



**EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY
CORPS**

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

February 2021
DG EAC



European
Solidarity
Corps

Table of contents

1. Executive summary.....	3
2. Introduction.....	4
2.1. Context.....	4
2.2. Strategy development.....	4
2.3. Methodological approach.....	5
3. Research highlights.....	6
3.1. Desk research.....	6
3.2. Interviews.....	6
3.3. Key findings.....	7
4. Goals and objectives.....	9
4.1. General aim and overall ambition.....	9
4.2. Specific communication objectives.....	9
5. SWOT analysis.....	11
5.1. Key challenges.....	11
6. Target audience.....	13
7. Key messages.....	16
7.1. Positioning.....	16
7.2. Messaging matrix.....	17
8. Communication approach.....	20
8.1. Tone of voice.....	20
8.2. Vocabulary.....	20
8.3. DOs and DON'Ts.....	21
9. Creative approach.....	22
9.1. Creative concept.....	22
9.2. Key visuals.....	23
10. Outreach approach.....	25
10.1. European and national communication.....	25
10.2. Tools and tactics.....	26
11. Monitoring and evaluation.....	30

1. Executive summary

The European Solidarity Corps programme (2021–2027) must rely on a strong communication strategy to raise awareness of the programme and its priorities among potential beneficiaries (young people and organisations) and to disseminate its messages with the support of stakeholders and multipliers.

This strategy was developed through research, interviews with experts, stakeholders and beneficiaries and focus groups with stakeholders. It includes a creative concept and will be implemented through an 18-month communication plan.

The communication strategy addresses the different target groups of the European Solidarity Corps, namely: potential applicants, direct beneficiaries, stakeholders, multipliers and decision makers.

This communication strategy aims to position the European Solidarity Corps as a one-stop shop for volunteering – a unique programme connecting young people with organisations offering solidarity projects.

It highlights programme novelties – the main one being the introduction of a humanitarian aid strand –, its key priorities (inclusion, sustainability and digital) and showcases the benefits of joining the Corps for different audiences.

This strategy has been translated into the creative concept ‘The power of together’ – a strong idea that reinforces the brand of the European Solidarity Corps to tell authentic stories about it and enhance its overall communication.

The communication strategy will serve as a basis for the communication plan with the first set of communication tactics proposed in this document.

2. Introduction

2.1. Context

2021–2027 marks the new Multiannual Financial Framework for the European Solidarity Corps, which is a programme that aims to foster solidarity in European society, engaging young people and organisations in accessible, high-quality activities. It offers young people together with participating organisations a wide variety of opportunities to participate in solidarity activities introducing positive societal change.

The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) programme for 2021–2027 has two main strands ⁽¹⁾:

Volunteering: abroad or in your own country for between 2 and 12 months (in some cases 2 weeks), with opportunities in a wide range of fields – culture, environment, social inclusion and more – for people aged 18–30.

Humanitarian aid: building on the previous EU Aid Volunteers, the programme will also enable young people aged 18–35 to volunteer in the humanitarian aid field far beyond Europe. The humanitarian aid strand will not start before 2022.

In addition to those strands, the Corps offers the opportunity to take part in solidarity projects in which a group of at least five young people can submit a request for EU funding for a project that would positively impact their local community.

With a budget of over EUR 1 billion, the Corps will offer even more opportunities for young people to involve themselves in projects and activities within the EU and beyond.

The upcoming programme will have an even bigger emphasis on inclusion by encouraging and facilitating the participation of young people with fewer opportunities. It also aims to be more sustainable and more digital than before.

A new quality label application process will also be introduced for organisations. National Agencies will need to be well informed and empowered to explain it to potential and current beneficiaries.

2.2. Strategy development

In order to develop the strategic positioning of the new European Solidarity Corps programme, the following analysis has been carried out:

1. Research

- + Desk research
- + In-depth interviews with programme experts, key stakeholders and beneficiaries
- + Focus groups with key stakeholders and beneficiaries

2. Stakeholder mapping and analysis

3. Development of the communication strategy

¹ EC: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2385.
 EP: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/fr/press-room/20201207IPR93216/accord-sur-un-programme-de-volontariat-pour-les-jeunes-en-europe-et-au-dela>.
 Council: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/11/european-solidarity-corps-2021-2027-the-council-and-the-european-parliament-strike-a-provisional-agreement/?utm_source=dsm&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=European+Solidarity+Corps+2021+-+2027%3a+the+Council+and+the+European+Parliament+strike+a+provisional+agreement.

4. Development of creative concept (3 different routes for telling the story of the new European Solidarity Corps)

2.3. Methodological approach

The key steps are summarised below.

	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4
	Research and analysis	Creative concepts development	Communication strategy development	Creative assets and guidelines
PURPOSE	Understanding policy, context, novelties, audiences, challenges. Define inspiring insights and strategic direction.	Developing a long-term creative storytelling approach for the new European Solidarity Corps programme.	Highlighting strategic recommendations for the communication approach and actions in the years to come.	Providing ready-to-use materials and inspiring content to allow creators to develop their own materials.
PROCESS	Desk research – social media listening, review of relevant documents. In-depth interview. Focus groups.	Creative team's ideation process. Creation of Manifesto, and look and feel/graphic approach to convey the story.	Based on research findings, selected creative approach and had ongoing feedback sessions with DG EAC and selected experts.	Definition of specific assets based on immediate needs. Guidance for other appropriate communication tools and actions.
DELIVERABLE(S)	Creative brief. Research report.	3 different creative routes. Selected route to be decided on.	Communication strategy document.	Key creative assets and guidelines document.

3. Research highlights

3.1. Desk research

The desk research consisted of three parts:

1. Review and analysis of key documents:

- + Inclusion and diversity in the future Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes
- + Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps sustainability strategy
- + Digital Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps
- + European Solidarity Corps guide 2020
- + SALTO youth participation strategy
- + Various SALTO research documents
- + Background document: National Agencies and dissemination of projects
- + What's new – messages
- + Study on removing obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities
- + Study on the impact of transnational volunteering through the European Voluntary Service
- + Research for CULT Committee – European Solidarity Corps and volunteering
- + Documents on previous strategic communication plans and recommendations
- + EuroDesk survey 2019.

Social media monitoring and research:

- + The social media monitoring activity covered the period from 1 September to 15 November 2020 and aimed to identify insights such as: users' feelings towards the programme, key topics, events and communication hooks, top influencers.
- + The social media research also provided an overview of the main social media channels for the European Solidarity Corps at both European and national level, top organic posts, types of content targeting different audiences and the type of post likely to ensure high levels of engagement.
- + The insights gathered served as a basis for discussion with DG EAC social media and web teams.

