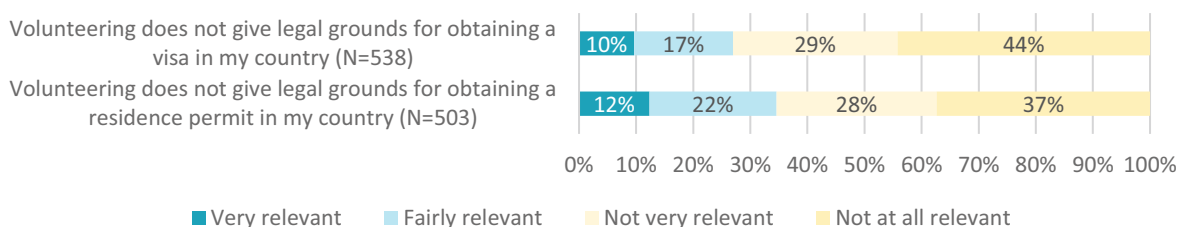
⁸⁰ Based on information collected from Youth Wiki and interviews.

work in other Nordic countries without a visa, work or residence permit for any period of time.⁸¹

Most EU Member States have no special provisions to describe the entrance of volunteers from third countries. General immigration law and laws on aliens apply to volunteers, with the same conditions as for all other foreign citizens. In the best-case scenario, volunteering is mentioned as a ground for obtaining a visa or residence permit. An example of this exists in Croatia, where the Law on Foreigners lists key definitions for foreign volunteers (volunteer, volunteer programme, host organisations, EU programmes that encourage mobility, etc.) and prescribes on the criteria for issuing residence permits to volunteers. This law also defines the rights of volunteers, stipulating that trainees, volunteers and students have the right to equal treatment with regard to access to goods and services and to the supply of products and services made available to the public, in accordance with specific regulations, and, where applicable, with regard to the recognition of foreign educational and professional qualifications.⁸² In Spain, volunteering is also explicitly mentioned in law as a means to obtain authorisation to stay. Slovakia also recognises volunteering as a status under which third-country nationals can obtain a residence permit.

Despite the fact that in many countries, no special provisions exist and foreign volunteers usually do not enjoy any special status, respondents to our survey indicated that volunteering activities constitute a legal ground for the issue of visas and residence permits in their countries (see Figure 22 below).

FIGURE 22. VOLUNTEERING AS A GROUND FOR OBTAINING VISAS AND RESIDENCE PERMITS



Source: PPMI survey of organisations

Lack of legal provisions for international volunteering often results in the unregulated status of international volunteers. As mentioned previously, in many countries the status of foreign volunteers is not defined by law, and volunteers are subject to the general provisions that apply to foreigners. However, in Italy, volunteer status is noted on residence permits. In Estonia, volunteering is recognised as studying, therefore the conditions that allow temporary residence permits for study also apply in the case of youth volunteering.⁸³ In Greece too, volunteers are usually issued with a student or

⁸¹ Youth Wiki: Denmark

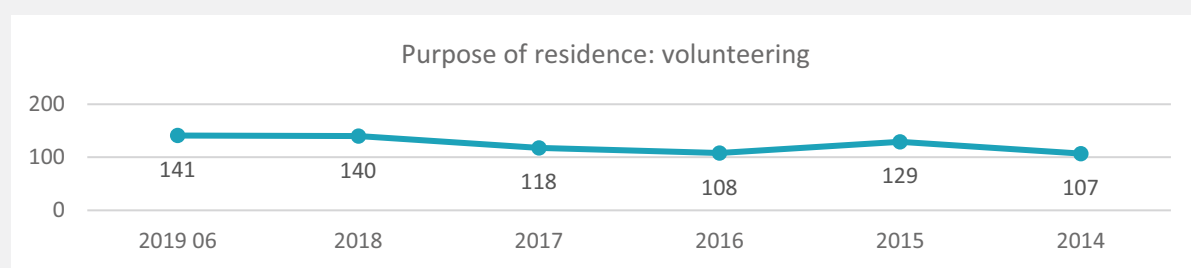
⁸² Interview findings

⁸³ Youth Wiki: Estonia

trainee visa. In Sweden, volunteers often receive a tourist or student visa.⁸⁴ In Czechia, volunteers need to apply for a study visa.⁸⁵

BOX 4. DATA ON TEMPORARY RESIDENCE PERMITS FOR THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS IN SLOVAKIA

The Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic collects and publishes statistics on the number of valid temporary residence permits issued each year to third-country nationals (i.e. everyone who is not a Slovak or EU national, a category that also includes stateless persons). This information is disaggregated by the purpose of residence, with volunteering being identified as a separate category.



Source: prepared by PPMI based on <http://www.minv.sk/?annual-reports>

When there is no clear definition of volunteering, or volunteering is not mentioned as a ground for obtaining a visa or residence permit, this situation can cause problems during a volunteering placement. In Slovenia, the employment and work article of the Aliens Act makes no mention of volunteers, but its application is essential for the work of foreign volunteers in Slovenia. Thus, volunteers may be treated as workers.⁸⁶ In Belgium, the International Youth Office points out a major issue regarding access to the territory by foreign volunteers as part of the European Voluntary Service. For three years, non-EU volunteers applying for volunteer placements in Belgium under the EVS programme have seen their visa application refused. They must now apply for a work visa which complicates access to the territory for these volunteers, and in some cases may even make it impossible.⁸⁷

Third-country nationals must fulfil a number of requirements to obtain visas and residence permits. These requirements are highly specific to each country. Key requirements can include the ability to cover their living expenses for a certain period of time (Italy, Malta, Denmark, Portugal, Slovenia, Belgium, Romania, Spain); insurance (Malta, Hungary, Denmark, Slovenia, Belgium, Ireland, Spain); an agreement with the host organisation (Malta, the United Kingdom, Croatia, Portugal, Belgium, Spain); a lease agreement (Malta); police clearance/criminal record checks (Germany, Ireland, Spain).

⁸⁴ Youth Wiki: Sweden

⁸⁵ Youth Wiki: Czechia

⁸⁶ Interview findings

⁸⁷ Youth Wiki

BOX 5. REQUIREMENTS APPLYING TO FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS IN ITALY

In Italy, fairly restrictive requirements apply to non-EU foreign volunteers. Quotas govern the number of foreign volunteers in the country. Foreign volunteers may be aged between 25 and 35. Applicants must prove the ability to cover their expenses. Applicants must also request authorisation to enter 45 days in advance, and must register within 30 days of arriving in Italy. Volunteer status is indicated on their residence permits, which are issued for the duration of the volunteering activity and may not exceed one year or, in exceptional cases, 18 months. Permits are not renewable. (Article 27, immigration law).

Source: Prepared by PPMI based on

[http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/normativa/procedureitalia/Pagine/INGRESSO-ED-IL-SOGGIORNO-PER-VOLONTARIATO-\(ARTICOLO-27-BIS\).aspx](http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/normativa/procedureitalia/Pagine/INGRESSO-ED-IL-SOGGIORNO-PER-VOLONTARIATO-(ARTICOLO-27-BIS).aspx)

Very limited information is available on benefits and services for foreign volunteers across all EU Member States. As described in previous sections of this study, volunteers from third countries are often required to obtain health cover or other types of insurance in order to obtain a visa or residence permit. Such insurance must be obtained at the expense of the volunteer or hosting organisation. In Croatia, the organisation hosting international volunteers must take full responsibility for the volunteer at the time of volunteering (including the costs of subsistence, accommodation, nutrition, health insurance and return travel).⁸⁸ In Denmark, volunteers are not entitled to any public benefits and cannot undertake paid work.⁸⁹

The results of our consultation with stakeholders confirm that obtaining visas and residence permits remains an obstacle. Survey respondents frequently referred to problems with visas and residence permits, without providing details of specific cases. Interviewees from Belgium and Estonia indicated that obtaining a visa is a burdensome process. Due to complicated rules and requirements, applicants from third countries are often rejected by the authorities responsible.

Certain EU actions have made a positive contribution in this area. These include Directive 2016/801⁹⁰ on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals, which also includes provisions on volunteering, but only within the framework of the EVS (currently the Corps)⁹¹: "[the] Directive should support the aims of the European Voluntary Service to develop solidarity, mutual understanding and tolerance among young people and the societies they live in, while contributing to strengthening social cohesion and promoting young people's active citizenship. In order to ensure access to the European Voluntary Service in a consistent manner across the Union, Member States should apply the provisions of this Directive to third-country nationals applying for the purpose of European Voluntary Service." As for the other methods of volunteering outside the EVS/the Corps – via national/regional cross-border volunteering schemes; private schemes; large organisations offering their own mobility schemes, etc., the

⁸⁸ Youth Wiki

⁸⁹ Youth Wiki

⁹⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2016/801/oj>

⁹¹ The European Solidarity Corps Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2018/1475) foresees that "References to the European Voluntary Service in legal acts of the Union, in particular Directive (EU) 2016/801 of the European Parliament and of the Council, shall be read as including volunteering under both Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 and this Regulation".

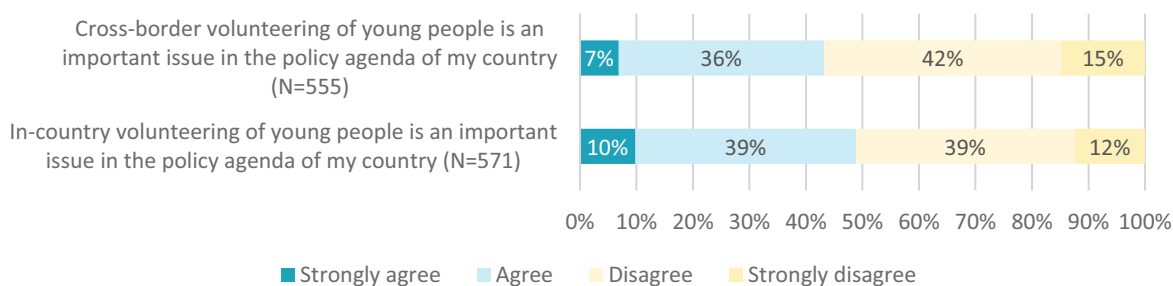
Directive only recommends in a non-compulsory way that "Member States should have the possibility to apply the provisions of this Directive to school pupils, volunteers other than those under the European Voluntary Service and au pairs, in order to facilitate their entry and residence and ensure their rights". Also, as noted by participants in the workshop with the Expert Group on mobility of young volunteers and cross-border solidarity, the Directive has not yet been fully implemented in all Member States.

4.2.2. National strategies for volunteering

In the previous section on the legal framework on volunteering, we explored the existence of a legal basis defining the field of volunteering, including provisions relating to foreign volunteers. This section considers the situation at a more strategic level, and presents our findings on whether the volunteering of young people, or volunteering in general, is recognised as an important issue on national policy agendas. This is further operationalised by examining whether national strategies exist in relation to youth volunteering or volunteering in general.

Our survey results show that while 57% of respondents disagree with the statement that cross-border volunteering is an important issue on the policy agenda in their country, 51% disagree with the statement that in-country volunteering is an important issue. The lower importance given to cross-border volunteering corresponds with our analysis of the differing understandings of solidarity in various Member States. As explained in section 4.1, solidarity is rarely understood as a cross-border issue, but instead relates to various national or local contexts.

FIGURE 23. IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERING ON THE POLICY AGENDA



Source: PPMI survey of organisations

Our survey results on this issue differ significantly between countries. The lack of importance given to in-country volunteering on the national policy agenda was indicated by respondents from Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark⁹², Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland⁹³, Poland and Romania. Respondents from Austria⁹⁴, Cyprus⁹⁵, Estonia, France, Germany,

⁹² Based on the answers of seven survey respondents from Denmark

⁹³ Based on the answers of six survey respondents from Ireland

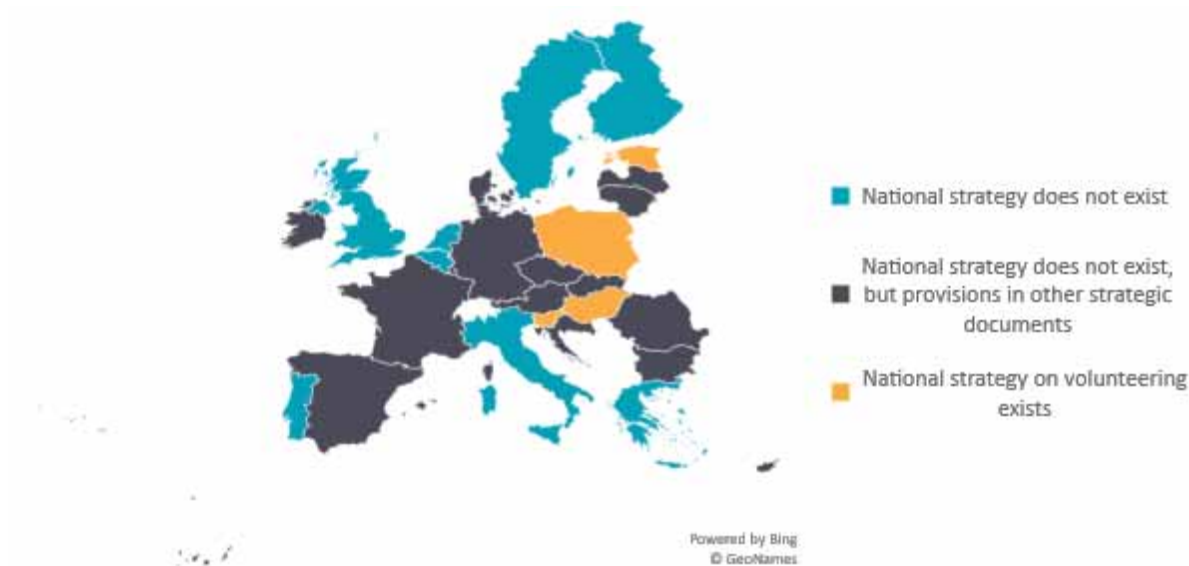
⁹⁴ Based on the answers of eight survey respondents from Austria

⁹⁵ Based on the answers of five survey respondents from Cyprus

Lithuania and the Netherlands indicated that in-country volunteering was an important issue on the policy agenda in their country. When it comes to the importance of cross-border volunteering, the results are more unanimous: respondents from the majority of countries disagreed that it is an important issue on their national policy agendas; while the statement was supported only by respondents from France, Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg⁹⁶ and Portugal.

These results can be explained and supported by our findings regarding the existence of national strategies on youth volunteering, and on volunteering in general. While the landscape among EU Member States with regard to such strategies is mixed, our study has not identified a single EU Member State that possesses a dedicated strategy on youth volunteering. This could have been expected, as such a specific field may be too narrow to merit a dedicated strategy. But while no dedicated strategies exist on youth volunteering specifically, youth volunteering is addressed at a strategic level in 20 EU Member States, at some level.

FIGURE 24. EXISTENCE OF NATIONAL STRATEGIES ON VOLUNTEERING



*Within the UK, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland possess general strategies on volunteering

**Within Belgium, the Flemish community possesses a general volunteering strategy

We identified that Malta, Hungary, Slovenia, Poland and Estonia possess **general strategies on volunteering** that also encompass the field of youth volunteering. Another cluster contains countries that do not possess a general volunteering strategy, but where **provisions regarding youth volunteering, or volunteering in general, are outlined in other strategic documents** such as youth strategies or strategies on civil society and participation, etc. This cluster includes 15 countries: Latvia, Cyprus,

⁹⁶ Based on the answers of four survey respondents from Luxembourg

Denmark, Croatia⁹⁷, Austria, Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Romania, Spain, France, Lithuania and Slovakia. Finally, there are a number of Member States in which **youth volunteering is not defined at strategic level at all**. These include Italy, Netherlands, Greece, Sweden, Portugal and Finland. The United Kingdom and Belgium are also assigned to this last group of countries, as they do not have strategies at the national level, but in the UK, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland possess general strategies on volunteering; while in Belgium the Flemish community has a general volunteering strategy.

BOX 6. COUNTRIES WITH DEDICATED STRATEGIES ON VOLUNTEERING

In **Malta**, the National Strategy for Volunteering 2019-2024 addresses the importance of volunteering in different sectors, defines the role of government in relation to volunteering, and sets out the legal and financial framework within which this governmental role operates.⁹⁸ Another strategic document, the National Youth Policy Towards 2020, also aims to include more young people in the Youth Voluntary Scheme and the European Voluntary Service, and to promote benefits of volunteering such as personal development and increased employability, together with facilitating voluntary efforts.

In **Hungary**, the National Volunteer Strategy 2012-2020 provides an extensive definition of volunteering. It aims to develop volunteering culture, support the involvement of special target groups and encourage the integration of disadvantaged groups and the development of social cohesion through volunteering. This strategy also provides horizontal objectives aimed at implementing specific priorities.⁹⁹ In addition to this, the National Youth Strategy contains provisions on youth volunteering specifically, which are based on the 2008 Council Recommendation.¹⁰⁰ This strategy runs from 2009 to 2024.

In **Slovenia**, the National Strategy for the Development of the Non-Governmental Sector and Volunteering was approved in 2018.¹⁰¹ This strategy includes two main objectives in relation to volunteering: (1) strengthening volunteering as a social value that corresponds with the needs of the community; and (2) strengthening the development of various forms of volunteering. In order to achieve these objectives, the following measures are envisaged: establishing mechanisms to raise the profile of volunteering organised by specific areas of NGOs and public institutions; promotion of the register of volunteering organisations (in order to obtain data on the actual extent of the implementation of volunteering); public calls for the promotion of various forms of volunteering (corporate, family volunteering, etc.); promoting cooperation between volunteering organisations and public institutions to provide optimal service to users; establishing a model of competences acquired through volunteering.

In **Poland**, the Long-Term Policy for the Development of Volunteering¹⁰² aims to strengthen volunteering as a form of civic activity. It consists of operational objectives, which include activities relating to the development of youth volunteering:

- Operational Objective 1 ("development of a volunteering culture") aims to:
 - educate teachers in developing the social competences of children and young people

⁹⁷ A draft of the National Programme for Development of Volunteering 2020-2024 is about to be published for public consultation process, to later be adopted by the Government. The Programme identifies priorities and key areas for further development of volunteering in Republic of Croatia; one of them is Education for volunteering and culture of youth volunteering.

⁹⁸ <https://maltacvs.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/National-Strategy-on-Volunteering-2019-2024-Report-2.pdf>

⁹⁹ https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/download/1/e8/d0000/N%C3%96S_eng.pdf

¹⁰⁰ Interview findings.

¹⁰¹ National strategy for the development of non-governmental sector and volunteering.

¹⁰² <http://wrzos.org.pl/download/Dlugofalowa%20polityka.pdf>

- organise, support and promote volunteering in educational institutions
- facilitate and encourage the acquisition of experience in volunteering by children and young people
- promote a diversity of volunteering (diverse forms of volunteering, volunteering for people in different age groups, including children and youth)
- Operational Objective 2 ("strengthening of public policies for the development of volunteering") aims to "create a Youth Volunteering project".

