



Quality Standards

for

SALTO European Solidarity Corps activities



EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY
CORPS

 **oead**
Agency for Education
and Internationalisation

Quality Standards in SALTO European Solidarity Corps activities

Introduction

The activities of SALTO European Solidarity Corps are diverse. This document aims at providing a clear set of quality standards as a guiding perspective for all activities of SALTO European Solidarity Corps and its partners. Some of these quality standards apply to all activities, while others are specific for each type of activity of the centre. They are presented below in two categories: transversal and specific.

These standards are drafted based on the values, priorities and actions promoted in the following reference documents:

- The Treaty of Lisbon¹, establishing human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and human rights as fundamental EU values
- The European Solidarity Corps Programme of the European Commission² and the four transversal priorities it promotes for 2021-2027 - inclusion, participation, sustainability, digitalisation
- The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027³
- The European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025⁴
- The 11 European Youth goals⁵
- The SALTO European Solidarity Corps Strategy 2021-2027⁶.
- The Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union⁷
- The 4 Thought for Solidarity Study commissioned by SALTO European Solidarity Corps in 2020⁸.

A. Transversal Quality Standards

1. Diversity and inclusion

SALTO European Solidarity Corps promotes the view that the diversity which exists in our societies is a richness that should be reflected in our programs and that all human beings, regardless of their culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability or socio-economic status must have equal opportunities. We promote diverse perspectives - always in line

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12007L%2FTEXT>

² https://youth.europa.eu/sites/default/files/european_solidarity_corps_guide_2022.pdf

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2018:456:FULL>

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152&from=EN>

⁵ <https://youth-goals.eu>

⁶ <https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-4299/SALTO-ESC-Strategy.pdf>

⁷ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32022H0411\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32022H0411(01))

⁸ <https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-4046/4TDS%20Study%2020200421.pdf>

with human rights principles - and give space to voices from various groups, especially to underrepresented groups, who are and have been historically marginalised, silenced or considered unimportant due to their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, diverse ability or country of citizenship.

Diversity and inclusion are mainstreamed in our activities and is visible in aspects such as:

- diversity of experts and participants;
- addressing topics related to stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination, as well as intersectionality;
- striving for social inclusion;
- using interculturally sensitive language and images;
- ensuring that our activities bring forward marginalised voices and address systemic discrimination.

The *Implementation Guidelines for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy*⁹ inform our actions in this regard.

2. Human rights-based approach

Human rights are guiding principles in all our activities. Solidarity is understood, among other things, as a means to redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power. It integrates the fulfilment of rights as an essential condition and a key leverage to achieving sustainable solidarity.

We systematically apply a human rights-based approach in our activities. We firmly believe that every activity is an opportunity to learn how to exercise one's rights, to uphold the rights of others and to combat discrimination. We empower civil society organisations, volunteering organisations, political bodies and young people to support volunteering and solidarity in their communities and to contribute to the prohibition, prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination.

We strive to promote through our activities a diversity of cultural and religious practices, political or ideological theories and perspectives, in so far as their practices are not in contradiction with human rights principles. We aim to create working environments, learning spaces, resources and communicate in a way that respects the rights of all people directly or indirectly involved.

3. Active citizenship

We promote and contribute to the development of democracy. Through our programmes we aim to create a culture of democracy and support agents of voluntary engagement to

⁹ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/implementation-guidelines-erasmus-and-european-solidarity-corps-inclusion-and-diversity-strategy>

develop their competences to be active citizens in democratic societies. While we strive for diversity of opinions and support freedom of thought, opinions that are contrary to democratic values and human rights are not promoted in our activities.

4. Gender mainstreaming

A gender perspective is integrated into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of our activities, in order to promote equality between all genders and combat discrimination. We promote an intersectional approach of understanding gender, as well as standpoint feminism, while committing to reflecting these principles in the recruitments of experts and participants, in the way we research and promote solidarity, in the way we organise and communicate our activities. We understand that this is an ever evolving field which requires changes in the actions as well as in the language use and commit to engaging in reflections upon the language used and to update our practices accordingly.

5. Transparency

Our work is guided by the principles of openness, communication and accountability. We strive for an open, honest and direct communication within our organisation, with our collaborators and partners and with the general public. The process of recruiting experts and participants is public, transparent and based on non-discriminatory criteria.