Secondary research conducted in different areas:

- + policy, history of the programme and novelties
- + content and messages
- + communication and outreach
- + stakeholders.

3.2. Interviews

In-depth interviews with DG EAC programme experts, key stakeholders and relevant beneficiaries of various opportunities within the European Solidarity Corps.

The interviews were conducted via Teams, lasted for approximately one hour and were recorded for reporting purposes if prior permission was given by the respondent.

The respondents for the European Solidarity Corps interviews are:

- + DG EAC – Director of Youth
- + DG EAC – Head of Unit, 'Youth, volunteer solidarity and traineeships'
- + European Solidarity Corps beneficiary
- + European Solidarity Corps participant
- + DG EAC – ESC programme officer
- + Austrian National Agency
- + Eurodesk.

3.3. Key findings

The key findings were clustered into three main areas: policy, people (including organisations) and communication. The key findings were shared with the larger project teams to inspire the development of creative concepts and storytelling lines, as well as a strategic direction for the creative and communication approach. A research report with detailed findings from the interviews will be made available as a separate document.

On policy:

1. The European Solidarity Corps aims to become a one-stop shop for volunteering and offers a wide range of solidarity activities for young people – both short and long-term. The addition of a humanitarian strand will further increase the diversity of the opportunities offered under the programme and will reinforce the idea of the European Solidarity Corps as a destination for young people and organisations who want to get involved in European solidarity activities.
2. The focus on inclusion and diversity should be taken into account at all stages of the programme's management: it is not just about the final participants (young people), but also about increasing the diversity of offers from participating organisations. Furthermore, the new programme will place more emphasis on sustainability (through greener mobility and the promotion of green projects) and digital (e.g. online training).
3. The EU Youth Strategy 2018 focuses on three core areas of action: engage, connect and empower ⁽²⁾. The European Solidarity Corps contributes to these three areas of action. The programme encourages the participation and civic engagement of young people who are increasingly involved in 'alternative forms' of participation, including youth activism, community volunteering, online activism and youth social movements, such as the climate activism movement ⁽³⁾.

On people and organisations

4. The European Solidarity Corps offers young people a unique opportunity to experience volunteering: it is not just a 'mission', but a way to really live a new and enjoyable experience.
5. As confirmed by a Eurodesk study ⁽⁴⁾, young people who opt for mobility opportunities primarily do so to have fun and live a new experience (94.5 %) and to do something meaningful and useful (90.5 %).
6. Organisations also benefit from participating in the European Solidarity Corps: they are connected to motivated volunteers who offer them a fresh perspective on their work, they exchange knowledge and best practices with other organisations and receive formal recognition from the EU.
7. The European Solidarity Corps not only offers a diverse range of project topics that give participants more choice, it is also open to diverse organisations. This diversity is reflected not only in the project topics, but also in their length, geographical scope and type (volunteering, solidarity projects or humanitarian aid beyond EU borders).
8. More and more young people are involved in volunteering: according to Eurobarometer, 34 % of young adults have been involved in an organised voluntary activity over the past 12 months ⁽⁵⁾. However, there remain big differences in the levels of participation by young people and organisations in the European Solidarity Corps across European countries. Some young people may already recognise it as a programme with clear added value, an obvious choice when it comes to helping others and an experience that they

(2) https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy_en.

(3) <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/participation/youth-strategy/>.

⁴ Source: Eurodesk Survey 2019, *Mobility and the Role of Youth Information*.

⁵ Source: Flash Eurobarometer 478, *How do we build a stronger, more united Europe? The views of young people*.

can proudly list on their CV. For others, volunteering might still be considered a waste of time that could be better invested in getting started with their career. For others, their motivation to join the European Solidarity Corps might be for philanthropic reasons: to help others.

9. The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated that a lot of young people want to get involved and like organisations, want to find diverse ways to help in such a challenging time. According to the Youth and COVID-19 survey report ⁽⁶⁾, globally European Solidarity Corps participants shared their stories when experienced the COVID crisis during their projects, showing how young people can make a difference and contribute to a better society.

On communication

10. The rebranding of the well-established European Voluntary Service (EVS) to the European Solidarity Corps caused some confusion and traces of communication on the former EVS can still be found online. The European Solidarity Corps is not yet a strong brand and is quite often presented next to Erasmus+, a widely recognised European brand and this might cause the Corps to remain in its shadow.
11. European Solidarity Corps opportunities are not yet well known and this lack of awareness is cited as one of the key obstacles for the programme ⁽⁷⁾:
 - + 85 % of organisations claim that there is a lack of awareness of the opportunities offered by the Corps;
 - + 66 % of survey respondents say that information on cross-border volunteering is not adequately disseminated.

This is confirmed by a Eurodesk study: 56 % of young people feel lost and struggle to find information they need about mobility programmes.

12. Communication needs also to be bottom-up and to take into account the different needs of National Agencies and other stakeholders in terms of size, funding and experience. There is a clear need for flexible toolkits that can be adapted for different target audiences.

"What we do not need is this sort of general campaign that we all have to adopt. Like the same letters, pictures, photos etc. It is nice to offer them but please let us adopt things to our own reality, to our own visuals and style because the local reality is different. Of course, we don't say: Don't offer them! But please let us have the freedom to work on them, to adopt them to our own reality"

NA

National Agency

Source: SALTO, *Exploring the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps during its first year.*

⁶ Source: European Youth Forum, Youth and COVID-19 survey report.

⁷ Source: study on removing obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities.

4. Goals and objectives

4.1. General aim and overall ambition

The overall communication goal is to develop a storytelling approach to the new European Solidarity Corps programme that can power communication campaigns and actions in the years to come (2021–2027). Simple graphic design elements and creative tools can inspire all contributors to European Solidarity Corps communication to create their own materials, ensuring a more consistent approach at the European and national levels.

4.2. Specific communication objectives

The table below highlights the target audience(s) for which the specific objective is relevant and the key moments that could be used for communication in the years to come (2021–2027).

