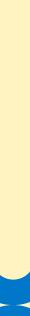


SAFEGUARDING GUIDELINES

Developing and enhancing Safeguarding Policies in organisations participating in the European Solidarity Corps Programme



SALTO European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre



INDEX

INTRODUCTION	3	CODE OF CONDUCT	14
Effective safeguarding practices are essential to creating safe, respectful and supportive environments for everyone involved in volunteering.	5	REPORTING AND ESCALATION MECHANISM	17
Who Should Use These Guidelines?	5	RISK MITIGATION AND PREVENTION	19
Understanding the complexities of Safeguarding	6	BEST PRACTICES	
Organisational Challenges in Safeguarding	7	DESTFRACTICES	21
WHAT IS A SAFEGUARDING POLICY?	8	RESOURCES & FURTHER INFORMATION	
Steps to Creating or Renewing an Organisational Policy	9	ANNEX	24
Implementing an Organisational Policy	12	Conducting an Organisational Needs Assessment	24
Monitoring and Evaluating the Organisational	13	Safeguarding Role Competences within an Organisation	27
Safeguarding Policy and Approach	15	Example of an Emergency Fact sheet:	29









INTRODUCTION

Safeguarding as a Foundation for Preparedness and Resilient Communities

A strong safeguarding policy plays a crucial role in creating a culture of preparedness and fostering resilient communities. By ensuring the safety and well-being of volunteers, such policies not only protect individuals but also lay the groundwork for trust, stability, and long-term community engagement. Safeguarding, therefore, becomes an essential element in empowering young people to build personal resilience and contribute meaningfully to the resilience of their communities.

Volunteering contributes significantly to preparedness by equipping young people with life skills, intercultural awareness, and problem-solving competencies. When embedded in safe environments, these experiences support young people in becoming adaptable, confident, and socially engaged citizens — key traits of resilient individuals and communities.

Why These Guidelines Matter

These Safeguarding Guidelines for Volunteering Organisations in Europe aim to support all types of organisations — both those already working with safeguarding measures and those just starting this journey.

For organisations without existing policies, the guidelines offer a clear foundation and practical steps to establish a safeguarding culture.

For those with established measures, they serve as a reflective tool to review, strengthen, and validate existing practices.

This guidance is part of a broader effort by the Strategic National Agencies Cooperation on Volunteering (SNAC vol), coordinated by the SALTO European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre, to enhance the quality, safety, and impact of youth volunteering in Europe.

In particular, the guidelines provide:

- An introduction to what a safeguarding policy can look like
- Practical advice on implementing a Code of Conduct
- Tools to ensure continuous improvement of safeguarding practices

Creating Safe Environments: A Shared Responsibility

Volunteers expect their hosting organisations to provide a safe space to **work**, **live**, **and learn**. They need to know that there are people within the organisation who will support them when things do not go as planned.

As a staff member of an organisation or mentor, you have the responsibility — and the opportunity — to shape that secure and nurturing environment. Doing so not only improves the **quality of the project** and the **volunteer's personal experience**, but also provides a healthy and empowering environment in which young people can thrive.

Organisations with **robust safeguarding policies** build trust among all stakeholders — staff, volunteers, participants, and the wider community. This trust is critical for resilience, especially in times of uncertainty or crisis.

Implementing a safeguarding policy is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Instead this document offers various options that serve to support your endeavour depending on your current context and needs.





Who are these guidelines for?



Staff members and volunteers of hosting organisations, responsible for ensuring that volunteers can work, live and learn in a **safe environment**.

Staff members and volunteers of hosting organisations, who are ready to implement safeguarding tools, such as a **code of conduct** in their organisation.

Staff members of National Agencies, supporting hosting organisations in their country to implement a safeguarding policy.

Mentors of volunteers who, as custodians of the safeguarding policy of their hosting organisation, want to contribute to creating a safe environment for the volunteers.







Effective safeguarding practices are essential to creating safe, respectful and supportive environments for everyone involved in volunteering.

One-third of adolescents (33%) experienced feeling nervous or irritable more than once a week in the last six months. One in four reported sleep difficulties (29%) and/or feeling low (25%). One in five (20%) reported having headaches more than once a week.

WHO & HBSC

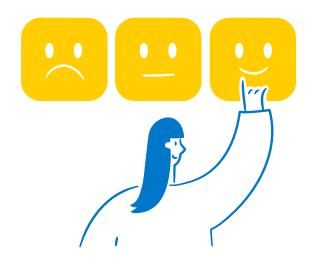


One in seven young people aged 10–19 years old, suffers from a mental disorder, and not all of them have the same access to mental health services.

Scouting in Europe, EU Election Call to Action*

Quality is vital to hosting (young) volunteers. They rely on the organisation to create a safe space for them to volunteer and learn. It is important to double-check if the necessary steps are taken to ensure this and to explore ways of improvement, working together with other members of the organisation and the mentor.

As part of the Quality Label, hosting organisations need to demonstrate how they can guarantee a safe living and working environment for the volunteers. Thus all hosting organisations are invited to integrate elements of safeguarding from the very beginning of their volunteering projects. By applying for the Quality Label, the organisation has already considered key safeguarding steps and this offers a great starting point to build upon and ultimately evolve into a comprehensive, organisation-wide, systemic approach, also known as a safeguarding policy.







Who Should Use These Guidelines?

As mentioned before, these guidelines are intended for staff members and volunteers of hosting organisations, mentors and other people connected to a volunteering project to ensure that (young) volunteers can work, live and learn in a safe environment.