Source: prepared by PPMI based on mapping and interviews

Some positive policy developments can be observed in relation to volunteering strategies. In Bulgaria, the Ministry of Youth and Sports is drafting the new national youth strategy 2021-2029. In Croatia, a draft of the National Programme for Development of Volunteering 2020 – 2024 is about to be published for a public consultation process. In Hungary, the National Volunteer Strategy is being revised, with an attempt to introduce an international dimension into the strategy and integrate the European Solidarity Corps within its provisions. In Ireland, at the end of 2018, the Department of Rural and Community Development issued a 'Call for Input' to inform and seek views from stakeholders on key topics under consideration to develop a National Strategy on Volunteering.¹⁰³ In Romania, a new National Youth Strategy is expected to be developed for 2020-21. In Czechia, the Ministry of Interior is working on a new national youth strategy which will be very much in line with the European Youth Strategy; one of its pillars focuses on volunteering.¹⁰⁴ In Spain, the Deputy Directorate-General for NGOs and Volunteering is working on a new National Volunteering Strategy, as well as on the further development of Law 45/2015 on Volunteering.

4.2.3. Key definitions

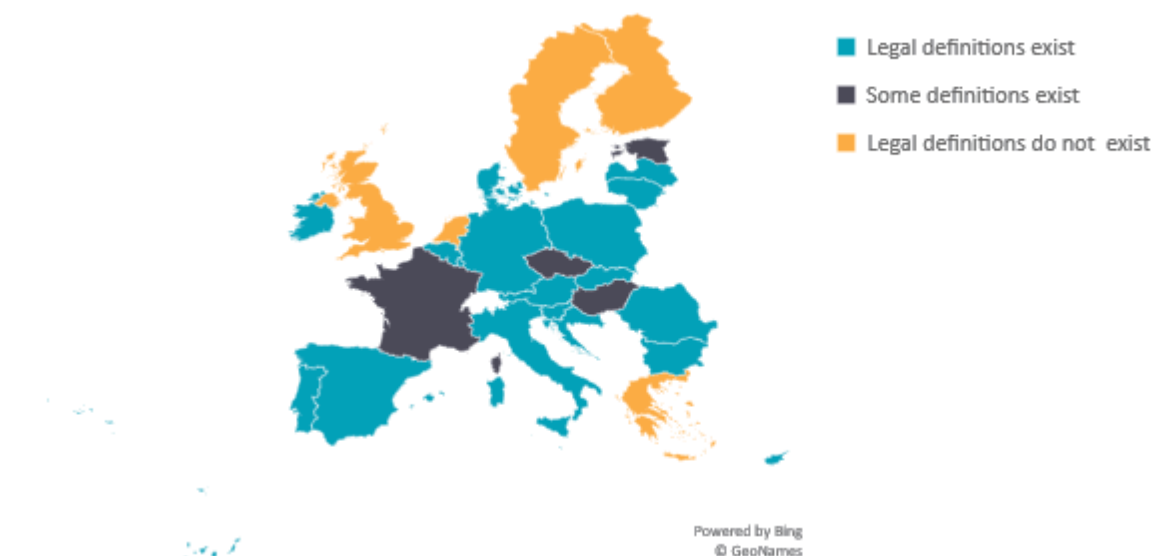
In this section of the report, we present an analysis of the legal acts and strategies discussed in the previous sections, and explore whether they provide definitions of volunteering, volunteers, and if they contain any provisions that might cause barriers to the participation of young people.

The majority of Member States possess at least some legal definitions of volunteering, volunteer, volunteering organisation or volunteering activity. The situation differs significantly between countries. In the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Greece, Sweden and Finland, legal definitions relating to volunteering are basically non-existent. In Hungary, Estonia, Czechia and France, only some legal definitions are available.

¹⁰³ <https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/8168df-volunteering-strategy-call-for-input/>

¹⁰⁴ Interview findings.

FIGURE 25. EXISTENCE OF LEGAL DEFINITIONS RELATING TO VOLUNTEERING



Source: prepared by PPMI

TABLE 9. EXISTENCE OF LEGAL DEFINITIONS RELATING TO VOLUNTEERING

STATUS	COUNTRIES
Legal definitions exist	Italy, Latvia, Malta, Cyprus, Croatia, Denmark, Austria, Portugal, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Spain, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia
Some definitions exist	Hungary, Estonia, Czechia, France
Legal definitions do not exist	Netherlands, United Kingdom, Greece, Sweden, Finland

Source: prepared by PPMI

The definitions provided in legal acts at national level do not target youth volunteering specifically, but rather the volunteering sector in general. Only in Bulgaria does a law exist that provides a definition of youth volunteering activity. This is defined as being socially useful activity performed for free by young people in Republic of Bulgaria, or in another country under programmes and initiatives within social, youth, sports and other socially significant fields.¹⁰⁵

Volunteering in general is the concept described most often, followed by definitions of a volunteer. Some countries also provide definitions of voluntary organisations, voluntary work and volunteering activities. In the majority of cases, these definitions are closely related and are defined using the same key concepts. After analysing the content of these definitions, we see that in almost every country they contain three key defining principles of volunteering: it is an **unpaid activity** (except for the provision of

¹⁰⁵ http://mpes.government.bg/Documents/Documents/Zakoni/ZAKON_zh_mladejta.pdf

reimbursement for costs directly linked to the activities carried out); it is a **non-obligatory activity undertaken at the free will** of the participant; and it needs to **benefit** people outside the volunteer's immediate family, such as the community or society in general.

TABLE 10. TERMS MOST COMMONLY DEFINED IN EU MEMBERS STATES

DEFINITION	COUNTRIES
Voluntary organisation	Italy, Malta, Denmark, Belgium, Slovenia, Croatia
Youth volunteering	Bulgaria
Voluntary work	Netherlands, Estonia, Austria, Ireland, Lithuania, Belgium, Slovenia
Volunteer	Italy, Latvia, Malta, Cyprus, Denmark, Portugal, Germany, Luxembourg, Ireland, Poland, Lithuania, Slovenia, Croatia
Volunteering	Italy, Latvia, Malta, United Kingdom, Denmark, Croatia, Greece, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Czechia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Spain, Lithuania, Slovenia
Volunteering activities	Hungary, Cyprus, Finland

Source: prepared by PPMI

Some **definitions of volunteering also mention solidarity**. In Italy and Spain, solidarity is mentioned as a pre-requisite for the activity to be described as volunteering. In Slovenia and Poland, solidarity is mentioned as a desired outcome of volunteering (see Box 7).

BOX 7. LEGAL DEFINITIONS THAT MENTION SOLIDARITY

Italy: volunteering is a form of work provided in a personal, spontaneous and free manner, through an organisation to which the volunteer belongs, not for profit, exclusively for the purposes of solidarity.¹⁰⁶

Spain: the definition of volunteering covers a range of general interest activities, as long as they meet the requirements of solidarity, willingness; are free-of-charge; and are implemented through involvement with a volunteering entity and a volunteering programme.¹⁰⁷

Slovenia: volunteering is a socially useful, free activity performed by individuals who, through their work, knowledge and experience, contribute to improving the quality of life of individuals and social groups, and develop solidarity, human and an equal society.¹⁰⁸

Poland: volunteering is defined as the "simplest form of action for the common good". It is also mentioned that "both its corporate and personal dimensions are a manifestation of civic activity, which promotes the attitudes of co-operation and increases mutual trust, thereby contributing to the growth of social capital. Volunteering also plays a significant role in fostering social inclusion and solidarity".¹⁰⁹

Source: prepared by PPMI based on desk research

¹⁰⁶ https://www.lavoro.gov.it/archivio-doc-pregressi/AreaSociale_AgenziaTerzoSettore/Leqqe_266_91.pdf

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2015-11072>

¹⁰⁸ Volunteering Act <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO5532>

¹⁰⁹ http://bip.mkidn.gov.pl/media/download_gallery/20141008SRKS_na_stronie_internetowej.pdf

Some definitions also include the provision that volunteering should be organised and implemented through an organisational setting (e.g. in Denmark). In Austria, Romania, Spain and Lithuania, it is explicitly stated that the volunteering should take place in an organisational setting.

As for the **definition of a volunteer**, the same key three principles apply; namely, free will in joining such activities; unpaid; and beneficial to society. In Latvia and Lithuania, the definition of volunteer also includes a lower age limit on the individuals who can be involved in volunteering. In Latvia, a volunteer is a natural person who has reached the age of 13 years; in Lithuania volunteers must be over 14 years of age.

In the majority of countries, the definitions of volunteering and volunteer only mention (if at all) that a volunteer makes his/her skills, time and knowledge available to others through the volunteering. However, a few unusual cases were identified. For example, in Poland, the law states that the person undertaking a volunteering activity must be duly qualified and must meet the requirements necessary to provide the benefit that he or she is providing, if other legal provisions specify such qualifications or requirements.¹¹⁰ In Lithuania, one provision states that a volunteer shall not be required to possess qualifications, except for such types of volunteering where special qualifications are required under other legal acts or under the requirements of the volunteering organisers.¹¹¹

BOX 8. SPECIFIC DEFINITIONS IN FRANCE AND LUXEMBOURG: BÉNÉVOLAT AND VOLUNTEERING

Two types of civic commitments coexist in **France**: bénévolat and volunteering.¹¹² Although these are separate concepts, it is important to stress that they are both based on the same values of (voluntary) solidarity and commitment. No legal or contractual definition of **bénévolat** status exists in French law. The commonly accepted definition is that of the opinion of the Conseil Économique et Social (EESC – Economic and Social Council) delivered at its meeting of 24 February 1993. This defines a *bénévole* as anyone who freely commits to non-salaried action to help other people outside their professional and family time (this definition applies to all volunteers, youth, elderly people, etc.). A *bénévole* acts in his/her organisation without being bound to its structure by any duration or frequency other than those rules that may have been optionally and freely consented to in a mutual agreement. The *bénévole* is not subject to any subordination. *Bénévoles* participate in their organisations' activities without receiving any financial compensation. However, they may be reimbursed for costs incurred by their activity. **Volunteering** is another form of commitment (within a more formal legal framework defined by public authorities, unlike bénévolat). A volunteer's status lies somewhere between that of "employee" and "bénévole", in particular because, unlike a *bénévole*, volunteers are compensated (financial compensation). This form of commitment often responds to a general interest mission, and is usually exercised within non-profit organisations or legal entities governed by public law. In addition, volunteer status is governed by regulatory texts (laws and decrees) providing a restrictive legal framework.

In **Luxembourg**, a distinction is also made between "bénévolat" and "volontariat".¹¹³ The concept of "**volontariat**" refers to a person who carries out voluntary service. Voluntary service

¹¹⁰ Study on Volunteering in the European Union. Country Report: Poland, https://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/national_report_pl_en.pdf

¹¹¹ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalActPrint/lt?jfwid=1cdz0hg1n8&documentId=TAIS.412533&category=TAD>

¹¹² Youth Wiki: France

¹¹³ GHK Consulting, the Study on Volunteering in the European Union. Country Report Luxembourg

covers a group of activities of general interest, i.e. activities of a social or humanitarian nature that encourage intercultural understanding and solidarity, performed by natural persons under the following circumstances: (a) That the activities have no professional character; (b) That the decision to volunteer was taken freely by the young person; (c) That they are developed within the framework of non-profit, non-governmental organisations; (d) That they are not a substitute for professional, paid labour; and, (e) That they are non-paid, with the exception of the reimbursement of eventual expenses. These activities are different from bénévolat in that the volunteer engages in a well-defined project within a given period of time (between three and 12 months). **"Bénévolat"** is defined as a freely chosen engagement, without financial remuneration, in an activity for the benefit of another or of the community. It must occur within the structures of an organisation, and outside normal family relations or those based on friendship.

Source: Youth Wiki: France and GHK Consulting, the Study on Volunteering in the European Union. Country Report Luxembourg

4.2.4. Entitlements and benefits

The provision of entitlements and benefits to volunteers is a very important aspect of volunteering and other solidarity activities, notably long-term ones, which is usually the case for cross-border solidarity activities. Various entitlements and benefits that the volunteers might receive are not clearly defined at the national level, and the situation in this regard differs significantly between countries. Provisions governing the right to insurance, compensation for the costs incurred while volunteering, as well as taxation of any allowances/pocket money received, are usually spread across various legal documents, with no unified source of consolidated information. Such a diverse legal framework makes it difficult to ascertain the overall picture at country level, leaving a lot of grey areas and hindering the implementation of both in-country and cross-border volunteering activities. The most common types of entitlements identified are the covering of expenses relating to voluntary work (e.g. travel and accommodation, pocket money) and health insurance.

Allowances and reimbursement

The covering of direct expenses incurred while performing the volunteering activities is the responsibility of host organisations. However, this coverage is not always mandatory. These expenses must be directly related to the volunteering activities that the volunteer carries out, and may include transportation, food, accommodation and pocket money. In some cases, e.g. Austria, pedagogical support and continued assistance are also indicated as mandatory elements of the support to be provided to volunteers.¹¹⁴ In Croatia, volunteers may, in special circumstances, claim reimbursement for the purchase of special clothing or equipment for volunteering.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20007753>

¹¹⁵ <https://www.zakon.hr/z/258/Zakon-o-volonterstvu>

BOX 9. ALLOWANCES IN CZECHIA

Financial support for individual volunteers in the Czechia is officially possible only under the voluntary service, according to the Act on voluntary service. A volunteer is entitled, in case of voluntary service performed, to the following financial support:

- compensation of costs associated with necessary preparations for the role of volunteer
- compensation of travel costs
- personal allowance (general expenses in the place of deployment)
- compensation for equipment for work and personal protection
- insurance to cover liability for damage to property or health
- health insurance
- if agreed with the deploying organisation, also pension insurance

Source: Youth Wiki: Czechia

Our study identified Hungary, Croatia, Cyprus, Austria, Portugal, Romania, France and Spain as the countries in which the reimbursement of volunteers' costs is mandatory. In the Netherlands, Slovenia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg and Poland, the covering of expenses is optional and depends on the agreement between the volunteer and host organisation. In Poland, for example, the volunteer has the right (which they may voluntarily waive) to receive reimbursement for travel expenses and subsistence expenses, and the relevant agreement should also lay down the rules covering other costs of the volunteer's work, such as training costs or liability insurance.¹¹⁶ In Bulgaria, the individual volunteer organisations are responsible for providing and protecting volunteers. It is up to them to determine the amount of compensation.¹¹⁷ In Belgium, volunteering must be unpaid, but the expenses incurred by volunteers can be reimbursed. Organisations are, however, not obliged to pay such expense, but must inform the volunteer of this matter. The Act on the Rights of Volunteers (2005) defines two types of reimbursement to support volunteers:¹¹⁸ either the organisation can opt for the "reimbursement of real costs"; or the volunteer can receive a fixed reimbursement (regardless of real costs), the amount of which is indexed each year. In the case of real costs, the organisation pays only those expenses that are actually incurred by volunteers (use of a car, telephone, meals, etc.).

BOX 10. EXAMPLE OF ALLOWANCES PROVIDED UNDER FRENCH CIVIC SERVICE AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY VOLUNTEERING

In **French Civic Service**, participants are required to volunteer for 24 hours a week. This commitment leads to payment of an allowance of €472,97 net per month paid by the State, and additional support in cash or kind paid for by the host organisation (€107,58). It entitles the volunteer to social protection funded by the State. The commitment is compatible with continuing in education or holding down a part-time job.

International Solidarity Volunteering (Volontariat de Solidarité Internationale (VSI)) is a French volunteering scheme, governed by Law no.2005-159 of 23 February 2005 on international solidarity volunteering. International solidarity volunteering is now one of the forms that civic service may take. Article 1 of the aforementioned law provides that the international solidarity volunteering contract "is a civic service performed abroad and governed by the rules of this Law". Volunteers under this scheme do not have the status of an employee of the

¹¹⁶ <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20170001606/O/D20171606.pdf>

¹¹⁷ <http://4volunteering.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/sbornik-dobrovolci-web.pdf>

¹¹⁸ Youth Wiki: Belgium (German-Speaking Community)

organisation, since there is no work contract. However, they do enjoy a certain number of rights under the Law on international solidarity volunteering. Volunteers participating in this scheme are entitled to:

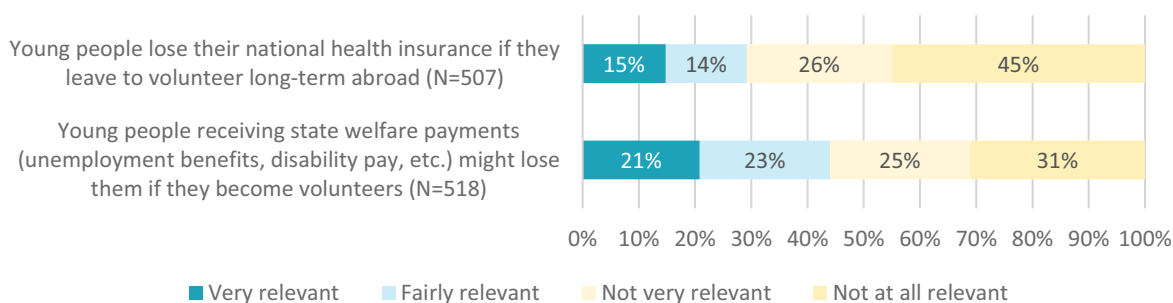
- At least two days' leave per month;
- Social welfare. Under Article 5 of the Law of 23 February 2005, the association affiliates the volunteer to a social security system guaranteeing rights to a level identical to that of the general French social security system. The social security scheme provides insurance cover for sickness, maternity, disability, death, old age, accidents at work and occupational diseases.
- An allowance to enable them to accomplish their mission in decent living conditions. This allowance is not a salary, nor is it subject to income tax or social contributions. The amount and conditions under which it is payable are set for each volunteer in their contract. It cannot be less than €100 per month (excluding housing and food).

Source: Youth Wiki: France

Health insurance

In our survey, 29% of respondents indicated that it is a "very relevant" or "fairly relevant" obstacle if young people lose their national health insurance when they leave to volunteer abroad long-term. 44% said that young people receiving state welfare payments (unemployment benefits, disability pay, etc.) might lose them if they become volunteers (see Figure 26 below).