Ultimate beneficiaries (individuals/organisations)	Stakeholders and multipliers	Decision makers	Communication moments
Communicate the novelties and lesser-known opportunities of the new European Solidarity Corps.			Starting in 2021 (first 18 months).
Reach out to underrepresented target audiences and people with fewer opportunities.			Before each application round.
1. Attract more organisations: need to create offer for the European Solidarity Corps. Attract more participants: more focus in later phase, once the offer is reinforced.			Starting in 2021 (first 18 months).
		Influence decision makers to ensure continued support.	Yearly, when positive results are available.
	Empower them to make the programme more visible within their networks.		Before bigger campaign launches and/or each application round.
Make the programme's strands clearer and better known.			Starting 2021 (first 18 months).
Celebrate the programme's achievements and spark a feeling of pride among EU citizens.			Programme anniversary/ milestones.
Clarify communication about COVID-19, how it is affecting the programme and the solutions.			Ongoing while the pandemic lasts.

It is important to stress that certain organisations can play a double role as both beneficiaries and multipliers. For example, a youth organisation can organise projects for European Solidarity Corps volunteers, while also co-creating and multiplying European Solidarity Corps messages to their own audiences.

Today, almost 30 % of registrants come from just three countries: Italy, Spain and France ⁽⁸⁾. The new programme should achieve a wider geographical spread. Male participants are also

⁸ Source: European Solidarity Corps, daily update for 18 October 2020, by DG EAC.

underrepresented, at only 38 %⁽⁹⁾. It is important to show that solidarity activities are an attractive opportunity for all young people. Reaching out to people with fewer opportunities (e.g. due to disabilities, economic or geographic obstacles) can further show that everyone is welcome to contribute to European solidarity. With 67 % of organisations surveyed⁽¹⁰⁾ – assessing their capacity and willingness to include young people with fewer opportunities in solidarity activities –, there is certainly the potential to increase the programme's inclusiveness.

⁹ Source: European Solidarity Corps, daily update for 18 October 2020, by DG EAC.

¹⁰ Source: Removing obstacles to cross-border solidarity activities, European Commission.

5. SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis was conducted to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the European Solidarity Corps. A SWOT analysis was used instead of a PEST analysis, because PEST is limited to external factors and does not consider the internal situation. Those internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) are very relevant for a programme like the European Solidarity Corps.

Moreover, when reflecting on opportunities and threats in a SWOT analysis, we also take into account the factors that would be included in a PEST analysis (e.g. COVID-19 with its social and economic impacts, political factors, such as the importance of diverse EU policies, etc.).

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Positive emotions and experiences of participants and organisations: there are many positive stories about the European Solidarity Corps. + Wide diversity of opportunities offered (volunteering and work opportunities, different fields, length, place, etc.). + Fully organised experience (costs covered, insurance, training), accessible to young people. + Personal development. + Formal recognition (Youthpass for participants, quality label for organisations). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Low levels of awareness of the programme and its opportunities. + Application process requires a lot of knowledge and resources that some smaller organisations might not have. + It is difficult to find relevant and appealing information about the programme. + Potential disappointment of registered young people: less than 40 % of registered young people were contacted at least once by an organisation ⁽¹¹⁾. + Very uneven distribution of registration: around 30 % are from just three countries (Spain, Italy, France).
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Over 93 % of non-mobile young respondents are eager to experience a mobility opportunity ⁽¹²⁾. + Increase the level of information about the programme among young people and organisations. + Reaching out to new types of organisations and to disadvantaged young people. + Potential rise in European solidarity: 63 % of Europeans agree that the current COVID-19 crisis shows the need for greater European cooperation ⁽¹³⁾. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Rebranding of EU-Aid and adding a humanitarian strand under the Corps could create confusion around the programme. + Mobility, a core feature of the European Solidarity Corps, is massively affected by COVID-19. + Mobility may attract negative comments in the context of 'a greener Europe'. + Criticism of certain EU solidarity activities (e.g. helping refugees).

5.1. Key challenges

Based on the SWOT analysis and research findings, key challenges and potential ways of tackling them were identified.

1. Position the European Solidarity Corps as a one-stop shop for solidarity activities.

The programme offers unique opportunities for young people and for organisations involved, but is not yet a strong brand. Besides graphical guidelines, the European Solidarity Corps needs a clear communication positioning translated into a powerful creative concept that would be relevant for all

¹¹ DG EAC data, as of 18 October 2020: out of 265 420 registrations, 101 768 were in contact at least once.

¹² Source: Eurodesk 2019.

¹³ Source: https://ecfr.eu/publication/europes_pandemic_politics_how_the_virus_has_changed_the_publics_worldview/.

target audiences.

Storytelling needs to be simple and inspiring: it is about promoting the Corps as a destination for all people (individuals and organisations) who want to develop their societies and themselves.

This storytelling should also allow us to promote the ambition of the European Solidarity Corps as more inclusive, green and digital.

- **Reach out beyond the programme's 'usual' target audiences (for both participants and organisations).**

It is crucial for the European Solidarity Corps to attract more diverse organisations to the programme in order to diversify the offer and increase the chance of matchmaking potential participants. The new quality-label application rules therefore need to be explained to inform organisations about new requirements for partnering with the Corps and hosting volunteers.

It is also important to convey the message that solidarity activities are open to young people from all different backgrounds. This can be achieved with an inclusive brand story and by looking for new ways of reaching out to more diverse audiences.

- **Bring more consistency while inspiring more diverse storytelling.**

Create strong brand guidelines for the European Solidarity Corps, allowing more consistency while still inspiring various stakeholders to create their own communication materials.

- **Introduce the humanitarian strand as the main programme's novelty.**

The introduction of the humanitarian strand will open up more possibilities for young people and organisations to engage with the programme.

The target audience for this strand will be broader than for today's activities under the Corps: reaching out to young people up to 35 years old.

- **Broaden the European Solidarity Corps community.**

Solidarity activities are all about people. It is about connecting young people with organisations and communities to which they want to contribute. Beneficiaries of the programme all have their individual stories to share and face-to-face communication is the best way to find out more about the programme. Communication should facilitate the sharing of such stories and the creation of connections between different people engaged in the European Solidarity Corps, for example by leveraging the power of alumni communities ⁽¹⁴⁾, such as Euro-peers or the European Solidarity Network.

¹⁴ https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/young-people/community/networks_is

6. Target audience

Below is a snapshot of the segmentation of target audiences and the specific objectives for different segments.

