

Solidarity as an important aspect of the European Solidarity Corps Programme

In December 2016, the European Commission launched a new EU youth programme: the European Solidarity Corps.

The programme focuses on solidarity as one of the core European values. Involvement of young people and organisations in solidarity activities, such as volunteering, local projects, jobs and traineeships and their active participation in society and local communities as well as willingness to help vulnerable people, significantly strengthen solidarity, open-minded attitudes, tolerance, democracy and citizenship in Europe. At the same time, one of the objectives of the new programme is to respond to new social challenges, including the need for social inclusion of young people in the majority society and the development of long-term cooperation among youth organisations across Europe.

What does “solidarity” mean in terms of European Solidarity Corps, though? Is there a common notion of solidarity across Europe? How to understand this aspect in our daily life and in the activities of organisations that work with young people? How to express “solidarity” in everyday situations? What are the benefits and limitations of solidarity? How to weave solidarity into the fabric of European Solidarity Corps projects?

Solidarity is the core idea behind the European Solidarity Corps Programme. Yet, there is a strong need for a better understanding of the concept of solidarity and its meaning in the context of youth work in Europe. The European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre in Vienna (Austria) responded to this need and commissioned a study to come up with a common narrative on the concept of solidarity from the perspective of research, practice, policy, and young people.

The study “4 thoughts for Solidarity” has clearly shown that many factors influence the perception of solidarity in our society. Different backgrounds create different perspectives. Nonetheless, the study describes 4 fundamental concepts that all target groups involved in the study agreed on: these **4 cornerstones** form the basis of a common understanding of solidarity:

- Human Rights;
- Active Citizenship;
- Inclusion;
- Empathy.

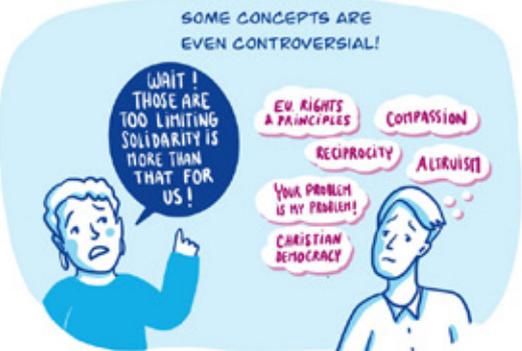
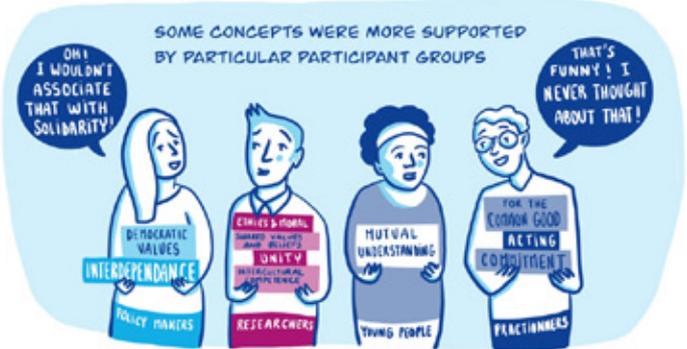
The ‘4 cornerstones’ are supported by **7 supporting concepts**, which were also highlighted to a lesser extent by people from the four participating groups. Nonetheless, they influence the broader perspective of a common understanding of solidarity in Europe:

- Social justice;
- Equality of opportunity;
- Support;
- Strengthening of communities;
- Active participation;
- Volunteering;
- Responsibility.

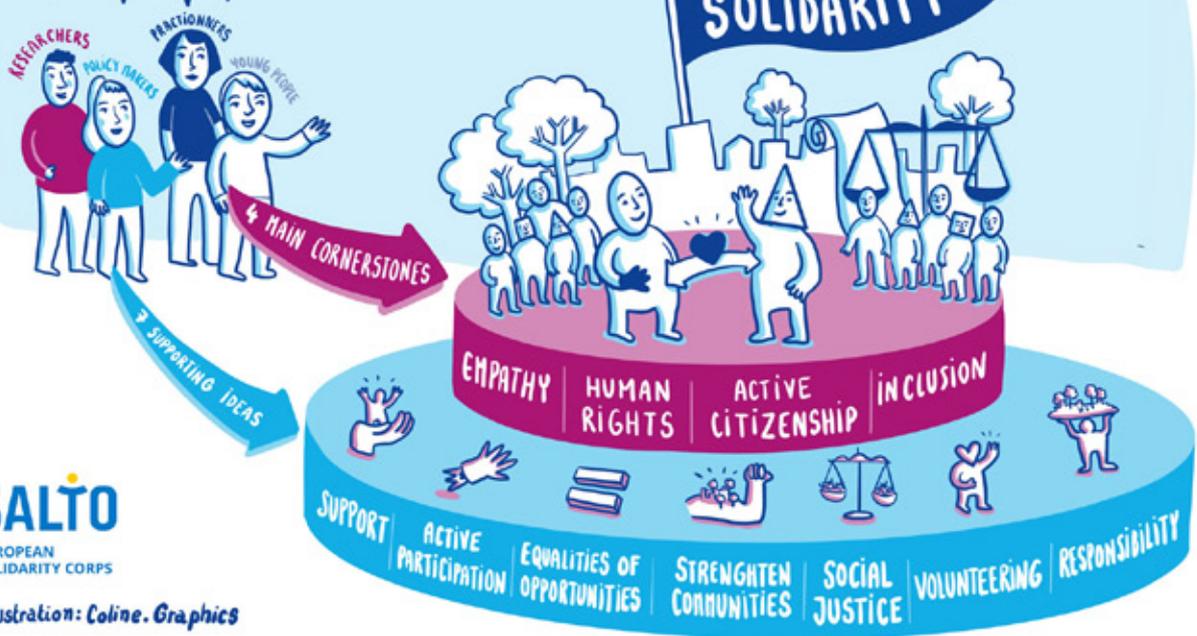
We should also note that the differences in the perception of the concept of solidarity also reflects each respondent’s reality. The study therefore aims to encourage dialogue and stimulate further discussion.

As you can see in [this picture](#), many other values and concepts were discussed throughout the process, some being more controversial than others.

WHAT IS SOLIDARITY?



ALTHOUGH WE MAY HAVE DIFFERENT OPINIONS, WE COULD AGREE ON THE COMMON GROUND!



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SOLIDARITY CORPS

Illustration: Coline. Graphics

For more information about the process and outcomes of the research, please refer to [this infographic](#). If you wish to read the full report, you can access it at <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/solidarity/>

The common narrative on solidarity should be helpful for a better understanding of what solidarity means in the context of the European Solidarity Corps programme. It brings further inspiration for organisations that are involved in the European Solidarity Corps projects and hold the Quality Label.

Resources

Infographic with outcomes of both research initiatives: [Coline.Graphics](#), European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre, Vienna, 2019.

European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/solidarity/>

European Solidarity Corps Guide 2020

https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/european-solidarity-corps-guide_2020_en.pdf

Publication „Solidarity in Europe“, authors: Philipp Genschel and Anton Hemerijck. European University Institute, 2018

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/db3d580c-b248-11e8-99ee-01aa75ed71a1>

4Thoughts for solidarity – “a research, a study, a thinking exercise, a thought-provoking resource”

<https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-4062/4TDS%20Study%2020200501.pdf>

Magda Wagenknechtová Svobodová,
Association of Non-formal Education z.s. (ANEV z.s.),
long-term experience with topic of EVS/ESC
and with EVS accreditations/ESC Quality Label, Czech Republic

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