FIGURE 26. HEALTH INSURANCE AND WELFARE PAYMENTS



Source: PPMI survey of organisations

In many countries, organisations are required to provide health insurance for volunteers (Italy, Hungary, Cyprus, Austria, Sweden, Spain, France). In some countries, however, this provision applies only to certain types of volunteers. In Slovakia, for example, insurance for volunteers is mandatory only for the unemployed who are engaged in volunteering, and it is intended to be covered by the organisation that engages the volunteers. This is further specified by the individual agreement between the organisation and the volunteer.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Study on Volunteering in the European Union Country Report Slovakia, https://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/national_report_sk_en.pdf

Some countries outline special provisions regarding additional insurance in cases where volunteering takes place in areas of high risk. For example, in Latvia, there is a requirement to provide special insurance, e.g. for accidents, if the volunteering takes place in a dangerous or risky environment.¹²⁰ In Portugal, young volunteers are also entitled to personal accident and civil liability insurance.¹²¹ In Slovenia, volunteers are entitled to insurance under the provisions of various laws, e.g. the Law on Fire Brigades and Law on Protection against Natural and Other Disasters, as well as the Healthcare and Health Insurance Act. However, as the titles of this legislation suggest, the obligation to provide insurance to volunteers only pertains to certain specific types of volunteer. In other cases, volunteers must insure themselves.¹²² In Poland, the provisions of the Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work indicate that an institution using the work of a volunteer must provide them with safe and hygienic conditions for their services as well as personal protection equipment and personal accident insurance. In addition, – if the volunteer is working in the territory of another country in an area of armed conflict or natural disaster – insurance for personal accidents and medical treatment abroad must also be provided, unless those benefits arise from other provisions.¹²³

At the other end of the spectrum, there are countries in which the requirement to provide health insurance for volunteers is ill-defined, or where volunteers are not entitled to it at all. In Greece, where volunteers have no official legal status, they have no specific rights to social benefits such as Public Health and Social Protection. Their entitlement depends on whether or not their volunteer activities affect their parallel legal status as a student, unemployed, employed, or any other status entitling them to protection. However, volunteers volunteering abroad in other EU countries are covered by the Greek health care scheme during their stay.¹²⁴ In Romania, insurance for health and accidents is optional, and is the responsibility solely of the host organisation. The state and other public bodies do not support volunteering through social security provisions; for example, volunteers are not eligible for unemployment insurance.¹²⁵ In Ireland, no specific legal provisions exist in relation to the insurance of volunteers while “on the job”. Volunteering Ireland, however, recommends that organisations engaging volunteers should draft written volunteer policies that state clearly, among other things, that volunteers are insured against the risks of illness, accident and third-party liability.¹²⁶ In Luxembourg, voluntary service (volontaire) prescribes that young people undertaking voluntary service activities are automatically covered by accident insurance. With regard to bénévolat, however, the responsibility to insure the volunteer (bénévole) falls upon the organisation for which he/she volunteers. Organisations that have signed an agreement with a Ministry will automatically cover their volunteers, while organisations that are not bound by such an agreement can decide whether or not to provide insurance.¹²⁷

¹²⁰ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/275061-brivpratiga-darba-likums>

¹²¹ <https://dre.pt/application/conteudo/223016>

¹²² Youth Wiki: Slovenia

¹²³ <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20170001606/O/D20171606.pdf>

¹²⁴ Study on Volunteering in the European Union Country Report Greece

¹²⁵ Youth Wiki: Romania

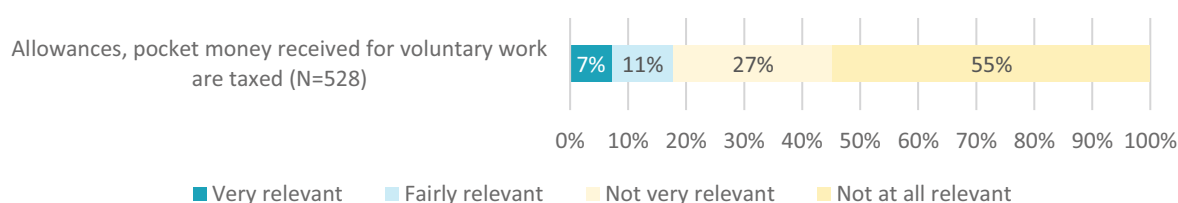
¹²⁶ <https://www.fai.ie/sites/default/files/atoms/files/the%20legal%20status%20of%20volunteers.pdf>

¹²⁷ Study on Volunteering in the European Union Country Report Luxembourg

Taxation of allowances and reimbursement

Volunteering is not a paid activity and is therefore not subject to income tax (see also section 4.2.3 for more information on definitions). As already mentioned, however, volunteers may be reimbursed for costs directly relating to their activities as a volunteer, or receive pocket money to cover their basic needs. These reimbursements and pocket money could, in certain circumstances, be subject to taxation. Our survey results indicate that the taxation of allowances and pocket money received by volunteers is not perceived as a relevant obstacle; 82% of respondents regarded the issue as “not very relevant” or “not at all relevant” (see Figure 27 below). When analysing the responses to this question at country level, there are no countries in which the majority of respondents regard taxation as a relevant issue in their country.

FIGURE 27. TAXATION OF REIMBURSEMENTS RECEIVED



Source: PPMI survey of organisations

However, qualitative analysis reveals a wide variety of practices on the taxation of volunteers across the EU Member States. In Belgium (German-Speaking Community), reimbursements received by volunteers are exempt from taxes; volunteers are also exempt from paying social security contributions.¹²⁸ In Luxembourg, the reimbursement of both bénévoles and volontaires is exempt from taxation.¹²⁹ In France and Hungary, allowances are also untaxed.¹³⁰ In some countries, there are no clear legal rules on taxation. In Sweden, for instance, local taxation offices decide on a case-by-case basis whether food, accommodation and stipends for volunteers are tax-exempt.¹³¹ In Netherlands, under certain conditions, volunteers are exempted from paying income tax.¹³² In Finland, the legal status of volunteers is ambiguous in practice. For example, volunteers are sometimes regarded as employees, and the European Voluntary Service has been dealt with according to the taxation practices of the Employment Contracts Act.¹³³

¹²⁸ Youth Wiki: Belgium (de)

¹²⁹ Study on Volunteering in the European Union Country Report Luxembourg

¹³⁰ Interview findings

¹³¹ Nelson, T., *A Comparative Look at National Volunteerism Legislation*, 2005.

¹³² Youth Wiki: The Netherlands

¹³³ Youth Wiki: Finland

BOX 11. TAXATION IN BELGIUM WITH REGARD TO INCOMING VOLUNTEERS

The hosting organisation provides accommodation to the volunteer and responsible for his/her daily expenses. Under specific programmes such as the European Volunteer Programme, the volunteer may also receive a small allowance. Two problems arise in the fields of tax and labour law. If this amount (accommodation, meals) exceeds the yearly maximum allowed by the law of 2005, these fees must be justified. Provision in kind may be considered as taxable, and the volunteer runs the risk of losing his/her volunteer status. The hosting organisation would then be considered an employer, with all the obligations this involves.

Source: Youth Wiki: Belgium (Flemish Community)

4.2.5. Administrative and regulatory framework issues relating to traineeships and jobs

The European Solidarity Corps programme brings together solidarity activities such as volunteering, traineeships and jobs under a single programme. Within individual Member States, however, volunteering and traineeships are usually regulated by different laws and may even fall under different policy areas and strategies, such as youth or employment policies. In this section, we review the regulation of traineeships in the Member States to see how it complements or conflicts with the open-market solidarity traineeships promoted by the European Solidarity Corps. In general, traineeships and jobs under the Corps are much less popular than volunteering. This section provides some insights as to why this is, based on the legal frameworks (or absence thereof) regulating traineeships in each of the Member States.

Traineeships under the European Solidarity Corps are defined as “periods of full-time work practice of between 2 to 6 months renewable once for a maximum duration of 12 months within the same participating organisation”. Traineeships should include a learning and training component through which the participant should gain relevant experience that contributes to their personal, education, social, civic and professional development. A European Solidarity Corps traineeship should be based on a written agreement in accordance with the legal framework of the country in which it takes place. Traineeships should be remunerated by the host organisation, and should not be a substitute for jobs.¹³⁴ By this definition, open-market traineeships are the closest definition to European Solidarity Corps traineeships. Open-market traineeships are understood as traineeships that are not part of the educational curricula of universities or other institutions. Neither are they part of the labour market integration programmes of national employment agencies, or those covered by other EU programmes such as Youth Guarantee. This definition of a traineeship as independent, temporary work practice oriented at personal development, is the one we use in the context of this study.

A review of regulatory frameworks governing traineeships in the Member States shows a general lack of legal regulation of open-market traineeships. While traineeships that form part of curricula or labour market integration programmes are often regulated, open-market traineeships are frequently based on an agreement between the trainee and the organisation. This means that there are few ways to ensure the fair remuneration, quality

¹³⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/youth/solidarity-corps/jobs-and-traineeships_en

assurance and recognition of such traineeships. Furthermore, in certain Member States, open-market traineeships are illegal and count as undeclared work. Table 11 summarises the presence or absence of regulation concerning open-market traineeship in the Member States. The remainder of this section addresses in detail the differences between the Member States, and the issues arising.

TABLE 11. REGULATION OF OPEN-MARKET TRAINEESHIPS IN EU MEMBER STATES

OPEN-MARKET TRAINEESHIP REGULATION	PRESENT	ABSENT
Country	Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom	Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Sweden

Source: PPMI elaboration based on mapping

The first group of countries consists of those that have explicit regulation of open-market traineeships, or traineeship regulation that does not explicitly include open-market traineeships but covers at least some aspects of them. In Belgium and Italy, there are national frameworks setting out the objectives, aims, working conditions, skill recognition, quality assurance and duration of traineeships. In Belgium, there are no provisions on remuneration, while in Italy, a minimum trainee wage is also regulated by national law. In both countries, such traineeships are implemented regionally through well-developed schemes matching potential trainees and employers. While they have succeeded in reducing youth unemployment locally, these schemes are fairly complex and not open to foreign applicants. Such schemes appear to compete with rather than complement European Solidarity Corps traineeships, since it is easier for both applicants and organisations to be matched at a national level, and government or Youth Guarantee funding can cover the traineeship costs and salary.¹³⁵

The situation is similar in France, Slovenia and Spain. In France, open-market traineeships referred to as apprenticeships are well regulated and trainees usually receive a fair remuneration. In Slovenia, a regulation on open market traineeships ensures that trainees must earn at least 70% of the basic salary and are employed under the terms of the Employment Relationship Act, which grants them the same rights as other workers. In this developed traineeship scheme, the language barrier is the main obstacle to engaging foreign trainees.¹³⁶ In Spain, various types of curricular and extra-curricular traineeships are regulated by law. Non-labour traineeships would come closest to the definition of European Solidarity Corps traineeships, although the definitions are not an exact match. Organising such traineeships is rather burdensome, both for

¹³⁵ Interview findings, Youth Wiki Belgium

¹³⁶ Youth Wiki Slovenia

participants and hosting organisations, and an age limit of 25 applies.¹³⁷ As a result, these traineeships are not popular. These examples demonstrate that developed traineeship schemes at a national level that generally comply with the regulations governing European Solidarity Corps traineeships do not necessarily serve to popularise the option of solidarity traineeships. In fact, it may be the other way around – they make it easier for organisations to prioritise the employment of national trainees.

Some Member States regulate curricular traineeships, or offer formal labour market traineeships organised by the government or employment agencies, and only provide **limited rules on open-market traineeships**. In the Netherlands, for instance, no formal regulations exist on open-market traineeships, but there are several non-binding government recommendations on what they should entail.¹³⁸ In Poland, regulations prescribe a written agreement between the trainee and the host organisation, as well as a maximum duration of three months, while not defining any options for an extension to this. Poland also does not prescribe the remuneration of trainees, resulting in reports of exploitation and underpaid or unpaid labour within the framework of a traineeship.¹³⁹ In Romania, a law from 2018 regulates open-market traineeships and sets a maximum duration of six months. However, awareness of this law is not widespread, and traineeships in general are badly promoted and planned individually between the organisation and the trainee.¹⁴⁰ In Slovakia, traineeships are regulated but mostly conducted in the framework of VET, while open-market traineeships are fairly uncommon. In the United Kingdom, open-market traineeships are not strictly regulated, but should comply with the Common Best Practice Code for High-Quality Internships. However, many of them end up being under- or unpaid and lack a clear training and learning component.¹⁴¹ In Bulgaria, under a 2014 update to the labour code, traineeships should comply with the EU Quality Framework for Traineeships, last between six and 12 months and be remunerated, but the application of the code to open-market traineeships is not specified.¹⁴² **The failure of such regulation to explicitly cover open-market traineeships allows the potential exploitation of trainees with regard to working conditions, remuneration and the quality of the traineeship.** However, since at least basic legal frameworks that cover components of open-market traineeships exist in these Member States, the situation could be improved fairly easily based on targeted recommendations.

In Ireland, no legislation exists to regulate open market traineeships, but the country can generally boast well-developed cooperation with the training industry. Traineeships are open to all, subject to loose formal regulation – but unpopular, due mostly to the country's generally low unemployment rate.¹⁴³ In Sweden, open-market traineeships are

¹³⁷ Youth Wiki Spain, Interview findings

¹³⁸ Youth Wiki Netherlands

¹³⁹ Youth Wiki Poland

¹⁴⁰ Youth Wiki Romania

¹⁴¹ Youth Wiki United Kingdom

¹⁴² Youth Wiki Bulgaria; Cedefop (2014). *Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes. Bulgaria*. Available at:

https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2015/ReferNet_BG_2014_WBL.pdf

¹⁴³ Action plan to expand apprenticeships and traineeships in Ireland 2016-2020, available at:

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Action-Plan-Expand-Apprenticeship-Traineeship-in->

also not legally regulated, and are commonly offered by businesses rather than solidarity organisations for a period of 12 months.¹⁴⁴ In Portugal, there are laws defining extracurricular and professional traineeships, but as a measure providing access to the labour market rather than an open-market traineeship.¹⁴⁵ **Solidarity traineeships are fairly unpopular** in these countries, also due to lack of funding capacity among hosting organisations.¹⁴⁶

In many Member States, open-market traineeships are both **not legally regulated and unpopular** because such activities are usually part of educational curricula. In Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia and Malta, open-market traineeships are fairly unpopular and not separately regulated.¹⁴⁷ In Luxembourg, besides the European Solidarity Corps and the banking sector, few bodies offer or promote open market traineeships, which are also not subject to any specific official legislation.¹⁴⁸ In Czechia, Finland, Hungary and Greece, extra-curricular traineeships are treated in the same or very similar way to **entry-level jobs, and the employment relationship falls under the labour code**.¹⁴⁹

In Latvia, no law exists to govern extra-curricular traineeships, and they are often considered undeclared labour. This situation is expected to change when a new law comes into force in 2020.¹⁵⁰ The context is similar in Lithuania and Denmark. In the latter, extra-curricular traineeships represent a poorly regulated "grey area" between education and employment. Unpaid traineeships tend to serve as a stepping-stone into the labour market, especially within the creative industries.¹⁵¹ Germany and Austria both possess developed systems of curricular and extra-curricular training for labour market entry, as well as extensive national schemes. However, they do not provide any specific regulation for open-market traineeships.¹⁵²

Several common challenges can be identified in relation to solidarity traineeships. First, in the majority of the Member States, open-market traineeships, as opposed to other types of traineeships, are very loosely regulated or not regulated at all. This can lead to the potential exploitation of trainees, low or no remuneration, and the poor quality of traineeships. Second, in countries that possess developed national traineeship schemes, open-market traineeships frequently compete with rather than complement such schemes. National traineeship schemes often provide easier access and better funding opportunities than open-market traineeships. Furthermore, solidarity organisations

Ireland-2016-2020.pdf; The five-step guide to traineeship in Ireland, available at <http://www.traineeship.ie/docs/TraineeshipGuide.pdf>

¹⁴⁴ Youth Wiki Sweden

¹⁴⁵ Youth Wiki Portugal

¹⁴⁶ Interview findings

¹⁴⁷ Youth Wiki; Cedefop European database on apprenticeship schemes, available at: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/apprenticeship-schemes/country-fiches/>

¹⁴⁸ Youth Wiki Luxembourg

¹⁴⁹ Youth Wiki, Cedefop European database on apprenticeship schemes, available at: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/apprenticeship-schemes/country-fiches/>

¹⁵⁰ Interview findings, Youth Wiki Latvia

¹⁵¹ Youth Wiki Denmark

¹⁵² Youth Wiki Austria, Germany

across the EU are often less well resourced and cannot afford to offer traineeships that offer adequate remuneration when compared to private companies, and so face the problem of attracting qualified candidates. As already mentioned in the previous section, the promotion of solidarity traineeships is complicated by the lack of overlap between the concepts of solidarity and jobs or traineeships, as well as a lack of clarity concerning the distinction between volunteering and traineeships.

4.3. Inadequacies in support at national and organisational level

4.3.1. Awareness of volunteering opportunities

Most EU Members States have instruments and tools aimed at promoting and raising awareness of existing volunteering opportunities, both in-country and abroad (as noted in section 3.2.3). However, these efforts are usually neither systemic nor integrated. More in-depth study findings confirm that the lack of dissemination and promotion of information at a systemic level is one of the key problems facing the volunteering/solidarity sector in Europe. According to both the survey and interview and the evidence from our desk research, one of the key obstacles to cross-border volunteering and solidarity activities is a lack of information and awareness among young people regarding the opportunities available to them.

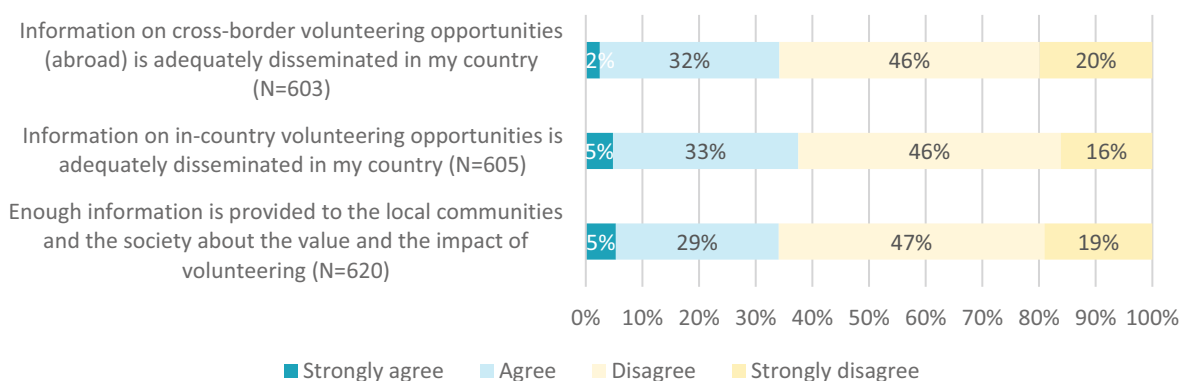
Our survey results indicate that **national-level efforts are not sufficient in terms of promoting/raising awareness of cross-border volunteering activities**: a vast majority of volunteering organisations surveyed (66%) either disagree or strongly disagree that information on cross-border volunteering opportunities (abroad) is adequately disseminated in their country, while merely 34% agree/strongly agree with this statement. At the same time, the situation in terms of awareness raising/promotion is only slightly more positive in the area of domestic volunteering activities: around 62% of organisations surveyed disagreed/completely disagreed with the statement that information on *in-country* volunteering opportunities is adequately disseminated in their country, with 38% agreeing/strongly agreeing with the statement (see Figure 28).

Evidence from this study also confirms **a lack not only of awareness-raising/promotional activities that address not only specific schemes and programmes, but also of activities that communicating the overall value and societal benefits of volunteering activities to the public**: around 66% of organisations surveyed disagreed/strongly disagreed that enough information is provided to local communities and society about the value and the impact of volunteering, with slightly more than one-third (34%) of organisations agreeing with the statement.

Evidence from the available literature and national-level interviews with experts and organisations confirms that the lack of information both on specific schemes/opportunities and on the general value of volunteering is one of the key challenges across most of the EU. More in-depth qualitative evidence shows that this lack of awareness correlates with socio-economic differences among young people, with persons from disadvantaged background often reported as being less informed and aware about volunteering opportunities and the benefits of volunteering. Correspondingly, knowledge of volunteering opportunities among people from rural

regions or less affluent families is significantly lower than that among young persons from urban and more affluent backgrounds. In some instances, low awareness on the part of local authorities about EU legislation concerning health and social insurance regulations for volunteers was also identified as a challenge to cross-border volunteering.