<p>A. Potential participants</p>	<p>Individual registrants and participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Young people (18-30). + 18-35 for humanitarian aid (15). As these actions pose specific challenges, the age of volunteers is extended, with the possibility of hiring experts and coaches outside of the age limit. + Mostly individuals (groups for solidarity projects). + Specific focus on those with fewer opportunities (people with disabilities, special needs or health problems, learning difficulties, economic obstacles, social or geographical obstacles, immigrants and refugees). <p>Organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Small and large governmental organisations, municipalities, non-governmental organisations (in EU and non-EU MS) and companies. + Covering different solidarity areas (e.g. citizenship and democratic participation, community development, culture, environment, equality and non-discrimination).
<p>Key objectives for potential applicants</p>	<p>Make the programme's strands clearer and better known.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + The communication needs to raise awareness of the European Solidarity Corps and its role in European solidarity. + For individuals: focus on diverse opportunities and benefits offered by the Corps. + For organisations: focus on benefits for organisations and on a quality label (the necessary requirements to take part in the programme). <p>Reach out to underrepresented target audiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + In order to address more diverse audiences, new ways of reaching out beyond the EU/Erasmus+ bubble need to be encouraged. <p>Attract more applicants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Knowing that only a limited percentage of young people are contacted by organisations, the first recommendation is to focus on attracting more organisations in order to increase the number and diversity of projects offered under the European Solidarity Corps.
<p>B. Direct beneficiaries (already registered / participating in the programme)</p>	<p>Individuals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Those who are already registered and are waiting to be contacted by an organisation. + Those who are already participating in the programme. <p>Organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Quality-labelled organisations of the European Solidarity Corps.
<p>Key objectives for direct beneficiaries</p>	<p>Communicate the novelties and lesser-known opportunities of the European Solidarity Corps.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + They are already aware of some of the opportunities offered by the European Solidarity Corps, but the communication should enable them to discover what else the new programme can offer them (e.g. humanitarian strand).

⁽¹⁵⁾ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20201207IPR93216/new-volunteering-programme-for-young-people-in-europe-and-beyond-agreed>.

	<p>Clear communication around COVID-19, how it is affecting the programme and the solutions proposed by the EU.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + The beneficiaries of the programme are the ones directly interested in how COVID-19 affects European Solidarity Corps mobility and what solutions are being introduced to tackle this challenge. <p>Celebrate the programme's achievements and spark a feeling of pride among EU citizens.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Your beneficiaries are the best ambassadors for the programme. Their engagement is crucial in spreading the news about the achievements of the European Solidarity Corps and attracting more individuals and organisations to the programme.
C. Stakeholders and multipliers*	Organisations and institutions who influence the way in which the European Solidarity Corps is implemented in participating countries, as well as those who influence the perception of the programme through their own communication actions (EACEA, SALTO, National Agencies, EuroDesks, etc.).
Key objectives for stakeholders and multipliers	<p>Empower them to make the programme more visible within their networks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Their role is essential in achieving all communication objectives for other target audiences. + Clear information on programme novelties (quality label, humanitarian strand) and ambition (inclusion, green, digital). + Communication should inspire them and give them relevant tools to disseminate communication on the European Solidarity Corps.
D. Decision makers	Those who can enhance future financial and political support for the programme at European (European Parliament, European Commission), national and local levels.
Key objective for decision makers	<p>Influence decision makers to ensure continued support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Communicating on the ambition of the programme, its priorities and how they are aligned with European/national policies. <p>Celebrate the achievements of the programme and spark a feeling of pride among EU citizens.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + It is important to show how different solidarity activities come together for bigger, international impact.

**A detailed stakeholder mapping exercise is in progress and will be available as a separate document.*

At this point, it is important to mention that certain entities can play a double role under the European Solidarity Corps as both beneficiaries and multipliers. For example, an NGO can coordinate volunteering projects, while also co-creating and multiplying the European Solidarity Corps messages for their own audiences.

Geographical scope

Two types of countries are eligible to take part in the European Solidarity Corps.

1. Participating countries: EU countries, Iceland, North Macedonia, Turkey, Liechtenstein and Norway (16).
2. Partner countries (EU neighbours): Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Kosovo, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Russia, Serbia, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine.

The future participation of the UK depends on the outcome of ongoing Brexit negotiations.

¹⁶ Source: https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity/countries-covered_en

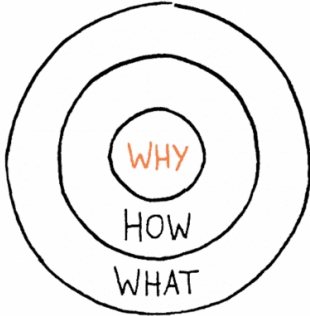
During the strategic process, common traits among the beneficiaries – both individuals and organisations alike – were identified.

-
- + They are open to and interested in a European experience.
 - + They want to make a difference and engage in actions with a real, positive impact.
 - + They are very positive about their European solidarity experience: it is a 'before-and-after' moment that has a lasting impact on their lives.
 - + They are ready to share their experience and they want as many people as possible to get the most from this opportunity.
 - + They learn from each other: the European Solidarity Corps is a learning experience for both participants and organisations.
 - + The European Solidarity Corps creates new connections on many levels: between participants and organisations, between volunteers from different countries and between various organisations.
 - + These connections reinforce participants' European identity.
-

7. Key messages

7.1. Positioning

In order to position the new European Solidarity Corps, Simon Sinek's 'golden circle' model⁽¹⁷⁾ was used to define the programme's mission, values and ultimate offer for their audiences concisely. The model is explained below.

	<p>WHY?</p> <p>The very reason the programme exists. It is the cause, the core belief.</p> <p>HOW?</p> <p>How is the programme special, different or relevant? What are the key values or aspects of the programme?</p> <p>WHAT?</p> <p>What exactly does the programme offer, today and tomorrow?</p>
---	---

European Solidarity Corps positioning:

	<p>WHY?</p> <p>The European Solidarity Corps empowers young people and organisations to connect with others to act in common solidarity because together we can make a difference to improve society and ourselves.</p> <p>HOW?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Diverse: connecting young people to all types of solidarity activities. + Accessible: open to all young people and to diverse organisations. + Greener: all connected for greener actions. + Digital: get connected with what matters to you. <p>WHAT?</p> <p>One-stop shop for volunteering, bringing together young people and organisations to offer them solidarity opportunities.</p>
---	--

Based on this positioning, we have developed a strategic direction to guide the creative development and the 'big idea' behind it:

The solidarity experience that connects us for a bigger impact on societies and on ourselves

It is about the core notion of solidarity as 'a feeling or an action of unity, togetherness or oneness between people who have the same interests and goals'⁽¹⁸⁾.

It is about the power of solidarity, about how together (young people and organisations) we can have a greater impact. This difference happens on two levels: societal engagement and personal development. It is a learning experience for participants, organisations and local communities.