Relevant resource materials and final official reports of our activities are offered through open access and are disseminated to the general public to the extent they are seen relevant and comply with the General Data Protection Regulation as a Regulation as established by EU law. When relevant, we consult young people and other relevant stakeholders with regards to our activities and programmes.

6. Promoting a sustainable green lifestyle

We promote and contribute to sustainable development. Through our programs we raise awareness about the climate crisis and sustainability and about the importance of dealing with eco-anxiety among young people. We support agents of voluntary engagement to act for a sustainable future, as well as to support young people to act sustainably, both in the way they consume, participate in the ESC programme and in the expectations they have from public institutions to pass relevant legislation. Our organisational culture is focused on sustainable practices that we communicate to our partners and collaborators.

7. Networking and cooperation

We work towards developing meaningful cooperation with other SALTOS, with National Agencies as well as with other partners and stakeholders. In order to be up-to-date and to foster innovation, we consult relevant experts in designing our activities and we openly

share the results and products of our activities. We are committed to ensuring knowledge transfer and creating synergies among various stakeholders involved in promoting and supporting solidarity and volunteering.

8. Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Our activities are developed according to our strategic planning. Monitoring on a regular basis is ensured with the aim to check our progress and to learn how to do better in the future. Evaluation is carried out at the end of each activity, as well as at the end of specific periods, according to our strategy. We keep an open mind in everything we do and we strive to continuously learn about and from our target groups regarding their context, needs and worldviews, as well as about current developments in the fields of solidarity and volunteering.

B. Specific Standards for Events

Quality in the events organised by SALTO European Solidarity Corps refers to the following series of aspects to be implemented throughout all phases of the activity, through the continuous effort of all responsible actors (staff, external experts, organisational and institutional partners).

1. Relevant aims based on concrete needs

The events are designed as a response to societal and humanitarian challenges in Europe, in line with the political priorities identified by the European Commission for the youth sector. The main aim of the events is to create opportunities for organisations, national agencies and other stakeholders involved in solidarity projects to strengthen their efforts and to respond to the priorities of the ESC Programme. Besides the institutional priorities, each activity takes into account the specific learning needs of the participants, which it strives to identify through various measures and to address in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the events. The overarching aim of each activity, as well as the specific competences aimed to be developed are made clear to all stakeholders involved.

2. Achievable and assessable objectives

Each activity has specific objectives which can be achieved by implementing the programme designed by the team of experts. The objectives of the activity are contributing towards addressing the societal challenges and the learners' needs identified and are in line with SALTO European Solidarity Corps' strategy. The objectives are linked with specific competences to be developed in the area of solidarity and volunteering.

3. Competence-based approach

SALTO European Solidarity Corps embraces the competence-based approaches promoted through the European Training Strategy¹⁰ and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture¹¹. These references are used to select and define competences, in relation to the aim of each activity and the participants' learning needs. Concrete evaluation measures are designed and implemented in order to assess development of competences. When relevant, the validation of these competences and learning outcomes are certified through YOUTHPASS¹².

4. Clear and transparent selection of participants

The calls for activities are open, transparent, offer equal opportunities and try to reach wide, diverse and relevant target groups. SALTO European Solidarity Corps decides together with the partners the profile of the expected participants and the selection criteria which correspond to our transversal standards are communicated to all partners involved, in due time. All applications are acknowledged and applicants are informed whether they were selected or not in due time, in order to allow for proper time to arrange all travel related aspects. The selection takes into account the possibility for the applicant to bring about change and benefit his/her community.

5. Thorough and timely preparation

The events are anchored in a thorough preparatory phase, with clear milestones and timely engagement of the team and additional experts or resource persons. Each activity has a preparatory process which includes one or more preparatory meetings. The preparatory meetings have clear agendas, agreed by all participants. Enough time is allocated in the meetings to ensure that all members of the team have a similar understanding of the main topics of the training. A clear and detailed work plan is created in the meeting, defining the tasks, responsible people, timeline and ways of communication. An educational script is prepared before the event, to ensure common understanding and smooth changes, should unexpected situations occur. During the events, the team of facilitators has regular meetings to check the progress and adapt according to how the participants are responding.