FIGURE 28. PROMOTING AND RAISING AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES



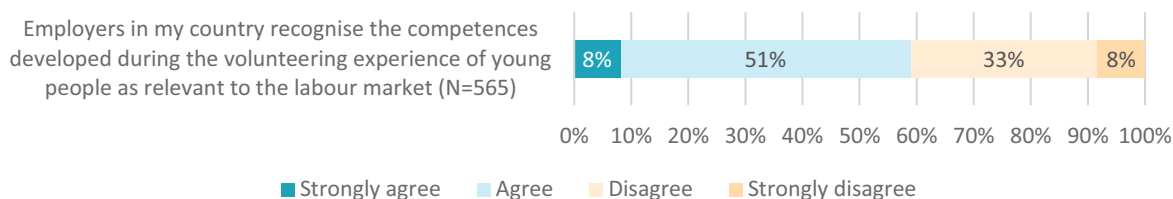
Source: PPMI survey of organisations

4.3.2. Recognition of skills and competences

Study **evidence concerning employers' perceptions of volunteering activities and their value is somewhat mixed**. On the one hand, the majority of organisations surveyed agreed that employers in their country recognise the competences developed during young people's volunteering experiences as relevant to the labour market (59% of organisations agreed/strongly agreed with the statement). But at the same time, as shown in Figure 29, the share of organisations that reported employers not valuing and recognising the competences acquired during volunteering is also fairly high (41% disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement). (Qualitative evidence supports these findings: while stakeholders in some countries indicated that employers recognised and valued volunteering experience as a potential benefit in the labour market, those from a number of other EU countries (even those that participate in the Youthpass and Volunteer Passport schemes) indicated that a lack of understanding persists among employers with regard to the competences developed during volunteering experiences, which employers regard as irrelevant to the labour market.

In certain Member States, the formal recognition mechanisms available are insufficiently well integrated. Youthpass, for instance, is still not entirely integrated into the Croatian labour market, and as a result, newly developed skills often go unrecognised by prospective employers. Study evidence also indicates that, at least in some countries, employers mainly recognise cross-border volunteering/solidarity activities: employers (especially international companies) consider the skills acquired through international volunteering (foreign language skills, working in an international team) as specifically valuable in the labour market.

FIGURE 29: RECOGNITION BY EMPLOYERS OF THE COMPETENCES AND SKILLS ACQUIRED THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

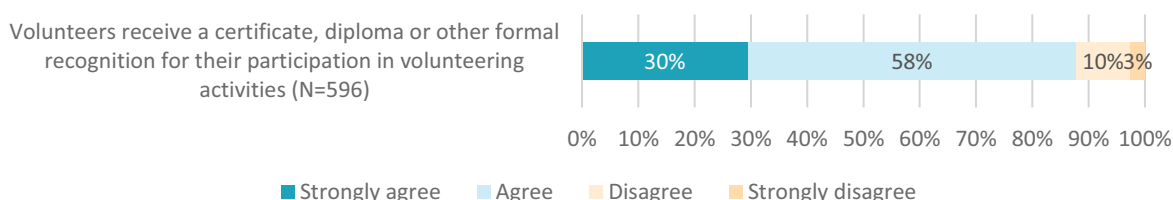


Source: PPMI survey of organisations

At the same time, representatives from a number of volunteering organisations indicated that **the attitude of employers and of the extent to which they recognise volunteering experience, largely depends on the ability of volunteers to clearly communicate the competences they have acquired, and their benefits to the potential employer.** It is therefore also important to develop the skills of young volunteers to communicate their volunteering experience and its benefits to potential employers.

Evidence from the study indicates that most volunteering activities result in the volunteer receiving some kind of formal document recognising their participation: 88% of organisations surveyed agreed/strongly agreed that volunteers receive a certificate, diploma or other formal recognition of their participation in volunteering activities (Figure 30). But while most volunteering activities result in some kind of formal document, most countries do not possess national-level frameworks for the recognition of skills/competences acquired through volunteering. Volunteering is therefore recognised on an individual basis. **The absence of a unified national framework for the recognition of skills/competences acquired through volunteering activities (especially for European Solidarity Corps and cross-border volunteering) was identified by a number of stakeholders from different Member States as one of the key challenges** and obstacles that provide a disincentive to the participation of young people in (cross-border) volunteering activities.

FIGURE 30: FORMAL RECOGNITION OF COMPETENCES AND SKILLS ACQUIRED THROUGH VOLUNTEERING



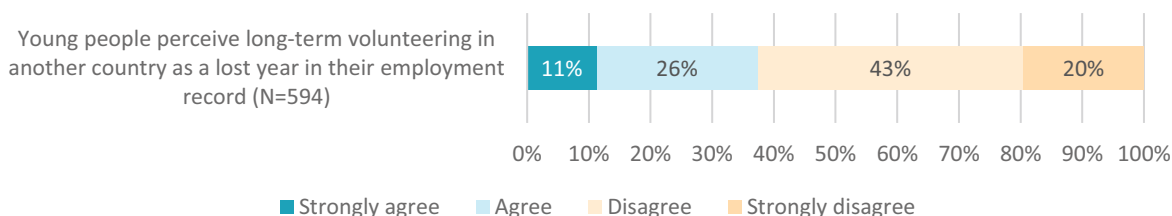
Source: PPMI survey of organisations

Whereas some countries (like Lithuania) have developed specific incentives that link volunteering experience to formal education (additional points are given to volunteers when applying for study programmes in higher education), most European countries do

not provide such mechanisms. A number of the stakeholders interviewed indicated **that the lack of substantial recognition for volunteering activities (i.e. recognition that goes beyond formal documents/certificates and which potentially incentivises young people to engage in volunteering activities) is one of the challenges** facing the volunteering sector in the EU Member States. According to these stakeholders, public authorities should make greater efforts to recognise volunteering experience, e.g. by giving extra points when applying to higher education programmes, public sector jobs, etc. This view is not universal, however: according to some stakeholders these rewards and extra incentives might distort the very essence of volunteering, since the main motivation for voluntary activities should be the public good/altruism.

In some cases, **the lack of recognition among young people themselves of the skills/competences acquired through volunteering might also pose an obstacle to cross-border solidarity activities.** According to the survey evidence (see Figure 31), around 37% of organisations agreed/strongly agreed that young people perceive long-term volunteering in another country as a lost year in their employment record (63% disagreed with the statement). Qualitative data from interviews confirmed that in some countries, the perceptions of young people towards volunteering are changing. A tendency has emerged for young people to want more structure in their life, which means having a job instead of 'losing' a year to volunteering.

FIGURE 31: PERCEPTION OF CROSS-BORDER VOLUNTEERING AS A "LOST YEAR"

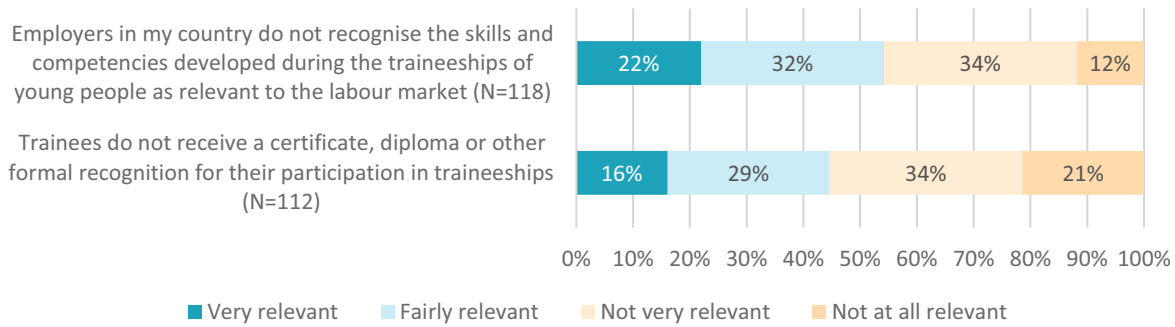


Source: PPMI survey of organisations

Both the survey and qualitative evidence indicate that in most cases, trainees receive a certificate/diploma or other formal document to recognise the **traineeship experience**. According to the results of the survey, when asked to identify the most relevant obstacles for young people in their country in relation to traineeships in the solidarity field, around 45% of respondents indicated "trainees do not receive a certificate, diploma or other formal recognition for their participation in traineeships" as a relevant/very relevant issue. The majority (55%) saw this as an irrelevant obstacle. The recognition of traineeship experience among the employers, on the other hand, was identified as a more significant obstacle: 55% of survey respondents confirmed "employers in my country do not recognise the skills and competencies developed during the traineeship of young people as relevant to the labour market" as a relevant/very relevant obstacle. **Qualitative evidence from the stakeholder interviews confirmed the findings above (i.e. that while in most cases, traineeships result in certificate/diploma**

or other formal recognition documents, employers often do not recognise this experience as very relevant/useful in the labour market).

FIGURE 32: OBSTACLES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN RELATION TO TRAINEESHIPS IN THE SOLIDARITY FIELD (RECOGNITION-RELATED ISSUES)



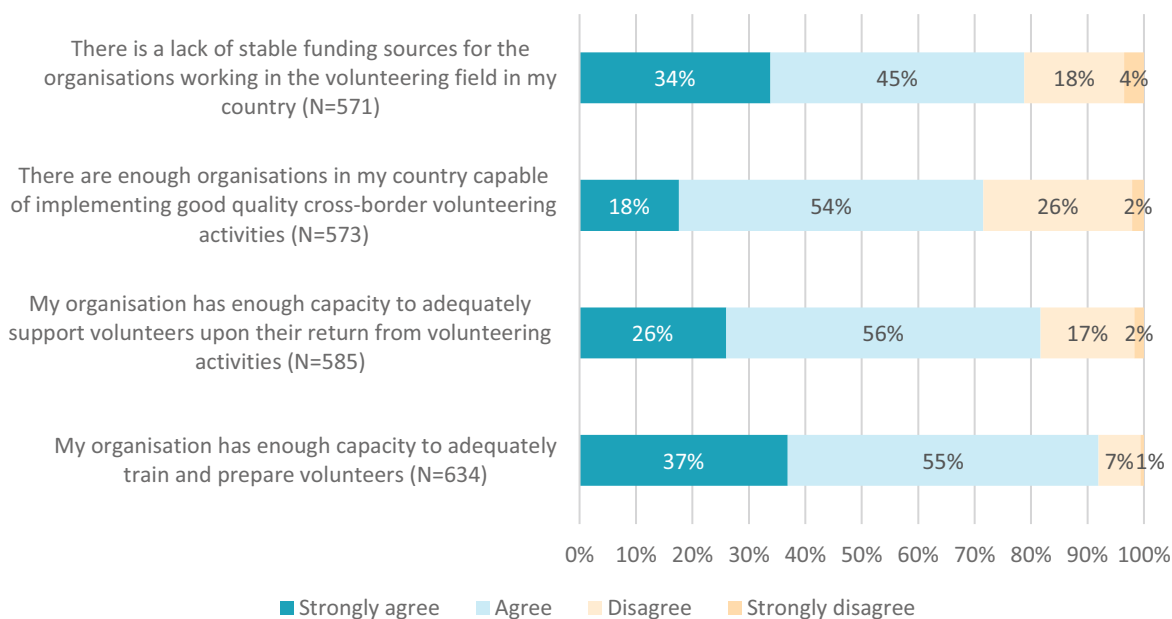
Source: PPMI survey of organisations

4.3.3. Capacity of organisations

Our survey results indicate that **the majority of volunteering organisations in the EU hold a positive view of their capacity to implement volunteering activities**, including cross-border volunteering. The majority (72%) of organisations surveyed indicated that there are enough organisations working in their country capable of implementing good-quality cross-border volunteering activities, while around 28% of respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement. The survey results also indicate that most of the organisations surveyed believed they had sufficient capacity to adequately train and prepare volunteers: 92% of organisations surveyed agreed/strongly agreed with this statement. Similarly, the overwhelming majority (82%) of organisations agreed that they had sufficient capacity to adequately support volunteers upon their return from volunteering activities (Figure 33).

At the same time, however, quantitative and qualitative study evidence indicates that **the lack of capacity of, and support for, organisations in some specific areas sometimes constitutes an obstacle to cross-border volunteering activities**. More specifically, the **lack of stable funding** for those organisations implementing cross-border volunteering and solidarity activities is one of the most common challenges: 79% of the volunteering organisations surveyed agreed/strongly agreed with the statement that there is a lack of stable funding sources for organisations working in the volunteering field in their country (21% disagreed with the statement). Our literature review and interviews with stakeholders confirmed that in many instances smaller volunteering organisations in particular lack the human and financial resources to prepare volunteers, or to invest in training and mentoring, including preparation for cross-border volunteering experience (language training).

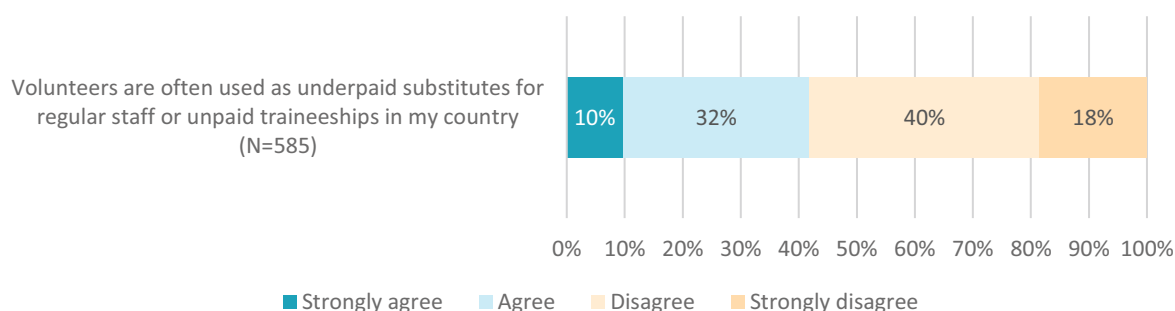
FIGURE 33: CAPACITIES OF ORGANISATIONS TO IMPLEMENT VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES



Source: PPMI survey of organisations

Evidence from our survey indicates that one of the key obstacles to (cross-border) volunteering and solidarity activities is **the misuse of volunteers' work and its exploitation as a substitute for regular work among some host organisations**. The survey results reveal that a large share of volunteering organisations (around 42%) agree/strongly agree with the statement that volunteers are often used as underpaid substitutes for regular staff or unpaid traineeships in their country.

FIGURE 34: VOLUNTEERS USED AS UNDERPAID SUBSTITUTES FOR PAID STAFF



Source: PPMI survey of organisations

It must be noted, however, that since the qualitative study evidence on this issue is limited, the above findings on job substitution are based only on the perceptions of the organisations surveyed. Further evidence from secondary sources does, however, confirm that the substitution of paid jobs with volunteers has been identified as a problem in previous research. A national survey on volunteering experiences was carried out in the UK through YouGov's panel (10,000+ respondents) and published in January 2019 by the NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) under the title "Time Well Spent". In this study, 24% of those surveyed who volunteered at least once a week felt that it was becoming "too much like paid work". This view was more prevalent among those volunteering most frequently, as well as those volunteering in the public sector or in organisations with a paid coordinator.¹⁵³ Several scenarios exist with regard to the substitution of paid jobs with volunteers. In some cases, an organisation may decide to cut jobs and recruit volunteers to fill the gaps. In other cases, when a service has been withdrawn due to funding cuts, members of the community or service-users may volunteer to run services to meet similar needs.¹⁵⁴ To avoid job substitution and potential conflicts between employees and volunteers, a number of recommendations and guidelines were issued in the Member States. For example, the Charter for Strengthening Relations between Paid Staff and Volunteers in England establishes the key principle that the involvement of volunteers should complement and supplement the work of paid staff, and should not be used to displace paid staff or undercut their pay or conditions of service. In addition, another principle of the Charter states that the added value of volunteers should be highlighted as part of the commissioning or grant allocation

¹⁵³ *Time Well Spent: A National Survey On The Volunteer Experience*, NCVO, 2019
https://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/policy_and_research/volunteering/Volunteer-experience_Full-Report.pdf

¹⁵⁴ *A guide to avoiding job substitution*,
<http://www.resettlement.eu/sites/icmc.tcp.eu/files/VAS%20Guide%20to%20avoiding%20job%20substitution.pdf>

process, but their involvement should not be used to reduce contract costs.¹⁵⁵ Other measures recommended for organisations to address and avoid job substitution with volunteers include:

- Consulting with trade unions, staff and the community on key principles for volunteer involvement.
- Creating a volunteering policy, defining the procedures used to create new roles and solve problems (defining volunteer recruitment, diversity, induction and training, expenses, supervision and support, insurance, health and safety, confidentiality, etc.).
- Agreeing on defined roles and responsibilities for volunteers (identifying activities for volunteers that support and complement the work of paid staff).
- Creating opportunities for staff and volunteers to better understand each other's roles.¹⁵⁶

In terms of the capacities of organisations to conduct traineeships in the solidarity field, study evidence indicates a similar set of obstacles in relation to organisational capacities to those observed in the field of volunteering. First, the evidence shows **that in many cases organisations are not able to cover basic traineeship costs, which results in negative effects on working conditions and the overall traineeship experience for the trainees involved**. According to the survey results, 71% agreed that the "cost of traineeships (trainees' wages/stipend, social security contributions, learning materials and costs of mentors' time) is too high for the employers". Closely related to this is the survey's finding on the lack of financial and other benefits for trainees: 80% of surveyed organisations indicated as a relevant obstacle that "Trainees are usually not remunerated (no allowance, coverage of food or accommodation costs, etc.)", with another 65% indicating that trainees are not covered by social security benefits (health insurance, holiday entitlements, etc.). **The misuse of trainees as an unpaid substitute for regular staff turns out to be even more relevant issue for traineeships than for volunteering activities**: 75% of survey respondents agreed with the statement that "trainees are often used as underpaid substitutes for regular staff" (Figure 35). According to our interviews with stakeholders, in some countries there is ongoing debate over the idea of eliminating unpaid traineeships as they are increasingly perceived as a problem, since they provide employers a way to avoid hiring paid workers.