¹⁷ 'Start with why': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0HIF3Sfl4>

¹⁸ Source: SALTO, Use Your Hands 2.0.

This concept of “togetherness” differentiates the programme from other solidarity initiatives.

Through the European Solidarity Corps, a participant is connected:

- + to the chosen organisation, to the cause that matters to you;
- + to like-minded people with whom you have a good time;
- + to your mentor/trainer, supporting and guiding you through the whole experience;
- + to other organisations from which you can learn more;
- + to local and disadvantaged communities, bringing support where needed.

‘Through taking and giving, as individuals, as groups, as a society – there is a need to connect to others, there is a need for common understanding and a need for common acts of solidarity for society to grow’⁽¹⁹⁾.

7.2. Messaging matrix

A snapshot of the messaging matrix is visualised below (details are included as sub-sections):

HORIZONTAL MESSAGES ABOUT THE 2021–2027 PROGRAMME	
Brand tag line	THE POWER OF TOGETHER
Potential applicants Direct beneficiaries Stakeholders/multipliers Decision makers	Bringing European solidarity together. The European Solidarity Corps is a one-stop shop for volunteering, connecting people and organisations active in solidarity activities.
Reasons to believe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + The European Solidarity Corps connects young people and organisations active in solidarity activities. + Diverse choice of solidarity projects (different fields, in country or abroad, various durations, etc.). + 100 % focus on volunteering activities (occupational strand is stopped).
Potential applicants Direct beneficiaries Stakeholders/multipliers Decision makers	We’re better together. European Solidarity Corps impact is about building better (inclusive, sustainable, participative) communities, whether close to your home or abroad. It’s about growing all together and enjoying the journey.
Reasons to believe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Inclusive: open to all, enabling all kinds of people and organisations to grow, encouraging participation for all young people. + Greener programme: encouraging participants, organisations and partners to opt for greener choices and promote sustainable practices. + Ongoing projects even under COVID-19: proving that solidarity keeps on improving European communities.
Potential applicants Direct beneficiaries Stakeholders/multipliers Decision makers	Connecting European solidarity to the world. It’s about opening European Solidarity Corps to the world: as of 2022, the humanitarian aid strand will add even more opportunities to the programme.
Reasons to believe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + More opportunities for broader audiences (young people up to 35). + Opening European Solidarity Corps to new types of organisations active in humanitarian aid fields.

¹⁹ Source: 4Thoughts for Solidarity, SALTO, European Solidarity Corps.

Messages for individuals (young people/potential applicants)

Boost your skills and experience

Volunteering can help you to develop your skills, acquire new ones and gain valuable experience of the world of work. The programme can give you an opportunity to learn more about a chosen field, gaining rapid hands-on experience or to try out a new direction in a different field or sector. Either way, you will return home with new competences and new perspectives for future employment.

Give something back

Volunteering is a way of supporting communities – whether your own, another in Europe, or by taking part in humanitarian activities outside the continent. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people have turned to volunteering as a way of showing solidarity to others. As we rebuild across the world, it is important to carry on supporting each other, giving our time and skills to others in need.

Learn about different cultures

Experience another culture thanks to the programme. Spending time living and working in a new community can be enriching and eye-opening, providing new experiences and connections that can broaden your horizons and open up new opportunities.

Open to all

You can take part in the programme whatever your background and regardless of your financial situation (travel, accommodation and insurance are covered). Training and support are also available to tackle any other obstacles you might need to overcome to make the most of your volunteering experience.

Be part of the green wave

Whether you are already a passionate environmentalist or simply keen to learn more, volunteering with an organisation that is working in the field of sustainability or is in the process of greening its practices can prove a worthwhile experience. Gaining skills and experience in sustainability can give you an advantage with future employers as the EU moves towards becoming the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

Messages for organisations

Key messages are designed to help attract organisations and to enable them to see the benefits in getting involved in the European Solidarity Corps.

Working across borders/at European level brings benefits at home

The European Solidarity Corps is an opportunity for NGOs to build networks and engage in youth activities at the European level. Bringing people from different cultural backgrounds together broadens horizons and enriches your organisation and the local community. Participating organisations can become recognised actors locally and at the European level.

Energise your workplace and inject new ideas

Your organisation gains access to a pool of proactive/highly motivated young people who want to make a difference. These young people bring fresh ideas, emerging skills and new ways of working that can help to energise your organisation and boost innovation and creativity.

Boost your “green” credentials

Taking part in the programme can encourage your organisation to take steps to start (or continue) to green its practices in line with the new focus on sustainability. This can help build or strengthen the organisation's image as a green actor.

Help build an inclusive society

Take part in a programme that provides opportunities for young people, including those who would not otherwise have the means to spend time in another country. Thanks to your organisation, a young person can have a unique experience that is enriching or even life-changing, while you build new connections and benefit from another new perspectives on your organisation and work.

Raise your profile by taking part in an international programme

Participating in the European Solidarity Corps is an opportunity for NGOs working in humanitarian aid in developing countries to make new contacts and build their networks, helping to raise their profiles internationally. Bringing people from different countries together around a common goal also broadens horizons and enriches your organisation and the local community.

8. Communication approach

8.1. Tone of voice

The general communication approach and tone of voice are based on the following elements:

Authenticity

The European Solidarity Corps is about authenticity reflected in photographic style, the type of stories we want to tell and the real impact that young people want to make. We want to avoid clichés and stereotypes in portraying solidarity.

Encouraging and accessible

Think of the European Solidarity Corps as something that believes in you, that supports you so you can connect with others and develop yourself.

Feel-good

The European Solidarity Corps is a positive concept that leaves people and communities energised.

Diverse

The European Solidarity Corps connects and brings various people together. It is about portraying the diverse connections they make.

People @heart

This is about experiences, about people and organisations who grow together through the programme.

Where communication only targets decision makers through official documents the tone of voice will be slightly adapted to reflect institutional norms.

8.2. Vocabulary

When beneficiaries and stakeholders were asked to summarise the European Solidarity Corps experience, some inspiring terminology emerged. Summarised below, these terms can help draft rich, yet consistent public-facing messages.