¹⁰ <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/trainingstrategy/>

¹¹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture>

¹² <https://youthpass.eu>

6. A competent team of experts

As per the ETS Competence Model for Trainers¹³ trainers and facilitators are a core element in the success of an event. Their professional expertise and their ability to perform within the specific framework of each event impacts the quality activity in a crucial way. The facilitators involved in our activities are aware of the values and quality standards promoted by SALTO European Solidarity Corps, embrace them and are able to put them in practice

External experts (facilitators, trainers, speakers, rapporteurs, etc.) are selected through a selection process based on clear criteria, in accordance with our transversal standards. While we strive primarily for open calls, we understand that sometimes, the best way to proceed is through closed calls or direct invitation. Regardless of the selection procedure, the standards and criteria are always respected. Moreover, when the decision to launch a closed call or a direct invitation is taken, no “fake open calls” are organised. The composition of the teams facilitating our events reflects gender, geographical and cultural diversity, as well as diverse theoretical expertise and practical experience.

7. Participatory approaches

The activities are designed based on the principles of non-formal learning. They are participatory and voluntary, leading to competence development and action-oriented results. The methods favour the balanced development of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding and engage learners actively in the educational process. Debriefing plays an important role in the educational process. Whenever relevant, the training programme makes use of the potential of new technologies of information to ensure active participation and effective organisation.

8. Safe, inclusive and engaging space

The trainers strive to create an atmosphere which is safe for participants to express their opinions and clarify their values, enabling them to work towards cooperation and mutual respect. The management of the space aligns with the transversal standards for green and sustainable lifestyle. Intentional actions are taken to ensure physical safety and safety from sexual harassment.

The activities take place in a space that is inclusive, ensuring the access of participants with limited mobility or visual and auditory impairment. Inclusion also requires teams of facilitators to pay attention to all other aspects (such as linguistic, cultural, socio-economic) which could prevent them from fully participating in or attending certain activities.

¹³ <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/trainercompetencedevelopment/trainercompetences/>

9. Evaluation

An evaluation process is embedded in all activities. The tools for monitoring and assessing the quality of the activities (templates for evaluation forms and reports) are based on the use of qualitative and quantitative indicators to assess relevant aspects: achievement of objectives, competence development, organisational aspects, etc.) The evaluation process and methods are discussed in the preparation phase of the event. The methods used allow participants to express their opinion in a safe space. An evaluation meeting by the team takes place after each event.

10. Documentation and Reporting

Documentation and reporting is done both for organisational memory and for informing specific stakeholders and the general public about our activities. The extent of the documentation and reporting, as well as the means (photo, video, text, etc.) is decided according to the specificities of each event and is discussed in preparatory meetings. The reports are drafted with the aim to be useful for our future activities and/or for the activities of other stakeholders in the field. A balance is sought between providing all the relevant information and ensuring a proper length of the report.

C. Specific Standards for Resources Developed

1. Innovation and usefulness

The resources we develop are in line with the current research findings, as well as with the latest documents published by the European Union and other relevant international organisations. The resources promote solidarity and volunteering as core values in Europe, challenge its readers to critically analyse their own worldviews and inspire them to become active European citizens. The resources are meant not (only) to answer questions, but rather to ask questions which invite reflections and stimulate future research, discussions; they are meant to fill a gap and to complement existing theory and practice related to solidarity and volunteering, as well as to respond to specific needs of relevant actors.

2. Accessibility

Special consideration is given to ensuring that the text, design and means of dissemination are adapted to the specific groups that are targeted by each resource. All our resources are freely available online and easy to find. Whenever possible, we strive to have our publications/videos translated in various languages, accessible for persons who are visually impaired or hard-of-hearing. Information about public use and translation of our resources is provided in each resource and on our website.

D. Specific Standards for Communication

The quality standards for communication are meant to ensure that the organisation's brand is employed consistently to deliver messages which are compatible with its vision and mission.

1. Transparency and accountability

All SALTO European Solidarity Corps activities are promoted through online and offline means of communication and are accessible without discrimination and designed to reach diverse target groups and a wide audience. When communicating about our activities, we make sure that the information circulated is in line with the General Data Protection Regulation in the European Union and with our transversal standards.

2. Consistency

A communication strategy is drafted for each activity and continuously adjusted, according to the progress of the activity and the general context in Europe. The application of the communication strategy ensures that: our target public has access to regular and specific messages, adapted to various target groups; the information is provided in user-friendly and accessible ways; and there is a way for providing feed-back and/or asking for further clarifications.

3. Standardised format

The messages transmitted by us and re-distributed by our partners bear the logo and are in line with the visual identity of SALTO European Solidarity Corps and the European Solidarity Corps programme. The partners - National Agencies, solidarity projects organisers, mentors, volunteers, municipalities and other beneficiaries of our activities are made aware of our communication standards.