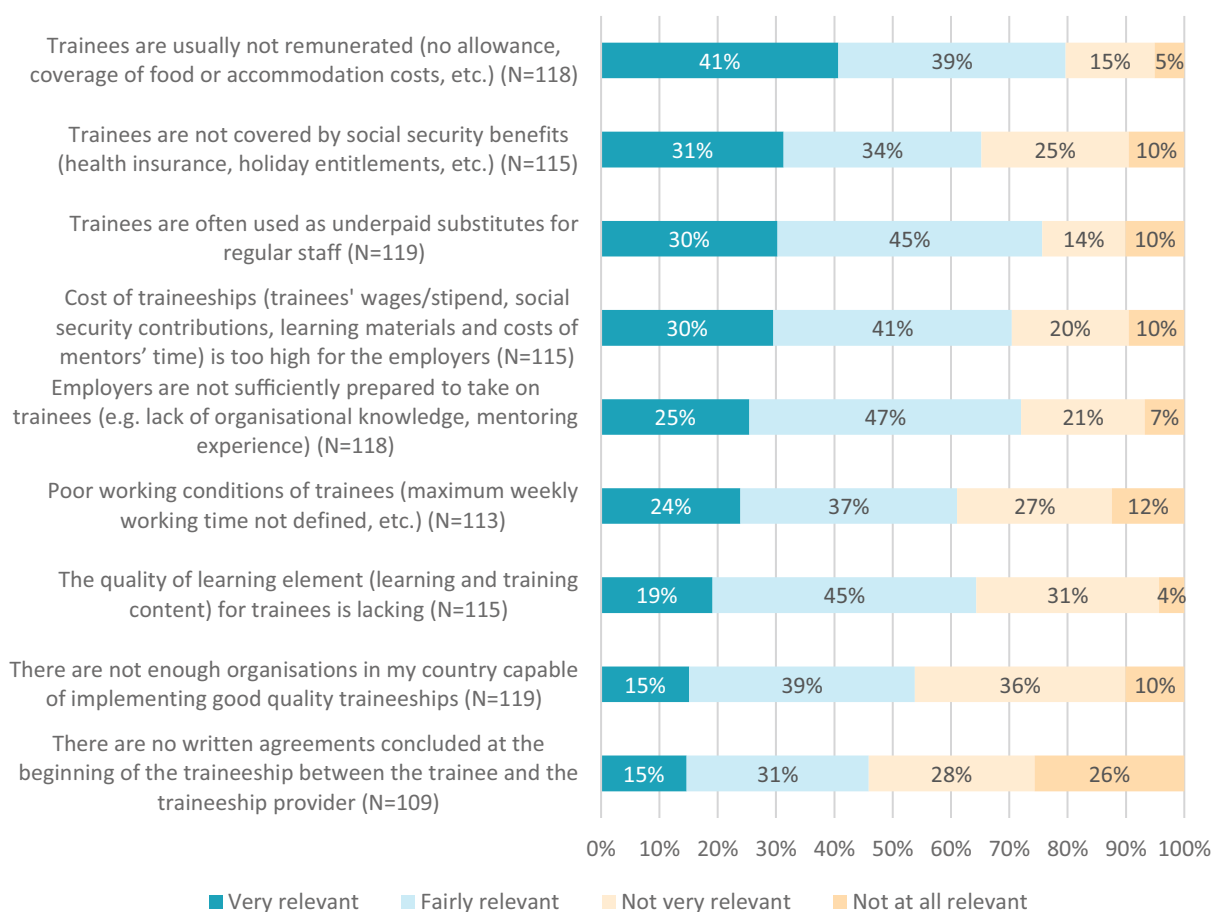
Evidence also shows that organisations that host trainees also often **do not clearly define the conditions and terms of the traineeship, and generally lack the competences/dedication to organise high-quality training activities**. According to the results of our survey, 72% of organisations identify "employers are not sufficiently prepared to take on trainees (e.g. lack of organisational knowledge, mentoring experience)" as a relevant/very relevant obstacle. Similarly, 64% of respondents agreed that the quality of the learning element (learning and training content) for trainees is lacking, with another 61% indicating poor working conditions for trainees (maximum

¹⁵⁵ A Charter for Strengthening Relations Between Paid Staff and Volunteers, <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/charter-strengthening-relations-between-paid-staff-and-volunteers>

¹⁵⁶ A guide to avoiding job substitution, <http://www.resettlement.eu/sites/icmc.tcp.eu/files/VAS%20Guide%20to%20avoiding%20job%20substitution.pdf>

weekly working time not being defined, etc.) as a relevant/very relevant obstacle. Finally, **the general lack of organisations able to organise good-quality traineeships for young people was identified as an important challenge.** According to our survey results, 54% of organisations agreed that there are not enough organisations in their country capable of implementing good-quality traineeships (Figure 35).

FIGURE 35: OBSTACLES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN RELATION TO TRAINEESHIPS IN THE SOLIDARITY FIELD



Source: PPMI survey of organisations

4.3.4. Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities

Mixed evidence was found regarding the capacities and readiness of organisations to accept and include young people with fewer opportunities in solidarity activities. On the one hand, **most of the organisations surveyed provided a positive assessment of their capacity and willingness to include young people with fewer opportunities in solidarity activities.** The majority of survey respondents (67%) agreed/strongly agreed that their organisation used specific practices, methods and tools to engage young people with fewer opportunities into solidarity activities (volunteering,

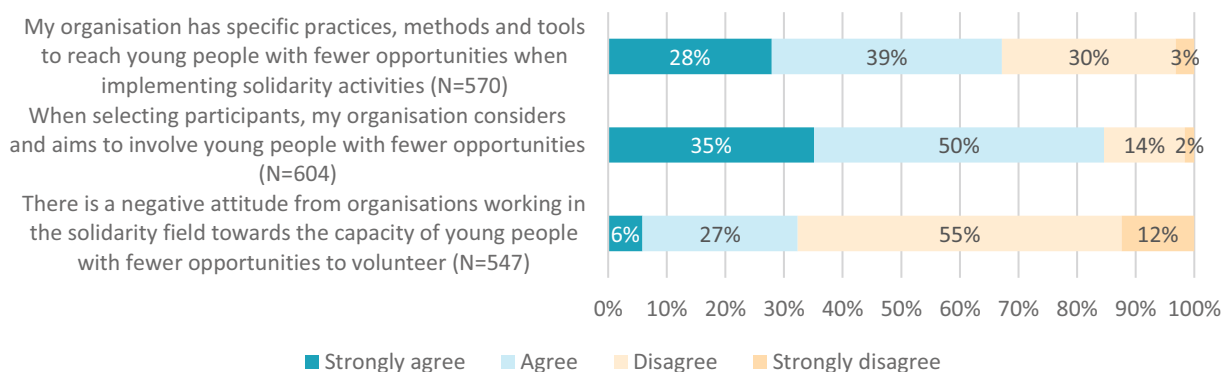
traineeships/jobs). At the same time, around one-third (33%) of organisations surveyed indicated they did not undertake such practices, methods and tools to engage people with fewer opportunities. Similarly, the vast majority of organisations (85%) agreed/strongly agreed with the statement that when selecting participants, their organisation considers and aims to involve young people with fewer opportunities. Analysis of the qualitative evidence shows that organisations apply a number of different approaches, tools and practices to include young people with fewer opportunities into their volunteering activities. These include public presentations and workshops in schools attended by people with fewer opportunities, as well as various social media tools (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), advertisements in local newspapers, joint projects/cooperation with organisations specialising in support for young people with fewer opportunities, etc. In most cases, the representatives of volunteering projects simply go to local communities, schools and other places to present opportunities for volunteering.

Regarding the overall attitude of organisations towards young people with fewer opportunities, the majority of organisations (67%) disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement that there is a negative attitude from organisations working in the solidarity field towards the capacity of young people with fewer opportunities to volunteer. More concerning, however, is the fact that around one-third (33%) of respondents agreed that such negative attitudes towards people with fewer opportunities did, in fact, exist among volunteering organisations (Figure 36).

Qualitative data confirmed that in a number of countries **volunteering is still widely considered as an occupation for the upper/more affluent classes, and that people with fewer opportunities are under-represented in volunteering sector.** In Austria, for example, the likelihood of a person to volunteer is in large part dependent on their socioeconomic and educational status: according to an interview with a local expert working in the field, it was estimated that roughly 25% of the population participates in 90% of volunteering. Similarly, in France, around 30% of persons with higher education were involved in volunteering through associations in France, compared to only 15% of those high-school education or less. According to the same research, the predominance of more highly educated persons within volunteering organisations may prevent persons with lower levels of educational attainment from getting involved in volunteering activities, because they may feel inadequate or “out of place” among more educated volunteers.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ *L'évolution de l'engagement bénévole associatif en France, de 2010 à 2019, Etude France Bénévolat / IFOP Mars 2019 avec l'appui de Recherches & Solidarités, et le soutien du Crédit Mutuel.*
https://www.francebenevolat.org/sites/default/files/DOCUMENTATION/ETUDE_Evol%20b%C3%A9n%C3%A9volat%20associatif%20en%202019_DEF.pdf

FIGURE 36: INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FEWER OPPORTUNITIES IN SOLIDARITY ACTIVITIES (VOLUNTEERING, TRAINEESHIPS/JOBS)



Source: PPMI survey of organisations

4.4. Individual reasons

Sections 4.1 to 4.3 of this report explored and discussed various obstacles at policy and organisational levels. This section of the study briefly outlines and presents our findings on the reasons at an individual level that hinder the participation of young people in cross-border solidarity activities. To identify these reasons, we rely on qualitative findings from the EU youth and volunteering organisations surveyed, as well as interviews with National Authorities and National Agencies.

The common factor among the reasons identified that may prevent young people from participating in volunteering activities is **uncertainty or anxiety**, which many surveyed organisations characterised as “fear”. In some cases, the hesitation of prospective volunteers relates to a **lack of confidence and independence** to relocate and engage in new experiences. Among other factors, respondents mentioned the anticipation of culture shock or a complicated period of adaptation. Other, less prevalent reasons include general worries in relation to **not being able to cope with the challenges** being undertaken (e.g. finding suitable accommodation, coping with homesickness), or health anxieties over due to existing **mental and physical conditions**.

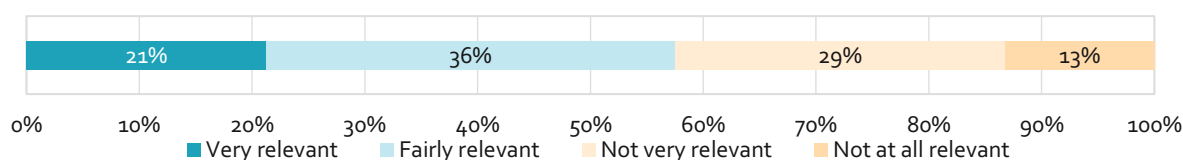
However, the key underlying concern among prospective youth volunteers stems from **poor command of foreign languages**. Interviews with experts and representatives suggest that a lack of foreign language skills/foreign language training is among the most common reasons for their reluctance to engage in cross-border volunteering activities. This factor applies to both organisations and young people. The qualitative responses provided by the EU youth and volunteering organisations surveyed reveal that prospective volunteers often see language as a cause for insecurity.

“I believe that there is a language barrier. Young people don’t have great language skills and, therefore, feel afraid to travel alone when they are not competent in the native language.”

Excerpt from a qualitative survey response, shared by an EU youth and volunteering organisation.

As illustrated by Figure 37 below, quantitative survey responses reveal that 58% of respondents perceive (agree/strongly agree) that an insufficient level of foreign language skills poses an obstacle for young people in relation to **traineeships** in the solidarity field¹⁵⁸.

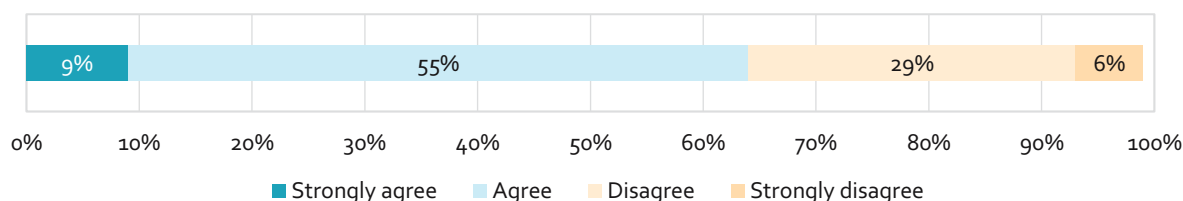
FIGURE 37. RELEVANCE OF INSUFFICIENT FOREIGN LANGUAGE SKILLS AMONG INCOMING/OUTGOING TRAINEES



Source: PPMI, quantitative survey, Q26: "How relevant are the following obstacles for young people in your country in relation to traineeships in solidarity field?: The foreign language skills of young people going for traineeships in other countries / trainees coming to my country are not sufficient (N=113)".

The responses differ in the case of **volunteering activities**, where 64% of respondents state (agree/strongly agree) that the foreign language skills of departing or incoming volunteers are sufficient. It is worth noting, however, that slightly more than one-third (35%) of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with this statement¹⁵⁹). The shares of responses are outlined in greater detail in Figure 38 below.

FIGURE 38. SUFFICIENCY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE SKILLS AMONG INCOMING/OUTGOING PARTICIPANTS IN VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES



Source: PPMI quantitative survey, Q23: "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the capacities of your organisation and other organisations in your country to implement volunteering activities: The foreign language skills of young people going to volunteer in other countries / volunteers coming to my country are sufficient (N=614)".

Survey respondents in France and Spain, the countries with the highest number of European Solidarity Corps projects (as noted in section 3.2.4), are among those not

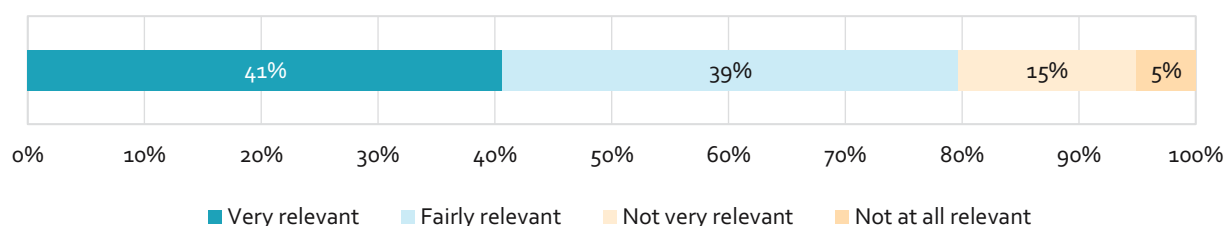
¹⁵⁸ PPMI, quantitative survey, Q26: "How relevant are the following obstacles for young people in your country in relation to traineeships in solidarity field: The foreign language skills of young people going for traineeships in other countries / trainees coming to my country are not sufficient".

¹⁵⁹ Quantitative survey, Q23: "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the capacities of your organisation and other organisations in your country to implement volunteering activities: The foreign language skills of young people going to volunteer in other countries / volunteers coming to my country are sufficient".

entirely confident in the foreign language skills of participants in cross-border solidarity activities. 60% of respondents from French organisations perceived the level of language skills as insufficient in the case of volunteering, while 70% saw it as an issue in the case of traineeships. A similar situation can be observed in the case of Spanish respondents: 50% of the organisations surveyed observe language issues as relevant in volunteering activities, while 63% find them relevant in the case of traineeships. The language barrier was pronounced in open responses, where participating organisations were asked to share the feedback from outgoing or incoming volunteers regarding their personal obstacles. A notable share of all open responses includes a mention of language barriers, with French, Spanish and Italian respondents sharing this sentiment the most frequently.

While **financial barriers** cannot be characterised as an obstacle at a purely individual level (they are closely related to the funding available to organisations and specific mobility schemes), it is important to note that obstacles relating to funding are among those frequently mentioned by stakeholders. Based on the feedback received, organisations indicate that participants (especially those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds) pay close attention to allowances and their adequacy with regard to travel and subsistence costs. This is especially relevant in the case of traineeships. As seen in Figure 39 below, 80% of the organisations surveyed perceive the lack of remuneration to be a relevant issue.

FIGURE 39. RELEVANCE OF LACK OF REMUNERATION AS AN OBSTACLE TO TRAINEESHIPS



Source: PPMI, quantitative survey, Q26 "26. How relevant are the following obstacles for young people in your country in relation to traineeships in the solidarity field?: Trainees are usually not remunerated (no allowance, coverage of food or accommodation costs, etc.) (N=118)".

Financial barriers are more pronounced in the case of cross-border solidarity activities, as participants in these activities frequently incur higher costs in relation to their placement abroad. Additional financial support is particularly important in encouraging and enabling participation by people from disadvantaged backgrounds.¹⁶⁰

"Some young people are scared to leave their environment, especially those with fewer opportunities. It's important to mentor and accompany them."

Excerpt from an interview with a National Agency

¹⁶⁰ European Commission (2017). Study on the impact of transnational volunteering through the European voluntary service.

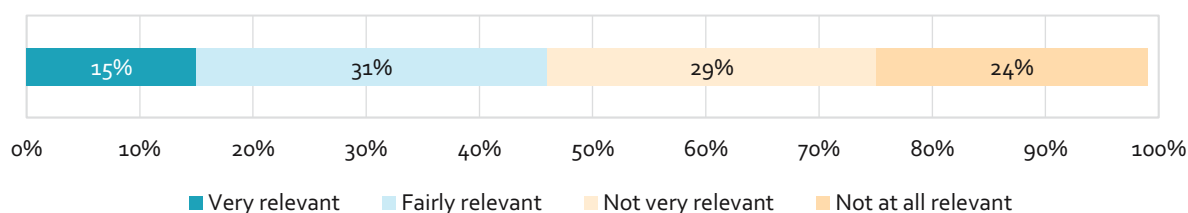
Another important factor that echoed throughout qualitative responses is the priority given to **existing commitments**. Volunteering, or “working for free”, as it was described by some respondents, can be considered an intrusion into an already mapped-out career path. Depending on their age, youth may prioritise the pursuit of a higher education degree or well-paid employed position, as well as taking care of family. Outside commitments may also be of a smaller scale, for instance, relating to an ongoing rental contract. 47% of the youth and volunteering organisations surveyed agreed that families can contribute to anti-volunteering sentiment by emphasising caring duties and responsibilities¹⁶¹, as illustrated in Figure 40.

“The attitude towards volunteering in general from most society members is quite negative. A lot of young people choose to take the traditional path – high school-university-working, and do not see the point.”

Excerpt from a qualitative survey response, shared by an EU youth and volunteering organisation

The emphasis on a formal life plan also closely coincides with formally or informally imposed **expectations and social pressures**. While quantitative survey responses do not present a unanimous view, **family pressure** was frequently mentioned in qualitative responses. To a large extent, this relates to the culture and tradition of volunteering in the given country, which determines if volunteering is considered to be a suitable choice. Younger participants may seek approval from their parents, who often frown upon volunteering and advocate for a more traditional career path.

FIGURE 40. FAMILY PRESSURE AS A REASON FOR NOT VOLUNTEERING



Source: PPMI, Q19 “How relevant are the following obstacles to volunteering in your country or abroad?: There is family pressure for young people not to go volunteering in other countries because of their caring duties and responsibilities (N=585)”.

Finally, less pronounced reasons relate to the **fleeting interest** of young people. On one hand, they may lack enthusiasm for volunteering if their **expectations are not met** in terms of activity type or desired destination country. However, their lack of interest may also arise as a result of the **overwhelming number of opportunities** available to

¹⁶¹ PPMI, quantitative survey, Q19: “How relevant are the following obstacles to volunteering in your country or abroad: There is a family pressure for young people not to go volunteering in other countries because of their caring duties and responsibilities”.

modern youth – from cheap modes of travel and competing programmes, to already tight schedules resulting from school work, hobbies and other extracurricular activities. This, in turn, can result in apathy towards volunteering in general.

While health-related issues were not emphasised by EU youth and volunteering organisations, our desk research indicates that **people with disabilities or mental or physical health problems** are often excluded from solidarity activities. In the UK, one in 10 people who have never volunteered claimed that a disability or illness has prevented them from doing so.¹⁶² Mental and physical health problems were the most commonly identified reasons for a lack of opportunities among people who did not participate in EVS.¹⁶³ Very few cross-border solidarity postings are accessible to disabled people, and the support provided by the sending and hosting organisations is often insufficient to support such volunteers. The lack of support is frequently related to the scarce resources organisations have at their disposal, and the high additional costs of support staff for people with special needs.¹⁶⁴ On top of these difficulties, disabled volunteers often face prejudiced attitudes, discouraging them from participating in solidarity activities.¹⁶⁵

Other barriers to volunteering that were sporadically mentioned in the survey and interviews include the anticipation of issues relating to accommodation and transportation, lack of support from the hosting organisation, concerns about personal safety, having a criminal record, dissatisfaction with the current age limitations, and others.

¹⁶² UK Civil Society Almanac 2019. Available at: <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/volunteering/motivations-and-barriers/>

¹⁶³ European Commission (2017). *Study on the impact of transnational volunteering through the European Voluntary Service*, p. 80.