Opportunities
Meaningful experience
Solidarity
Connections
Growing Up

Discovery
Making a difference
European
Sharing
Change

8.3. DOs and DON'Ts

DOs – what to say/the approach to take	DON'Ts – best to avoid
Authentic storytelling: the creative approach expresses togetherness using real experiences of Corps participants wherever possible.	Using stock imagery to tell the stories of the Corps.
Approach: positive, energising, empowering.	Institutional and/or too technical.
Reflect the diverse possibilities to engage in solidarity activities. Adapt messages, tools and channels to the audience and the context.	While key identity elements must always be present, avoid a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to content.
People and their experiences (individuals or organisations) are central. It's about providing enjoyable and powerful experiences connecting people engaged in the Corps.	The policies are the enablers of creative experiences, not the central point in communication
Call to action: try to use an emotional tone (i.e.: 'let's', 'join European Solidarity Corps'). A call to action must always be easily visible.	Multiple or complex messages without a clear indication where they can find out more about a certain topic.
Visuals/content: use diverse, vibrant visuals, reflecting the variety of projects under the European Solidarity Corps.	Avoid negative connotations and stereotypes potentially linked with solidarity activities.
Showcase togetherness: it's about meaningful connections.	Focus only on individual experience.
Sharing: be proud in sharing communication actions or tools that have worked.	Copy or imagery that may not be relevant locally. Make sure it fits with the local culture and realities.

9. Creative approach

9.1. Creative concept

The creative concept is based on the strategic direction as presented in the point 7.1 of this communication strategy: 'Solidarity experience that connects us for a greater impact on societies and on ourselves'. This has been translated into creative proposals and the chosen one validated during focus groups with programme stakeholders and potential beneficiaries is presented here.

POWER OF TOGETHER: CREATIVE RATIONALE

This route is about the power of solidarity, about how together (young people and organisations) we can have a greater impact.

It is a message that is straightforward about the benefits of the European Solidarity Corps: in a nutshell, it is all about sharing—your time, your energy, your skills.

What makes European Solidarity unique is that once you decide to share you receive so much in return: you learn and you grow.

This is also very true for organisations who decide to join the Corps (learning from each other) and for the European solidarity in general. The more we are, the more of positive difference we can make. And that is the power of together.

The Manifesto expressing the creative concept serves as an inspiration for further communication work European Solidarity Corps, a creative expression of the 'power of together' concept.

MANIFESTO FOR THE CHOSEN CONCEPT: 'The power of together'

We don't have superpowers.

But when we get together and help each other, we can have a big impact on other people's lives.

Even by doing small things.

When we share our energy, our enthusiasm and our skills, we really have the power to change the world.

Together, we move forward.

Together, we learn from each other.

Together, we grow.

Together, we feel empowered.

And together, we enjoy the feeling.

At the European Solidarity Corps, you can experience the power of together.

Whatever the size of the project.

Whatever the length of the mission.

Wherever you are.

And whoever you are.

European Solidarity Corps. The power of together.

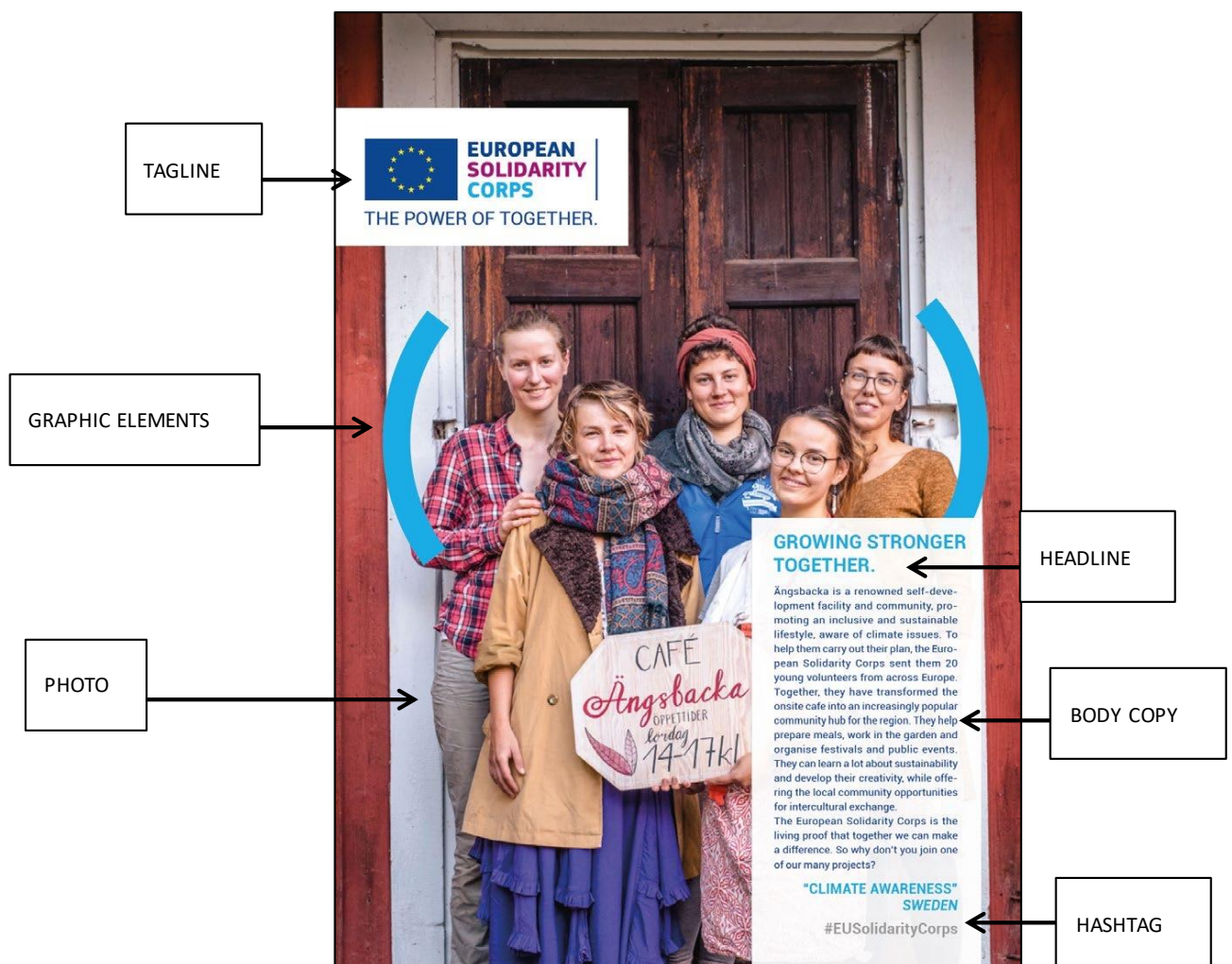
9.2. Key visuals



GENERIC APPROACH

ICF Next will develop a series of visuals that will bring to life different aspects of European Solidarity Corps.