¹⁶⁴ European Commission (2017). *Study on the impact of transnational volunteering through the European Voluntary Service*, p 92.

¹⁶⁵ Southby, K., & South, J. (2016). *Volunteering, inequalities and barriers to volunteering: A rapid evidence review*. Leeds Beckett University, p. 5.

5. European Solidarity Corps: specific challenges

5.1. Volunteering

In-depth analysis reveals that the key obstacles to the cross-border volunteering activities under the European Solidarity Corps programme largely match the obstacles to (cross-border) volunteering/solidarity activities in general, as identified in the previous sections.

Evidence from our also confirms the relevance as an obstacle of the **absence of a favourable legal environment providing easy access to visas for non-EU volunteers participating in the European Solidarity Corps programme**. According to our survey results, more than half (51%) of participant organisations agreed with the statement that there are difficulties in obtaining a visa for non-EU participants of the European Solidarity Corps programme. Interviews with stakeholders confirmed that visa access for non-EU volunteers is an increasingly pressing and relevant problem: while some countries such as France offer a specific "volunteer visa" option in their visa application forms, the majority of Member States don't. As a consequence, the visa applications of prospective mobile volunteers from non-EU countries frequently do not fall under any of the possible alternatives (student, worker, tourist, etc.), and the visa application process therefore takes longer than planned. In some cases, a visa may be denied to potential volunteers under the European Solidarity Corps programme. According to multiple stakeholders, interest and applications to participate in the programme from non-EU residents are rising steadily, and this visa issue will become even more pressing in the future.

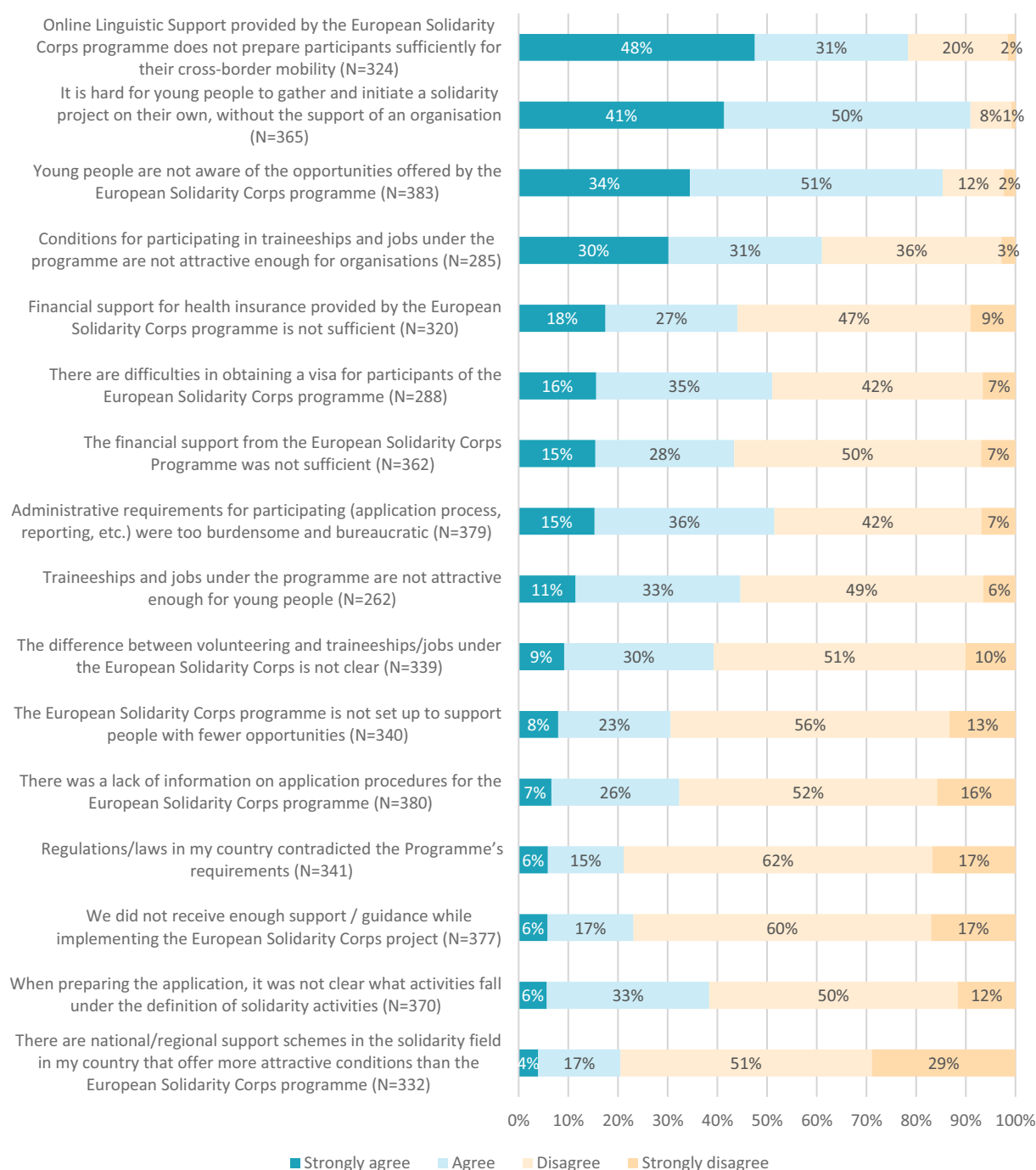
The **key difficulty affecting participation in the Solidarity Projects action is a lack of support for groups of self-organised young people, who often lack the knowledge, skills and other resources needed to successfully prepare and complete a project**. According to the results of our survey, 91% of the organisations surveyed agreed with the statement that it is hard for young people to gather together and initiate a solidarity project on their own, without the support of an organisation. It must be noted, however, that this evidence might involve some bias as the question was addressed to organisations and not young people (in solidarity projects the involvement of an organisation is optional).

Insufficient programme funding for health insurance and other costs was another important obstacle identified by the study. Around 43% of participant organisations indicated that overall financial support from the European Solidarity Corps programme was insufficient. In addition, 45% also claimed that financial support for health insurance provided by the European Solidarity Corps programme was insufficient (Figure 41) – an obstacle whose relevance for many volunteering organisations confirmed in our stakeholder interviews. A number of stakeholders also indicated that current funding was insufficient to cover/travel the accommodation costs of volunteers travelling to more expensive countries/areas in Europe. In some cases, organisations reported difficulties in the reimbursement of costs by the insurance company, particularly in the case of volunteers with chronic illnesses or disabilities.

Qualitative evidence shows that for some stakeholders, cross-border volunteering under the European Solidarity Corps has a **narrow focus in terms of its thematic**

areas/potential options, and a wider set of topics should be explored in order to increase the interest of young persons and volunteering organisations in the programme (although, according to its regulations, the Corps does not actually have any thematic areas or options - projects can take place in a broad range of areas, as long as it tackles a societal need).

FIGURE 41: KEY PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES WHEN APPLYING FOR OR IMPLEMENTING PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS PROGRAMME



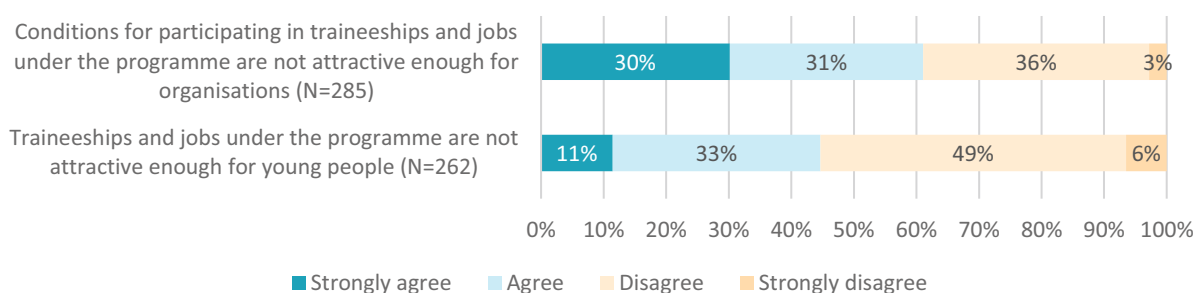
Source: PPMI survey of organisations.

5.2. Traineeships and jobs

Monitoring data shows that out of all European Solidarity Corps projects funded in 2018 and 2019, only 2% were organised under the traineeships/jobs strand (see section 2.2.4 for more details).

Evidence from our survey shows that the majority of organisations (around 55%) agreed that traineeships and jobs under the programme are attractive enough for young persons, while 44% disagreed with this statement. However, **61% of organisations agreed/strongly agreed that the conditions for participating in traineeships and jobs under the programme are not attractive enough for organisations** (Figure 42).

FIGURE 42: ATTRACTIVENESS OF ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS PROGRAMME TO ORGANISATIONS AND YOUNG PEOPLE



Source: PPMI survey of organisations.

When asked what reasons led their organisation not to participate in traineeships/jobs projects under the European Solidarity Corps programme, **a vast majority of respondents (77%) agreed that the financial incentives for traineeships/jobs under the programme are insufficient for organisations to participate.** A number of potential applicants and other stakeholders indicated that the key obstacle that deters organisations from hosting trainees through the European Solidarity Corps is the programme's requirement for organisations to contribute to the salary of the trainee. Organisations often choose "cheaper" options – accepting trainees through programmes/schemes that do not require a financial contribution from the host organisation. Conversely, organisations that were willing to pay trainees preferred to hire them on their own terms and not through the European Solidarity Corps programme, which imposes additional requirements and administrative burden (proposal writing, project reporting, the requirement for "solidarity" activities, etc.) (It must be noted, however, that one of the aims of the Corps Quality Label is to ensure that minimum quality standards are met by beneficiary organisations. Under the European solidarity corps, the trainees receive a relocation allowance and reimbursement of travel costs. They are covered by a complementary insurance scheme. Primary insurance is normally provided by the host country, through European Health Insurance Card).

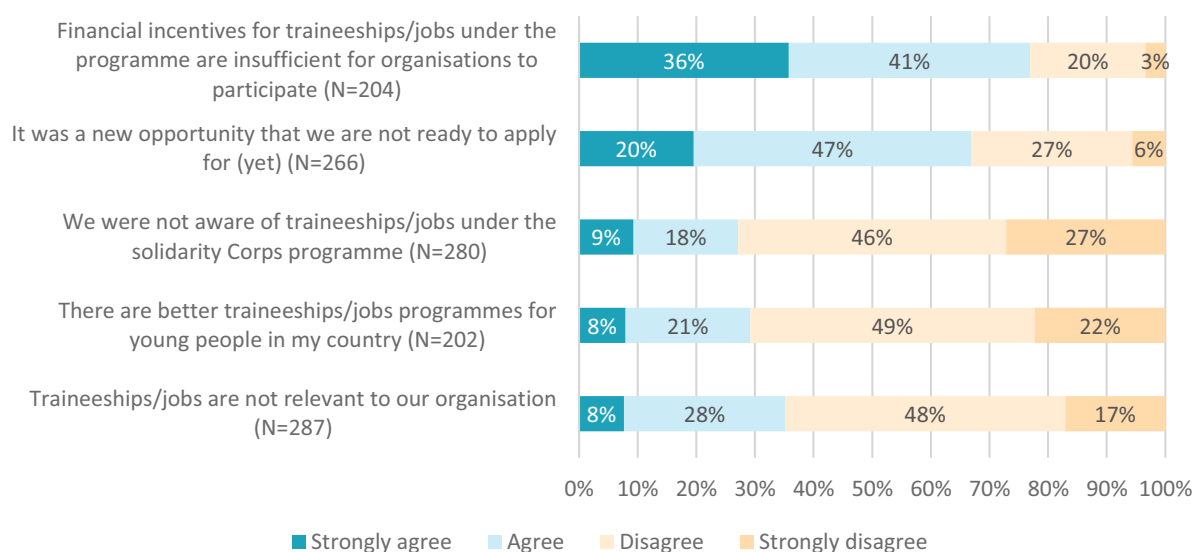
Similarly, the **novelty of the programme itself** was often identified as a reason for its lack of popularity, and the lack of readiness among organisations to participate in the

programme under the traineeships/jobs strand. Around 67% of potential participant organisations agreed that it was a new opportunity that they were not (yet) ready to apply for. As our analysis of qualitative evidence also shows, **in a number of Member States, national laws and regulations are not attuned to the traineeships/jobs strand under the European Solidarity Corps**. In some countries (such as Lithuania or Austria), laws do not define or envisage the possibility of traineeships outside the formal education framework (VET/higher education programmes). In Latvia, open-market traineeships are currently prohibited by law and are seen as undeclared work. Moreover, **unpaid traineeships are not official, and are undertaken only on an informal basis** because national laws define traineeships as unpaid work practice. As a consequence, organisations are reluctant to participate in the traineeships/jobs strand due to the risk of infringing existing legal regulations, or because of legal clashes between the programme's requirements and national regulations.

At the same time, however, our survey results indicate that the majority (73%) of potential participants were aware of traineeships/jobs under the European Solidarity Corps programme, and that **the lack of information was not a key challenge to this strand of the programme**. Similarly, the **prevalence of more attractive national/regional alternatives to traineeships/jobs under the European Solidarity Corps programme was also not the major obstacle**: the vast majority of organisations surveyed (71%) disagreed with the statement that better traineeships/jobs programmes for young people were available in their country (Figure 43).

In terms of the relevance of the traineeships/jobs strand, **the majority of potential applicants (65%) indicated that traineeships and jobs under the Solidarity Corps programme are relevant for their organisation**, whereas a little more than one-third (around 36%) of organisations surveyed agreed that this strand of the programme was not relevant for them (Figure 43).

FIGURE 43: REASONS THAT LED ORGANISATIONS NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN TRAINEESHIPS/JOBS PROJECTS UNDER THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS PROGRAMME



Source: PPMI survey of organisations.

5.3. Horizontal challenges

According to the results of our survey, around 21% of organisations agreed that **regulations/laws in their country contradicted the requirements of the European Solidarity Corps programme** (Figure 41). Qualitative evidence indicates that in some countries, other formal regulations/public responsibilities of young persons might jeopardise their opportunities to participate in the Solidarity Corps programme. For example, in Austria the Corps does not replace compulsory military service. Young people, specifically young men, could be deterred from cross-border volunteering, since volunteering under the European Solidarity Corps is (by law) not a valid replacement for compulsory military service. The Federal Ministry of the Interior is yet to recognise the European Solidarity Corps by name as a volunteering scheme, although it did recognise the EVS. Similarly, in the Netherlands, young people may lose unemployment benefits if they undertake cross border volunteering. In the UK, job centres do not recognise volunteering as an employability training opportunity. Young people may consequently lose their unemployment benefits while they are engaged in cross-border volunteering.

According to the survey results, one of the most significant obstacles encountered by participants in the European Solidarity Corps programme is **the lack of linguistic support/foreign language training**: 79% of programme participant organisations agreed/strongly agreed with the statement that the Online Linguistic Support (OLS) provided by the European Solidarity Corps programme does not prepare participants sufficiently for their cross-border mobility (Figure 41). A number of interviews confirmed that young people who are potential beneficiaries of the European Solidarity Corps programme are often not confident about their foreign language skills, and therefore decide not to participate in cross-border solidarity and volunteering activities. According to these stakeholders, the linguistic support provided in the programme's framework is not sufficient to address this challenge.

The lack of awareness/promotion among young people of the programme's opportunities was another key difficulty identified: 85% of organisations participating in the programme agreed/strongly agreed that young people are not aware of the opportunities offered by the European Solidarity Corps programme. Most of the stakeholders interviewed also agreed that young people in their country are not sufficiently aware of the programme and the opportunities it provides, and that current promotion efforts are not sufficient.

Complex formal procedures and the administrative burden imposed by the programme were another significant obstacle to the successful implementation of the European Solidarity Corps programme identified by this study. More than half of participant organisations surveyed (51%) agreed that the administrative requirements for participating (application process, reporting, etc.) were too burdensome and bureaucratic. Interviews with stakeholders also confirmed that the heavy administrative burden and extensive documentation often dissuade organisations and potential volunteers for taking part in the Corps. Applications involving cover letters and materials in English may be difficult to complete without organisational support, especially for people from disadvantaged backgrounds and those lacking language skills. It must be noted, however, that this issue might also be a result of insufficient awareness about the

Programme's application process and possible support for the applicants: the legal documents and the Programme Guide are translated by the Commission in all official languages. Furthermore, most National Agencies translate the application forms and related documentation. In the rare cases where the application is not translated, organisations can fill in the information in their native language.

According to some stakeholders, the financial motivation for organisations to participate is low, while administrative procedures remain very rigorous. Organisations must first apply for a quality label, but cannot receive any funding before they complete the application, which is not guaranteed to be approved. According to some testimonies, **the deadlines/waiting period for the European Solidarity Corps might be too long** for many organisations, who may be unwilling to wait six months for a trainee/volunteer.

Almost one-third (31%) of organisations surveyed agreed that the European Solidarity Corps is not suitable to support young people with fewer opportunities (Figure 41). This was supported by the findings of our interviews, in which **some organisations claimed that the programme lacks inclusiveness**, and provides insufficient support for the engagement of participants with fewer opportunities. More specifically, a number of stakeholders indicated that hosting and organising volunteering activities that include young people with fewer opportunities (migrant or those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, persons with disabilities) often requires extra resources, especially when mobility-related costs (relocation, travel and accommodation expenses) are involved.

Qualitative evidence also indicates that for a number of stakeholders **the lack of recognition of competences acquired through volunteering/traineeships is one of the obstacles potentially dis-incentivising young persons from participating in the European Solidarity Corps scheme**. As already mentioned in our earlier analysis, the skills and competencies developed by young people during traineeships are not recognised by a large share of employers in the Member States as relevant to the labour market. As a consequence, young people tend to consider volunteering/traineeships as a "lost year" in their professional life, and choose instead to search for a regular job (for more details see section 3.3.2 above). According to some stakeholders, while the vast majority of volunteers receive a Youthpass, the certificate is very long and complicated in its current form and, as a result, it is not widely recognised by employers. According to some suggestions, integrating Youthpass into more generally accepted formats such as the Europass CV would be more beneficial.