EXECUTION



More details on the execution of creative concept can be found in the programme's visual guidelines.

DESIGN ELEMENTS

The key design elements for key visuals are:

- + **PHOTOS OF EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS PROJECTS**
The starting point when creating a key visual are real photography of the Corps projects. The choice of the pictures must reflect the values of Solidarity Corps. Pictures from real projects and coloured imagery with people together to reinforce the core idea of "The Power of Together" are favoured. For some communications, for example a press release, black and white images can also be used. Positive and modern imagery is recommended to avoid possible negative connotations.
- + **GRAPHIC ELEMENTS**
Those are illustrative shapes representing the values and actions of European Solidarity Corps. (e.g. enthusiasm, joy, caring, inclusion, movement, etc.)
Graphic elements make the campaign more easily identifiable by giving a "family resemblance" and a positive energy to all the visuals.
- + **FONTS**
When the layout doesn't follow the charter of European Commission, the use of *Roboto* font is obligatory. When the use of the chart is required, using the *EC Square Sans Pro* font is obligatory.

COPY ELEMENTS

The key copy elements are:

- + **HEADLINE**
Headlines will express different facets of the European Solidarity Corps focusing on its tangible results, e.g. "Growing stronger together" or "Transforming shorelines, transforming your life"
- + **TAGLINE**
This sign-off is an elliptical tagline where 'together' is not used as an adverb, but as a noun which means 'being together and doing things together'.
'The Power of Together' stands for 'The Power of Being / Working / Creating / Helping / Thinking / Building / Learning / Transforming / Moving / Growing... Together'.
- + **BODY COPY**
In some cases, an additional body copy is needed to explain the details of presented European Solidarity Corps projects and to show how they prove that together we can make a real difference. Name and country of the project will be highlighted.
- + **HASHTAG**
#EUSolidarityCorps will be used as an additional branding element.

10. Outreach approach

10.1. European and national communication

The various actors involved in the European Solidarity Corps programme have different roles and responsibilities when it comes to the communication of the programme.

- + DG EAC develops European guidelines highlighting the programme's novelties and an 'inspiration book' to encourage consistent communication. Launches communication actions and campaigns at European level mainly communicating the 'bigger picture'.
- + Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) supports DG EAC and boosts the launch at the European level. EACEA is responsible for certain programme actions. Its role is to inform potential applicants about the funding opportunities, communicate with beneficiaries and to provide information on successful projects within centrally-managed actions.
- + Key stakeholders and multipliers (National Agencies, EuroDesks, SALTO) adapt communication to national contexts, run national communication actions and share feedback with other countries and DG EAC. They are also responsible for the communication of more practical information about the application process, for promoting different information points where potential beneficiaries can find support at the national level (e.g. through WhatsApp groups) and for providing useful resources (e.g. informal learning for youth workers and leaders by SALTO).
- + Beneficiaries (individuals, as well as organisations) co-create valuable content inspired by their own experiences and share them with their peers and networks becoming genuine ambassadors for the programme.

For key communication campaigns or actions (such as the launch of the new European Solidarity Corps programme), it is important to keep a stronger focus on internal communication (i.e. communication with EACEA and National Agencies) and stakeholder engagement to balance the communication launch at the European level. Regular, structured sessions with the internal teams, as well as with key stakeholders and multipliers, will lead to complementary communication efforts and avoid potential overlaps in outreach.

	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4
	Internal launch	Key stakeholders and multipliers engagement	EU launch and national adaptation	Structured sharing of information and assets
PURPOSE	Align DG EAC and EACEA teams on communication ambitions and approach.	Align key stakeholders and multipliers on novelties and the European communication approach.	European launch and preparation for launch at the Member State level.	Sharing intelligence aiming to inspire and enhance the sense of community among those communication on the European Solidarity Corps.

ACTION	Video briefing session and sharing of guidelines/ 'inspiration book'.	Webinar/video briefing sessions and sharing of guidelines/ 'inspiration book' and other relevant documentation.	DG EAC launches communication on its own channels. Key stakeholders and multipliers adapt and create national communication plans and materials, which are in line with the European guidelines/ 'inspiration book' and respond to their own needs.	Sharing of best practices and communication materials through stories via different channels outlined in detail in the communication plan.
TIMING	Min. 2 weeks before Phase 3.	Min. 1 week before Phase 3.	At the time of launch.	Regular exchanges. Ongoing via platforms/monthly live catch-ups.

DG EAC has defined a strategy for the dissemination and exploitation of programme results covering the Erasmus+, Creative Europe (CE) and European Solidarity Corps programmes for the period 2019–2020. This new strategy builds on the 2015 one and has taken on board the recommendations from an external evaluation carried out in 2017 – most importantly, by aligning it with the needs expressed by stakeholders (including EACEA and European Solidarity Corps National Agencies). The strategy is organised around four key objectives:

- + Objective 1: Produce project stories with policy relevance for communication purposes.
- + Objective 2: Provide support to beneficiaries on communication, dissemination and the utilisation of projects.
- + Objective 3: Facilitate the exchange of experiences among National Agencies and EACEA.
- + Objective 4: Foster sharing and the re-use of project information and results via the Erasmus+, Creative Europe and ESC Project Results Platforms.

DG EAC, EACEA, National Agencies and project beneficiaries are instrumental in the selection and dissemination of stories and support-related communication efforts on programme results. Reinforced support for stakeholders in their communication, for example by providing them with additional guidance when needed (especially before big campaigns, communication actions or when new tools or priorities are announced) and more templates/models of further formats such as videos, factsheets and stories. This support will be particularly beneficial for stakeholders or multipliers with fewer communication resources.

10.2. Tools and tactics

The tools and tactics proposed in this section will be further developed in the communication plan, providing more details and showing how and when different tools can be disseminated. The chosen tactics will also be further aligned with the dissemination strategy and the exploitation of results. Long-term communication products will also be highlighted in the communication plan.

Inspiration book

Inspiring and easy-to-use guidelines created and disseminated by DG EAC to help improve consistency, while remaining flexible enough to integrate national needs.

The inspiration book will include:

- + the manifesto
- + tone of voice and creative DOs and DON'Ts
- + brand guidelines
- + other ideas/inspiration for how to communicate around the new concept.

With this tool, national agencies and other stakeholders can create their own communication materials inspired by the new storytelling approach on the European Solidarity Corps and consistent with proposed branding elements. This will enable the story of the Corps to be told by diverse voices, adding to its richness and growing over time.