6. Overall insights on the impact of the 2008 Council Recommendation

6.1. Summary and relevance of the 2008 Council Recommendation

On 20 November 2008, the Council issued a recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union (2008/C 319/03). The recommendation defines cross-border volunteering; recognises its benefits; identifies common potential obstacles to volunteer mobility; and provides a framework for Member States to intensify their cooperation in the field. The Council recommends that Member States promote the mobility of young volunteers by enhancing the conditions for cooperation between volunteering organisations across Europe. In accordance with their national frameworks, the Member States should raise awareness of volunteering and its benefits nationally and improve access to information on cross-border volunteering, disseminate it among potential target groups, and simplify the relevant administrative procedures. They should support the development of hosting capacity among the organisations engaged in cross-border volunteering, and provide contact points in the form of National Agencies. To reduce barriers to cross-border volunteering, the Member States should increase awareness of the importance of intercultural competences and language learning among young people. Furthermore, they should assure quality and provide sufficient information about cross-border volunteering activities and organisations. The Member States should ensure that volunteers are not discriminated against as a result of social protection policies such as health care and social welfare, and that special visas and residence permits are easy to obtain. The recommendation also invites to promote appropriate recognition of competences gained through volunteering, also using EU-wide instruments such as Europass and Youthpass. People with fewer opportunities should be given particular attention to enhance their access to cross-border voluntary activities. **In short, the 2008 Council Recommendation suggests raising awareness of and capacity for cross-border volunteering opportunities, reducing barriers to participation, increasing the recognition of the experience and the inclusiveness of the activity.**¹⁶⁶

The study cited above, which was published in 2016, evaluated the 2008 Council Recommendation as having addressed some of the very relevant and persistent issues and obstacles to cross-border volunteering. Dissemination of information about cross-border volunteering opportunities, as well as the development of a sufficient number of volunteering opportunities to cover the demand, were identified as essential aspects. The need for better recognition of volunteering experience remained an issue in 2015, even though the Council Recommendation seems to have contributed to the increasing popularity and recognition of the Youthpass and Europass certificates. The inclusion of people from disadvantaged backgrounds was identified as a more pressing issue in 2015 than it had been in 2008, as were visa applications and attitudes

¹⁶⁶ European Commission & ICF International. (2016). *Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU [Final report]*. Brussels, p. 28

towards foreigners in the wake of the migrant crisis.¹⁶⁷ **Other needs identified but not addressed by the Recommendation include quality assurance for volunteering projects, the lack of stable funding and capacity-building opportunities for organisations, the digitalisation of volunteering, and the introduction of "EU volunteer" status to facilitate visa and tax solutions for cross-border volunteers.** Overall, the recommendation was said to **lack ambition**, and it was stated that it **should be better linked to concrete EU funding instruments**.¹⁶⁸

In addition, the study identified a **lack of awareness of the Council Recommendation** among both policy makers and youth organisations as a major issue. More than half of youth organisations surveyed had either heard of the Recommendation but did not know its content, or were completely unaware of it.¹⁶⁹ The Recommendation gained additional visibility and attention among national policy-makers as a **part of a wider European Youth Strategy**. However, as a result, it is difficult to disentangle the impact of the Council Recommendation from that of the EUYS.¹⁷⁰

6.2. Implementation and impact of the 2008 Council Recommendation

In our interview programme and the expert workshop, we placed a special emphasis on the 2008 Council Recommendation in order to assess what impact it may have had in the Member States. At the **EU level**, the representatives of some umbrella organisations noted an **increase in the funding of solidarity activities at both national and EU levels, and an increasing supply of cross-border volunteering opportunities since 2008**.

A clearer understanding of what cross-border volunteering entails emerged with the Council Recommendation, but a lack of quality assurance mechanisms persists. Recognition of cross-border volunteering has improved, but there is still room for improvement. The Council Recommendation, together with the Open Method of Coordination on youth policy and volunteering and related Expert Groups, served to **push volunteering up the policy agenda and into national youth strategies** in some Member States. It also contributed to promoting and raising awareness of cross-border volunteering. However, the **interviewed stakeholders also agree that the impact of the 2008 Recommendation is difficult to pinpoint, due to its non-binding character and relatively general provisions**. Some representatives also expressed concerns that several big Member States are considering the establishment of compulsory volunteering schemes, which would go against the key principle of voluntary work. Furthermore, these schemes in countries such as Italy or France promote national identity and solidarity, rather than cross-border volunteering and European solidarity, which side-blocks the aims of the European Solidarity Corps. However, positive developments have occurred that promote cross-border volunteering. These include

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 41-42, 94-95.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 28-29

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 45

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 69

bilateral exchanges between national civic service schemes, such as between the UK and France.

At a national level, notable differences exist between Member States. Representatives from some Member States mentioned that their governments did not recognise the Recommendation as relevant, or were unaware of it. Some governments were aware of the Recommendation but it made no notable impact on national policies, or was only considered within the NGO sector; others actually consulted the Recommendation in the shaping of their volunteering laws, youth strategies and in implementing other policy measures relating to volunteering.

In Bulgaria, Czechia, Finland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Ireland, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden there was both lack of awareness of the Council Recommendation and little impact of it at the policy level. In Czechia, Romania and Ireland, representatives of the voluntary sector and National Agencies were aware of the Council Recommendation, but no national-level measures or policy initiatives could be pinpointed as resulting from it. In France, Latvia, Lithuania and Spain, awareness of the recommendation was lacking among both stakeholders and policymakers, and in Finland it was deemed irrelevant by the national government. However, the youth sector in Finland did adopt the definition of voluntary activities from the 2008 Recommendation, since no legal definition of voluntary work or voluntary activities previously existed in the country. In Slovenia and Sweden, issues such as the taxation of reimbursements for volunteers, health insurance and social security coverage, as well as visa and residence permit issues, remain unresolved despite the Council Recommendation.

In Germany and Luxembourg, both National Agencies and governments were aware of the 2008 Recommendation, but national schemes and volunteering legislation were sufficiently well developed such that no further changes were needed to meet the targets set by the Recommendation. In Germany, cross-border volunteering has gained in popularity over recent years, but this cannot be clearly related to the Council Recommendation. German organisations have initiated peer-learning activities and measures to increase international cooperation, but these initiatives have failed mostly on the part of the foreign partners. In Italy, the government was aware of the Recommendation and an agreement to facilitate a visa process for cross-border volunteers was reached with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the central government could have done much more, especially in relation to language barriers and awareness-raising.

In several countries, the Council Recommendation was nevertheless used to implement at least some measures to address obstacles to cross-border volunteering. In Austria, the Recommendation contributed to the revision and expansion of the portability of family, unemployment, and monetary benefits. In Belgium and Estonia, the Recommendation was consulted in order to unblock visa issues for cross-border volunteers, and in the latter country, also served to define volunteering as a non-formal learning activity with a quality assurance system. However, the Recommendation made an impact in Estonia only because its implementation was streamlined via the binding EVS programme regulation. In Flanders (Belgium), the Recommendation was used to define the portability of the social benefits of volunteers. In Poland, the Council Recommendation

was also used to facilitate visa procedures for cross-border volunteers, tax relief on reimbursements for voluntary work, and volunteering in general achieved a higher place on the policy-makers' agenda as a result. In Croatia, a new scheme for the certification and recognition of voluntary work was implemented in consultation with the Council Recommendation, and further awareness raising measures were implemented. In Hungary, the provisions of the Council Recommendation have been integrated into the National Youth Strategy 2009-2024, which includes provisions on youth volunteering. In Malta, the Recommendation contributed to the introduction of volunteering into the National Youth Strategy. In the United Kingdom, the Council Recommendation was explicitly mentioned in recent policy statements and initiatives by the government.

Overall, apart from a few cases in which it contributed to the development of volunteering legislation and youth strategies, or helped to open up debate over issues such as visa and entitlements for cross-border volunteers, the 2008 Council Recommendation has not achieved a major impact on the Member States, for several reasons. First, due to its **non-binding character** as a Recommendation, some governments did not consider it relevant or lacked awareness of it. Second, for the same reason, it is **difficult to pinpoint whether the changes in the national frameworks that have occurred since 2008 were actually influenced by the Recommendation** or by other developments. Third, as pointed out in the 2016 study cited earlier, the Recommendation **lacked ambition**, concrete measures and connection to EU funding instruments such as Erasmus+, as well as tools to monitor its implementation. Member States with developed volunteering sectors and laws did not consider it useful because the measures recommended were largely already in place in those countries.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

This final section of the report outlines the key findings and conclusions on the most persistent obstacles to solidarity activities, and provides recommendations to the Member States and the European Commission as to how these obstacles can be eliminated. The study's recommendations can be divided into three broad groups. **Recommendations 1 to 8** address the key obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities in general, and are relevant at both national and EU levels. **Recommendations 9 to 12** focus on the European Solidarity Corps specifically and suggest ways in which the programme could be further improved by removing the obstacles identified. Our **final recommendation** relates to the structure and implementation of the revised Council Recommendation and possible measures to enhance it, building on the key issues identified in relation to the 2008 Council Recommendation.

It is important to note that the general obstacles to solidarity activities identified and the corresponding study recommendations 1 to 8, which target the cross-border solidarity field in general, are also **highly important for the functioning and success of the European Solidarity Corps programme**. Failure to identify and address key obstacles at the national level within EU Member States might result in the full potential of the programme not being exploited. The key obstacles summarised in the chapters below are also **highly relevant to inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities**. Considering the diversity of volunteering culture within the EU, and the differences between the most pressing obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities that exist within various Member States, the recommendations of this study should be viewed and prioritised taking into account these individual national contexts.

7.1. Background: the scope and culture of volunteering

The European Union possesses an **active volunteering environment** with over 34% of young people having volunteered in the last 12 months (2019 Flash Eurobarometer 478). The most popular activities appear to be at local and community level, with only 8% of young people in Europe reporting that they have volunteered abroad (2017 Flash Eurobarometer 455). Episodic and occasional volunteering are more popular than regular volunteering. The supply of volunteering placements appears to be ample: based on PPMI survey data, over 80% of organisations agree that sufficient opportunities exist for both in-country and cross-border volunteering. Finally, the EU provides a favourable environment for volunteering, given that volunteering experience is generally valued by the societies, communities and families of the volunteers, as perceived by around 70% of surveyed organisations.

The study identified a **diverse volunteering culture across the Member States**. This results in different countries facing different challenges and obstacles to solidarity activities, both in-country and cross-border. Based on the development of volunteering culture and tradition as well as the popularity of volunteering, the Member States fall into four broad groups:

- Countries in which volunteering is relatively popular and volunteering culture is developed. This group covers most Western and Southern European countries.

- Countries in which volunteering is relatively popular despite a still-developing volunteering culture.
- Countries in which volunteering culture is developing, but volunteering rates remain low.
- Countries with a developed volunteering culture, where volunteering rates remain low.

Given this diversity, there are different issues and obstacles that should be prioritised by individual Member States in order to overcome the obstacles to cross-border volunteering. These range from the lack of a comprehensive legislative framework to a lack of awareness in relation to the opportunities and benefits of volunteering.

7.2. National policy actions to support cross-border solidarity activities

This study concludes that most EU countries **possess one or more schemes at national/regional level that support cross-border volunteering and solidarity activities** among young people. Eleven countries have no such scheme(s) and in some, the European Solidarity Corps is currently the only programme providing opportunities for young people to volunteer/undertake traineeships and jobs abroad. The **scope, content and organisational arrangements of these national schemes vary significantly** from country to country, from large-scale civic service schemes administered by public institutions/agencies (e.g. the national civic service in France or Italy) with thousands of volunteers annually, to a volunteering offer that consists of a number of smaller-scale schemes supported by public funds and involving only dozens of beneficiaries each year. In many Member States, therefore, the European Solidarity Corps remains the main scheme that is specifically dedicated to enabling young people to participate in cross-border mobility in the solidarity field.

Apart from developing dedicated schemes to support young people's cross-border mobility, Member States implement **a diverse range of policy instruments** to facilitate capacity-building and quality assurance within organisations working with solidarity activities and disseminating information about volunteering opportunities.

The study reveals that public authorities and agencies in the Member States contribute to **capacity building** within volunteering organisations, mostly by organising training and initiatives to disseminate information. In addition, a number of countries have developed recommendatory guidelines and standards on how to organise and manage (cross-border) volunteering activities, some of which are based on the 2008 Council Recommendation.

The study also concludes that aside from these recommendatory standards and guidelines, most EU Member States possess no **quality assurance framework** for volunteering organisations, and the evaluation of volunteering projects largely relies on the organisations themselves. Where a quality assurance/project evaluation framework does exist, it is usually linked to a single/major volunteering scheme at national level, and does not support volunteering activities in the country in general. A few EU Member

States apply quality assurance via specific conditions that organisations must meet in order to receive public funding for volunteering activities.

The study also shows that in most EU countries, attempts are made and instruments exist to **raise awareness** and popularise (cross-border) volunteering opportunities among young people. However, in many countries there is no single system that integrates such information in one place. The most common instruments for the promotion of (cross-border) volunteering opportunities include information portals and online volunteering databases; dedicated regular events such as annual volunteering days, and the establishment of local or municipal volunteering information centres.

7.3. Obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities

Problems relating to the definition of solidarity and solidarity activities

The study found that **no common definition of solidarity or solidarity activities exists across the EU**, aside from the definition provided by the European Solidarity Corps. This lack of a shared understanding of key terms often leads to poor understanding of the programme and its approach to solidarity activities, notably in relation to traineeships and jobs. Although 60% of organisations surveyed that worked with the European Solidarity Corps stated that the concept of solidarity activities was clear to them, a wider contextual analysis of the term shows that "solidarity" is associated with a range of movements and ideas, including socialism or trade unions, and that the word "corps" has a military connotation in some contexts and countries. The term "solidarity activities" are not used in connection with volunteering in many Member States. Furthermore, solidarity is mostly understood to be prevalent at local or community level, rather than in a cross-border context.

Regulatory and administrative frameworks

The popularity and efficient implementation of volunteering depend on a number of legal and social factors, including an enabling legal environment and accessible administrative frameworks. Administrative and regulatory frameworks must be complemented by a favourable economic situation and a political environment that supports and nurtures the non-governmental sector, among other aspects. But the existence of (clear) national administrative and regulatory frameworks that govern in-country and cross-border volunteering is a prerequisite for the successful development of, and participation in, cross-border solidarity activities. This is especially true for more structured and longer-term volunteering. Interviews and the survey carried out for this study revealed **strong support from stakeholders, especially organisations working in the volunteering field, for further action to be taken by the European Commission and the Members States**, with the aim of increasing collaboration at policy level and better aligning the legal frameworks that govern the solidarity field. Such strong support for further action regarding the existing legal systems indicates that certain problems and barriers persist.

The study identifies that the **key barrier related to administrative and regulatory frameworks is their diversity between countries. This diversity results in a lack**

of alignment between the Member States. This represents a particularly important obstacle to cross-border volunteering, as well as to the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps programme. Although many EU Member States possess dedicated laws on volunteering, they still lack of a unified legal basis, with numerous legal acts governing various aspects relating to volunteering which fall under different policy fields, often under the competence of different national ministries (status of volunteering, entitlements, international volunteering and visas, tax, healthcare, etc.). Such diversity makes the overall legal framework hard to understand (almost half of organisations surveyed indicate the lack of a clear legal framework defining the volunteering field as a very or fairly relevant obstacle in their country). It also causes various issues in relation to the application of these laws by the relevant authorities (e.g. those responsible for issuing visas). In some countries, however, the lack of a legal framework may be explained by a strong culture and tradition of informal volunteering.

While volunteering falls within the field of social policy, traineeships are usually linked to employment and education policies. Therefore, volunteering and traineeships are each governed by a different legal basis. For the purposes of this study and in the context of the European Solidarity Corps programme, only traineeships in the solidarity field are regarded as relevant. The study concludes that the **concept 'solidarity traineeships' is not used outside the European Solidarity Corps programme.** The traineeships promoted by the Corps are, by definition, closest to open-market traineeships or to traineeships that are not part of educational curricula or labour market integration programmes. Regulation of such traineeships is vague in most Member States; in certain countries open-market traineeships are even illegal. Lack of regulation can lead to the exploitation of trainees, resulting in trainees receiving low or no remuneration, as well as contributing to the low quality of traineeships.

RECOMMENDATION 1: INCREASE COLLABORATION TO ENSURE THE BETTER ALIGNMENT OF LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORKS AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING BETWEEN MEMBER STATES

- [to MS] Member States should provide an openly accessible and consolidated source of information (e.g. in the form of an interactive website, comprehensive manual) about the national legal and administrative frameworks governing volunteering and other solidarity activities. This source should provide up-to-date, cross-sectoral information (horizontally between departments and vertically between different levels of government) about relevant policies and laws that regulate volunteering and other solidarity activities. Such a source would help to increase stakeholders' knowledge at local, regional and federal/national level about the legal frameworks and policies that apply to the field of volunteering (including cross-border volunteering).
- [to EC and MS] Expand and further develop the specific Youth Wiki section on volunteering to become the main source of information in relation to cross-country legal and administrative frameworks. This will support evidence-based European cooperation in the field of Youth. Member States, with the coordination of the Eurydice unit at the EACEA, should seek to further align information on Youth Wiki and to ensure its quality. Youth Wiki could be further expanded to cover solidarity as a concept per se as well as other solidarity activities, especially solidarity/open-market traineeships.

- [to MS] EU Member States should collaborate more closely in order to better align national legal rules and regulations governing volunteering in general. This is also especially relevant to the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps programme. Peer-learning activities and the exchange of good-practice case studies could be used to support this process. The new Council Recommendation could suggest specific steps in this area, and thus help to facilitate this process.
- [to MS] Rules and regulations governing the field of traineeships should be revised and improved by defining and enabling open-market traineeships, in line with the Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships.

Legal definitions

The study found that the majority of countries **have at least some legal definition of volunteering**, but youth *per se* is often not a distinct target group for laws on volunteering, or for the definitions provided. Three key defining principles of volunteering can be found in legal definitions across almost all countries: it is an unpaid activity (except for the reimbursement of costs directly linked to the activities carried out); it is a non-obligatory activity undertaken with the free will of the participant; and it needs to benefit other people (outside the volunteer's immediate family), or community or society in general. Some definitions of volunteering also mention solidarity (either as a prerequisite for the activity to be called volunteering, or as a desired outcome of volunteering). Even though legal definitions exist in many countries at some level, they **do not ensure a clear legal status of volunteers**, either nationally or cross-border.

RECOMMENDATION 2: CLARIFY THE LEGAL STATUS OF VOLUNTEERS AND PARTICIPANTS IN OTHER SOLIDARITY ACTIVITIES

- [to MS] Member States should clarify the legal status of volunteers and participants in other solidarity activities. It should include the provisions of obligations and rights of volunteers (entitlements, benefits and their portability). MS should aim that the status of volunteers would be the same for national schemes with cross-border opportunities and the European programmes. The definition of legal rules and regulations, as well as the status of volunteers and participants in other solidarity activities, should not, however, be so strict as to make it impossible for communities or local organisations to initiate various sporadic, short-term volunteering activities.
- [to EC] The Commission could provide guidelines, toolkits and recommendations to Member States on the legal status of volunteers and participants in other solidarity activities. Taking into account the diversity of national contexts, these guidelines could specify at least minimum standards concerning their legal status at EU level and minimum requirements for their social protection.
- [to EC] These minimum standards and requirements should then be referenced and included in existing instruments (regulations and recommendations).

In the context of the legal framework that applies to international volunteers, the most pressing issue is their status in terms of obtaining visas and residence permits. In the majority of EU Member States, **no special provisions exist to describe the entrance**

of volunteers from third countries, and general immigration law and alien acts apply the same conditions to volunteers as to all other foreign citizens. Lack of legal provision for international volunteers often results in their unregulated status and unclear treatment in terms of obtaining visas. Volunteers are variously assigned with the status of students, trainees, or simply tourists; they may even be treated as workers. Obtaining visas and residence permits for international volunteers was identified as a burdensome process for the individual and the host organisation, involving a number of requirements.

RECOMMENDATION 3: FACILITATE THE OBTAINING OF VISAS FOR THE PURPOSE OF VOLUNTEERING AND OTHER SOLIDARITY ACTIVITIES

[to MS] Immigration and other related laws should include volunteering and other solidarity activities as a ground *per se* to obtain a visa and residence permit. MS should create a fast-track visa procedure with relevant safeguards to avoid fraud. This could be achieved through special agreements on visa facilitation for participants in EU programmes, but should also take into account cross-border volunteering that takes place outside EU programmes. Existing rules should be monitored and duly enforced, also taking into account the provisions of Directive (EU) 2016/801 on the conditions of entry and residence for third-country nationals.

Entitlements and benefits

The provision of entitlements and benefits is a very important aspect of volunteering and other solidarity activities, notably long-term ones, which account for the majority of cross-border solidarity activities. The lack of clear legal frameworks and undefined status of volunteers is closely related to the entitlements and benefits available to them. The entitlements and benefits for which volunteers may be eligible are not clearly defined at national level, and the situation in this regard differs significantly between countries. **Provisions governing the right to social protection, compensation for expenses incurred while volunteering, taxation of any allowances/pocket money received, are usually spread across various legal documents, with no unified source of consolidated information.** The most common types of entitlements identified are the covering of expenses relating to voluntary work (e.g. travel and accommodation, pocket money) and health insurance. The reimbursement of direct expenses incurred while performing volunteering activities is the responsibility of host organisations. However, this is not always mandatory.

Very limited information exists on the benefits and services available to foreign volunteers in each EU Member State. In order to obtain a visa and a residence permit, volunteers coming from third countries are often required to obtain health and other types of insurance. These expenses are the responsibility of the volunteer or the hosting organisation. The **unclear legal status of volunteers results in a lack of provisions ensuring their social protection and the portability of social benefits.** Nearly one-third of survey respondents indicated that it is a very relevant or relevant obstacle that **young people lose their national health insurance if they leave for a long-term volunteering placement abroad.** Almost half (44%) said that **young people**

receiving state welfare payments (unemployment benefits, disability pay, etc.), might lose them if they become volunteers.

Volunteering is not a paid activity and is therefore not subject to income tax. However, as previously noted, volunteers may be reimbursed for costs directly relating to their volunteering activities, or may receive pocket money to cover their basic needs. These reimbursements and pocket money may be subject to taxation. The survey carried out as part of this study indicates that the taxation of allowances and pocket money received by volunteers is not perceived as a relevant obstacle; 82% of respondents indicated that this issue is not very relevant or is not at all relevant. However, qualitative data collected during the study reveals a wide variation in practices on the taxation of such allowances across EU Member States and, in some countries there are no clear legal rules on taxation.

RECOMMENDATION 4: ENSURE THE PROVISION AND PORTABILITY OF SOCIAL BENEFITS FOR VOLUNTEERS

- [to MS] Member States should clarify the entitlements and benefits available to volunteers. Discussions could be held at national policy level, with stakeholder consultations, to address country-specific issues relating to volunteers' social benefits.
- [to MS and EC] There is a need for agreement between Member States on minimum standards for benefits and entitlements given to cross-border volunteers. A 'roadmap' should be developed to guide this process. The European Commission or the Presidency of the Council could support and mediate these efforts. The Commission could develop a roadmap with specific recommendations for Member States to implement the minimum European standards agreed for volunteers' benefits and entitlements. A detailed mapping of volunteers' entitlements and benefits should be undertaken prior to issuing these recommendations.
- [to MS] At national level, stakeholder organisations and different ministries should collaborate on the development of effective cross-sectoral policies to address the specific issues affecting social benefits for volunteers, such as healthcare, social welfare, employment and others.
- [to MS] Member States should review and clarify relevant rules in order to eliminate the taxation of benefits and reimbursements provided to in-country and cross-border volunteers.
- [to MS] Actions should be taken to ensure the cross-border portability of certain benefits, as well as the 'locking in' of essential benefits to be resumed when the volunteer returns home, especially in the case of disability allowances, unemployment allowances, pension benefits and healthcare insurance and benefits.

Importance of volunteering at the strategic level

Our survey results show that 57% of respondents disagree that cross-border volunteering is an important issue on the policy agenda of their country, while 51% disagree that in-country volunteering is an important issue. This trend for cross-border volunteering to be given less importance corresponds with the study's findings on understandings of the concept of solidarity, which is rarely understood as a cross-border

issue and usually relates to national or local contexts. These results can be explained and supported by findings on the existence of strategies on volunteering: the study did not identify a dedicated strategy for youth volunteering in any EU Member State. This could be expected: such a specific field may be too narrow for a dedicated strategy. The study further concludes that even though no EU Member States possess dedicated youth volunteering strategies, youth volunteering is addressed at the strategic level in the majority of the Member States (in many cases as part of more general Youth Strategies).

Inadequacies in national and organisational-level support

The study concludes that the main obstacles to cross-border volunteering activities that stem from inadequacies in support at national and organisational level are concentrated in four key areas: awareness of volunteering opportunities; recognition of skills and competences; the capacity of organisations; and the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.

Raising awareness of volunteering opportunities

In relation to awareness-raising of volunteering opportunities, the **lack and fragmentation of awareness-raising efforts are the key obstacles**. Although most EU Member States have instruments and tools to promote existing volunteering opportunities within the country and abroad, these are usually neither systemic nor integrated. The majority of volunteering organisations surveyed for the study (66%) either disagree or strongly disagree that information on cross-border volunteering opportunities is adequately disseminated in their country. There is also a lack of awareness-raising/promotional activities to communicate the overall value and societal benefits of volunteering to the public, especially to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

RECOMMENDATION 5: IMPROVE THE PROMOTION AND OUTREACH OF EU AND NATIONAL-LEVEL CROSS-BORDER VOLUNTEERING SCHEMES

- [to MS] Relevant National Authorities should support the development of 'one-stop shop' websites (e.g. like the European Youth Portal) that provide information on the various (cross-border) volunteering schemes available to young people in their country, thereby also helping to show the complementarity of the European Solidarity Corps with national volunteering schemes.
- [to MS] Member States should be encouraged to promote information on cross-border solidarity activities/schemes as part of formal education and secondary education curricula, as a way to increase outreach and raise awareness among young people with fewer opportunities.
- [to EC] To improve awareness and outreach of cross-border volunteering/solidarity schemes at national level, it is recommended that the European Commission support the organisation of cross-ministerial discussions and stakeholder groups involving representatives from national ministries.
- [to MS] Information on cross-border solidarity activities and schemes available at EU and national level could be promoted by employment agencies in Member States, as an option for professional skills development and as a career-relevant activity for young people.
- [to EC] The European Youth Portal could be updated to add information and link it to sources of information about national-level volunteering schemes.

Recognition of skills and competences

With regard to obstacles in the area of the recognition of skills and competences, the study's conclusions are mixed. The majority of organisations surveyed agreed that employers in their country recognise the competences developed through volunteering as relevant to the labour market, but a substantial minority disagreed with this statement. In addition, potential participants themselves often fail to recognise the value of volunteering activities. Around 37% of the organisations surveyed agreed/strongly agreed that young people perceive long-term volunteering in another country as a 'lost year' in their employment record. Finally, the **lack of a unified national framework for the recognition of skills/competences** acquired through volunteering activities (especially via the European Solidarity Corps and cross-border volunteering) was identified by a number of stakeholders interviewed various Member States as one of the key obstacles discouraging young people from participation.

RECOMMENDATION 6: IMPROVE THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL RECOGNITION WITHIN EU MEMBER STATES OF SKILLS AND COMPETENCES ACQUIRED THROUGH VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES

The following actions are proposed to improve the formal and informal recognition of skills and competences acquired through volunteering activities:

- [to EC] Updating the relevant recognition instruments (Youthpass/ Europass/ Diploma Supplement) and their implementation strategy to respond to the current situation and challenges.
- [to MS] Encourage the Member States and volunteering organisations to use the existing European instruments (Youthpass/Europass/Diploma Supplement) for the recognition of competences and skills acquired through volunteering, rather than specific diplomas and certificates issued by volunteering organisations.
- [to EC and MS] The European Commission, Member States and other stakeholders should continue to support and coordinate various events and high-visibility initiatives with the aim of expanding their scope, in order to boost recognition of the added value provided to society and communities by volunteering.
- [to EC and MS] EU-level, cross-ministerial discussions and meetings of stakeholders should be organised that focus on sharing and spreading good practice examples on the impact of volunteering and solidarity activities at community level.
- [to EC and MS] Societal recognition of volunteering and other solidarity activities at local level should be enhanced through the development of more embedded and sustainable comparative analysis of evidence-based research on the benefits of volunteering in relation to community impact. This should be carried out with cross-sectoral cooperation between practice, policy and research.
- [to EC] Encourage the involvement of local policy makers and communities through the development of a new 'quality and community impact label for volunteering' specifically aimed at municipalities, and building on the existing quality label for organisations.

Capacity of organisations

The majority of volunteering organisations in the EU view their capacity to implement volunteering activities positively. However, the **lack of stable funding to implement cross-border solidarity activities poses one of the most common challenges, identified as an issue by 79% of volunteering organisations surveyed. Misuse of volunteer work**, and its exploitation as a substitute for regular work, was also identified as a problem by 42% of the organisations surveyed, although further research and more in-depth, qualitative evidence are required to fully assess the significance of the problem of job substitution.

RECOMMENDATION 7: SUPPORT THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

[to EC] Building on the work already carried out under the European Solidarity Corps Quality Label, the European Commission should work to further develop quality standards for volunteering, including recommendatory minimum standards, as well as guidelines that encourage volunteering organisations to focus on the following priorities when implementing volunteering activities:

- Developing specific strategies, practices, methods and tools to reach and include young people with fewer opportunities in volunteering activities.
- Identifying specific actions and strategies to ensure that the involvement of volunteers complements and supplements the work of paid staff, and is not used to displace paid staff or undercut their pay and conditions of service (e.g. creating a volunteering policy; defining the procedure used to creating new roles and solve problems; agreeing on defined roles and responsibilities for volunteers; creating opportunities for staff and volunteers to better understand each others' roles, etc.).

Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities

Most of the organisations surveyed provided a positive assessment of their capacity and willingness to include young people with fewer opportunities in solidarity activities: 67% of organisations surveyed agreed that they already had specific practices, methods and tools to reach out to and include such young people. More concerning, however, is the finding that around one-third (33%) of survey respondents agreed that negative attitudes exist within organisations working in the solidarity field towards the volunteering capacity of young people with fewer opportunities. Qualitative data confirmed that in a number of countries, volunteering – particularly cross-border volunteering – remains widely considered as an occupation for the upper/more affluent classes, and that people with fewer opportunities are underrepresented in the sector, as they often lack sufficient financial support or language skills. The predominance within volunteering organisations of people with higher education qualifications might prevent those with lower educational attainments from participating, due to a sense of inadequacy or feeling 'out of place'.

Qualitative data also underlined that the socioeconomic and educational status of a participant contribute significantly to the likelihood of their involvement in volunteering, with the proportion of disadvantaged people participating in volunteering placements being significantly lower than that of their more privileged counterparts. In France, university graduates are twice as likely to volunteer as young people without tertiary education, and in Austria most voluntary work is performed by a small group of the population engaged in multiple volunteering frameworks.

RECOMMENDATION 8: INCREASE THE INCLUSION WITHIN CROSS-BORDER SOLIDARITY ACTIVITIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FEWER OPPORTUNITIES

To increase the inclusion and participation of young people with fewer opportunities (e.g. those economically disadvantaged, from a migrant background, persons with disabilities), the following actions are recommended:

- [to MS] Member States should build on existing inclusion policies, strategic approaches and tools to improve the outreach and access of European programmes to a wider audience, specifically young people with fewer opportunities.
- [to EC and MS] Take measures to improve the capacity of local organisations (improving working methods, access to stable and core funding and building partnerships with other sectors) to work with young people with fewer opportunities. This will allow more flexible and tailored support for differing individual needs before, during and after the volunteering placement. It will also ensure the wider outreach of volunteering schemes and an approach of sustainable inclusion towards those young people not yet involved in volunteering, helping to overcome differentiation in participation due to the lack of financial support, language capacity or educational attainment.

Key obstacles related to traineeships and jobs in the solidarity field

In terms of the obstacles to open-market traineeships/jobs for young people in the EU, the study concludes that the recognition of traineeship experience among employers is a significant obstacle: 55% of survey respondents agreed that employers in their country do not recognise the skills and competencies developed during traineeships by young people as relevant to the labour market. The study also concludes that in many cases organisations are not able to cover basic traineeship costs, which results in negative effects on the working conditions and overall traineeship experience for those trainees involved. Organisations that host trainees often do not clearly define the conditions and terms of the traineeship, and generally lack the competences or dedication to organise high-quality training activities. The misuse of trainees as an unpaid substitute for regular staff turns out to be an even more relevant issue for traineeships than it is for volunteering activities: 75% of survey respondents agreed that "trainees are often used as underpaid substitutes for regular staff".

7.4. Specific challenges for the European Solidarity Corps

The study concludes that the key obstacles to cross-border volunteering activities under the European Solidarity Corps programme largely match the obstacles identified in relation to (cross-border) volunteering/solidarity activities in general. One of the key administrative obstacles identified by **more than half of voluntary organisations is the difficulty of obtaining visas or residence permits for European Solidarity Corps participants from third countries**. Insufficient **programme funding for health insurance and other costs** (travel and accommodation) provided by the European Solidarity Corps was another important obstacle identified by 45% of participant organisations. **Lack of support for groups of young people was identified as an obstacle to the Solidarity Projects strand** of the programme. Participation in the Solidarity projects strand of the programme (24% of all projects 2018-2019) was significantly lower and less attractive in comparison to the Volunteering strand (74% of the projects 2018-2019), although it was still higher than for the Traineeships/Jobs strand (only 2% of projects funded in 2018 and 2019).

The study also concludes that **financial incentives for participating in traineeships and jobs under the European Solidarity Corps are not attractive enough**: 77% of the organisations surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. The programme requirements for organisations to co-finance the placements deter them from hosting trainees through the European Solidarity Corps. Similarly, the relatively recent introduction of the solidarity traineeships/jobs strand itself was identified by 67% of the organisations as a reason for the lack of popularity and readiness of organisations to participate in it.

RECOMMENDATION 9: IMPROVE THE FLEXIBILITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS BY PROMOTING MORE STRONGLY SHORT-TERM VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

[to EC] Encourage the participation of young people with fewer opportunities by further promoting and disseminating information about the short-term volunteering opportunities available under various activities of the European Solidarity Corps programme. Short-term volunteering under the European Solidarity Corps programme contributes both to capacity building within organisations and the inclusiveness of the scheme for young people with fewer opportunities, many of whom lack the resources for longer-term volunteering activities.

RECOMMENDATION 10: IMPROVE THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE TRAINEESHIPS AND JOBS STRAND OF THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS PROGRAMME

[to EC and MS] To improve the attractiveness and popularity of the traineeships/jobs strand of the European Solidarity Corps programme, it is recommended that Member States and other stakeholders co-fund the traineeships/jobs projects.

At a horizontal level, the study also concludes that the **insufficiency of online linguistic support/foreign language training** is another obstacle to the success of

the European Solidarity Corps. This issue was identified as a problem by 79% of the organisations surveyed. As a result, many prospective participants are not adequately prepared for their mobility. Similarly, lack of awareness/promotion of programme opportunities among young people was another key issue underlined by 85% of surveyed organisations. Qualitative evidence, confirmed by more than half of organisations in the survey, indicates that complex and bureaucratic administrative procedures pose an obstacle to the successful implementation of the Solidarity Corps programme.

RECOMMENDATION 11: IMPROVE THE AWARENESS AND OUTREACH TO YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS PROGRAMME

[to EC] The following actions are recommended to increase the visibility of the programme and to raise awareness of its opportunities among young people in the Member States:

- Improve the awareness of the European Solidarity Corps programme by further developing its communications strategy, by which the Corps should be established as a well-known and reliable brand with a strong identity.
- The online tools provided by the European Solidarity Corps should be made more accessible and user-friendly. The European Youth portal should be remodelled and its structure simplified to clearly communicate the available opportunities.
- To increase outreach by the Corps, the EC should invest in the establishment of an active alumni network. This is particularly important, given that many people learn about volunteering and its benefits from their friends and family.

RECOMMENDATION 12: IMPROVE ONLINE LINGUISTIC SUPPORT/FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING TO INCREASE THE INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FEWER OPPORTUNITIES IN THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS PROGRAMME

- [to EC] To increase the accessibility of the European Solidarity Corps programme, especially among young people with fewer opportunities, the study recommends taking the following actions:
- Adjust the Online Linguistic Support provided by the European Solidarity Corps programme to allow the tailoring of support to the specific needs of individual users;
- Research alternative forms of language support and training, including face-to-face options for those with restricted internet access, to complement the OLS and provide additional financial support for linguistic support/foreign language training for young volunteers with additional needs before and during their placement.

According to the study's findings, one of the more specific obstacles to the success of the European Solidarity Corps is that the programme's requirements are contradicted by regulations or laws in certain EU Member States (around 21% of organisations surveyed agreed with this statement). For example, in some countries, the European Solidarity Corps does not replace compulsory military service; in certain Member States, young people participating in the programme may lose social/unemployment benefits to which

they are otherwise entitled. In addition, although to a lesser extent, the lack of recognition given to competences acquired through volunteering/traineeships, and the insufficient financial support offered by the programme to young people with fewer opportunities, were identified as obstacles that can potentially disincentivise both young people and organisations from participating in the European Solidarity Corps programme.

7.5. Implementation of 2008 Council Recommendation

In assessing the implementation of the 2008 Council Recommendation, the study finds that while the Recommendation was a useful instrument for the Member States developing volunteering laws and youth strategies, it was less useful to those countries with well-established legal frameworks, strategies and national volunteering schemes. Awareness of the Recommendation, especially at policy-making level, was lacking. In general, the Recommendation was deemed insufficiently ambitious, lacking concrete measures and connections to other EU programmes and to instruments such as Erasmus+. It also lacked a monitoring framework to follow up on its implementation. As a result, it is difficult to measure the Recommendation's direct impact on national policies. However, the Recommendation helped to push volunteering higher up the national policy agenda in some Member States, and its provisions were taken up in volunteering laws and youth strategies in a number of Member States including Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Malta, Poland and the United Kingdom.

RECOMMENDATION 13: EQUIP THE NEW EU COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION WITH MEASURABLE GOALS AND TARGETS AS WELL AS AN ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- [to EC] The revised Council Recommendation should be more ambitious, and should include concrete measures (such as the study recommendations outlined above) as well as targets for removing obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities. It should take into consideration the increased importance at the policy level of volunteering and related developments since 2008.
- [to MS] Given the diversity in volunteering culture across the EU, Member States should set their own targets and prioritise specific areas from the Council Recommendation that are most relevant to their national context.
- [to EC] The revised Council Recommendation should come with a concrete action plan for implementation, as well as indicators and tools to continuously monitor progress. Oversight should be long-term and supported via networks and regular meetings of key stakeholders at European level, as well as national policymakers from the relevant ministries of Member States. The monitoring framework should not be 'one size fits all'. and should take into account the individual targets and priorities set by the Member States.
- [to EC] Actions are required to ensure awareness of the Recommendation among key stakeholders and policymakers. This could be achieved by establishing concrete links with other EU funding instruments and programmes such as Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps Regulation, as well as by increasing the visibility of the Recommendation through other existing events and initiatives.

Annexes

The following deliverables are submitted as annexes to the Final Report:

- Annex 1: List of completed interviews.
- Annex 2: Geographical distribution of respondents to the survey of organisations.
- Annex 3: Good-practice case studies.
- Annex 4: Country fiches.
- Annex 5: Workshop Report.
- Annex 6: Survey dataset.
- Annex 7: Mapping of national schemes.



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