Simple toolkit

Stakeholders, but also DG EAC expressed the need for more comprehensive communication materials, such as:

- + printable digital infographic(s) illustrating the European Solidarity Corps in a very simple, visual way (need for clear and simple communication material to convey messages about the programme);
- + videos to explain the programme in the local language;
- + social media materials such as readymade posts, GIFs, etc.;
- + electronic brochures for online events;
- + website banners;
- + PowerPoint presentation template;
- + recorded presentations, videos, tutorials, etc.

Broaden the digital community around European Solidarity Corps

The European Solidarity Corps is being promoted on DG EAC's Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts, but the online community is not yet very well developed and there is not much engagement on the Corps' social media.

We recommend a clearer targeting of audiences and tailoring of content for different channels.

- + Twitter would mainly target stakeholders and decision makers with content and updates relevant to them.
- + Facebook and Instagram would mainly target final beneficiaries with shareable, engaging or interactive content that is likely to result in the community increasing in size.

For umbrella accounts like the European Youth Facebook or Instagram ones, extra attention should be given to the European Solidarity Corps branding elements to ensure that the audience immediately recognises the post as being about the Corps programme in general or one of the opportunities it offers. Currently, the various social media posts about the European Solidarity Corps come in all colours and with very little programme branding. Clear formats for different types of posts would help to create a stronger brand for the programme and could also be shared with organisations and other multipliers.

The dedicated European Solidarity Corps group can be further developed to encourage more engagement around the programme and to enable direct communication with beneficiaries. More detailed recommendations for the use of the group will be outlined in the communication plan. In addition, other communities, such as Euro-peers or the European Solidarity Network, can be supported and/or used to promote the communication messages.

Alongside 'open' digital channels, the European Solidarity Corps manages the online platform matching participants with organisations. As explained in previous chapters, not all registered young people are contacted by a potential host organisation. Existing (general online training) and upcoming initiatives aim to increase interaction with registrants.

Once registered, participants can access the European Solidarity Corps mobile application which also offers the opportunity to reach out to the Corps community. Separate communication to existing registered participants is needed to keep their engagement high so that they update their profile and increase their chances of being spotted by interested organisations.

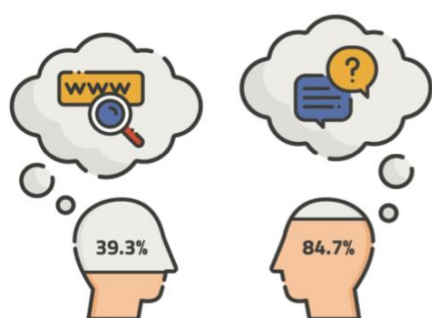
Specific approach for organisations

With simplified quality labelling, the sole focus on volunteering and the addition of humanitarian aid, the new programme offers many opportunities to attract more diverse organisations to the European Solidarity Corps. There is a need for communication materials that specifically target organisations (e.g. tutorials) and an evaluation of the channels that offer opportunities to reach out to them directly.

Ideas for activating organisations that are already beneficiaries of the Corps should also be considered so that they can be turned into programme ambassadors.

Facilitating personal connections

The best source of information for mobility programmes is face-to-face communication as confirmed by Eurodesk studies and also by our interviewees.



39.3% found their opportunity abroad online.
84.7% found it through a face-to-face contact.

Source: Eurodesk 2019 survey on mobility and the role of youth information.

The suggested communication tools should consider the importance of those personal connections, of matchmaking between participants and interested organisations and of connecting past participants with potential participants or interested organisations with already engaged organisations. Those interactions can happen in real life, but given the current COVID-19 situation online tools need to be considered. The European Solidarity app with its community journal functionality could also be used to reinforce connections between participants. Specific moments such as European Youth Weeks could be used to promote the programme during face-to-face and virtual events.

Real stories: personal stories in a 'connected' context

Stories based on real-life experiences are more effective at having the desired impact on the target audiences. European Solidarity Corps stories may reflect important aspects of the programme (inclusion, sustainability, digital). As mentioned before, authenticity in tone of voice is important to show that the projects are making a real difference and to tell stories to which others can easily relate.

Under the proposed creative concept, a script can be developed showing how these personal stories are part of bigger collective stories. For example, telling the story of the European Solidarity Corps from different perspectives: the volunteer, the hosting organisation, the local volunteers who worked together, etc. This type of script can be included in the 'inspiration book' for guidance. These stories could be told in different formats (e.g. podcasts), but as explained, we should always consider a video version.

With real stories we can show that the European Solidarity Corps is about community – about meaningful connections. Just like Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps has the potential to turn participants (individuals as well as organisations) into ambassadors for the programme.

Video content

There are a lot of things to communicate about the European Solidarity Corps programme and experiences. Most of them could be portrayed in a more dynamic and engaging way and here we recommend increasing efforts to create video content that would enhance storytelling opportunities. Based on Cisco forecasts²⁰, video will represent 82 % of all consumer internet traffic by 2021 (8). Not adapting to media forms that audiences frequently use may result in a loss of interest in the content we disseminate.

The power of networks

National agencies, SALTO, Eurodesks and others are powerful disseminators of information. They provide first-hand guidance on different programmes to current and potential beneficiaries and are in direct contact with other interest groups at national level. Leveraging the power of these networks will be crucial to continuing communication about the European Solidarity Corps. They will be provided with enhanced support for more coherent communication, as well as communication materials and guidance, best practices, etc.

²⁰ Source: https://www.cisco.com/c/dam/m/en_us/solutions/service-provider/vni-forecast-highlights/pdf/Global_2021_Forecast_Highlights.pdf. The forecast was done before the COVID-19 crisis. Video consumption has increased even more with the pandemic.

11. Monitoring and evaluation

This strategy should be monitored and its success evaluated as follows:

- + Surveys sent to stakeholders and multipliers to assess satisfaction levels with the materials and guidance received, as well as to gather insights on what can be improved in the future. In order to ensure broad inclusion, the survey should cover representatives from all Member States, for example by using EUSurvey or other online survey tools, such as Voxco.
- + Calls with key partners (i.e. National Agencies, EuroDesks) will enable a more in-depth assessment of what went well, the most useful materials received, best practices and future needs and expectations. A balanced representation of Member States (geographically, by size and by availability of internal resources) can be identified. Video calls can take place using software such as Teams following a pre-defined agenda for discussion.
- + Working groups with key partners and selected stakeholders/multipliers. Based on observations and insights from the previous points, a working session on communication could be organised to discuss the results and ways forward. This could be a live session, via video call or in person (when face-to-face meetings are again possible).