Many hosting organisations already have safeguarding practices in place — even if not formally recognised as such. Responding to challenges like the pandemic, extreme weather, staff or mentor turnover, inappropriate behaviour between volunteers or supporting volunteers with diverse needs is often part of everyday operations. Creating a safe environment for volunteers is already embedded in the work.

Documenting this experience in a safeguarding policy or code of conduct helps consolidate existing practices, retain organisational knowledge, and reduce the need to constantly start from scratch.

If the hosting organisation is taking their first steps toward a safeguarding policy a **Code of Conduct** can be a great place to start because it provides them with a starting point to discuss safeguarding with all involved actors (staff members and volunteers of the hosting organisation, mentors and volunteers) and encourages them to incorporate the local and national legal context of their country on youth work. A context that is mostly unknown to volunteers who come from all over Europe so these are very important conversations to have from the start of every volunteer's project.

To help reflect on what is already in place, here are some questions for consideration:

Reflection Questions for staff members & volunteers within Hosting Organisations

- Why is safeguarding important to you personally? Why is it import ant to your organisation?
- Describe the young people/volunteers you have hosted over time, considering their age range, backgrounds, and any challenges the have faced due to fewer opportunities. How has the profile of your volunteers evolved over the years, and what factors have driven these changes?
- What do you consider your organisation's good practices in ensuring a safe environment for your volunteers? What are you doing well? What makes you proud?
- What are your mentors doing particularly well in supporting volunteers? How can you further support your mentors to foster a safe and effective learning environment for the volunteers in their care?
- What systems and/or processes do you already have in place that could help you work towards enhancing safeguarding within your organisation?

Reflection Questions for Mentors

- Why is safeguarding important to the hosting organisation?
- What role do you play in supporting safeguarding for the volunteers?
- What do you consider your best practices as a mentor when it comes to creating a safe learning environment for volunteers?
- How can the hosting organisation better support you in your role as a mentor to create a safer learning environment for volunteers?
- Embarking on the journey to strengthen safeguarding may feel overwhelming at first. It's important to keep in mind that progress should reflect each organisation's specific context, priorities, and capacity.



Safeguarding







Understanding the complexities of Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a multifaceted issue that affects us all, regardless of our personal or professional backgrounds. To address safeguarding challenges effectively, it is essential to acknowledge the diverse realities volunteers may face, as well as the organisational hurdles that need to be navigated. Below are some scenarios that highlight these complexities:



A volunteer confides in their trainer during on-arrival training that they are feeling suicidal but have not disclosed their ongoing mental health struggles to the hosting organisation. The trainer, with the permission of the volunteer to disclose what is going on with them, reaches out to you for guidance on the next steps. This scenario underscores the importance of creating a supportive environment where volunteers feel safe to share their struggles and receive the necessary support when they return from the training event. This is an example that will be handled differently depending on the national context.

2. Inappropriate Behaviour from Leadership

Imagine a volunteer meeting with a senior leader who makes inappropriate or sexual comments. This situation shows the critical need for establishing and maintaining clear boundaries and ensuring that leadership sets a positive example for all team members.

3. Homesickness & Emotional Support

A volunteer, feeling homesick, opens up to their mentor, who feels unsure about how to provide adequate support. This situation illustrates the necessity for mentors to have access to training and resources to effectively support volunteers emotionally.



4. Natural Disasters

Consider a volunteer staying in a region affected by a sudden natural disaster, such as an earthquake or flood. Although the volunteers are safe, they are deeply shaken, and the local infrastructure is severely impacted. This scenario emphasises the need for robust emergency protocols and emotional support mechanisms for volunteers during crises like natural disasters, war, a pandemic etc.

5. Inappropriate behaviour among volunteers

A volunteer enters another volunteer's room without permission and talks to the volunteer in a disrespectful manner. This example shows the need for establishing and maintaining clear boundaries between volunteers who live or work in the same place. In this situation it is also important to build a common understanding of what appropriate and inappropriate behaviour between volunteers is since volunteers from different cultures and backgrounds may have a different understanding of what appropriate behaviour looks like in practice in the country they are volunteering in.





Organisational Challenges in Safeguarding

Each organisation faces unique challenges that can complicate safeguarding efforts. Recognising these challenges is the first step towards fostering a culture of safety and accountability:

Lack of Understanding or Buy-In

Some staff may question the necessity of formal safeguarding processes, believing that issues can be addressed informally. This mindset can undermine the importance of a structured approach to safeguarding.

Fear of Repercussions

There may be concerns about how reporting safeguarding issues could affect the organisation's reputation, funding, or the individuals involved. Addressing these fears is crucial to creating an environment where concerns can be raised without fear of negative consequences.

Unclear Reporting Systems

When staff and volunteers are unsure of how to report safeguarding concerns, or feel intimidated by the process, it hinders effective responses. Clear and accessible reporting mechanisms must be established to empower everyone to speak up.

Cultural Context

Safeguarding practices that work well in one cultural context may not be as effective in another. It is essential to adapt safeguarding measures to the cultural realities of each environment to ensure they are relevant and actionable.

Moving Forward Together

As you navigate these complex realities, it is crucial to foster a shared commitment to safeguarding across the organisation. By reflecting on these scenarios and acknowledging the challenges you face, you can work together to create a safer, more supportive environment for all volunteers and staff. This document is designed to serve as a framework for understanding your responsibilities and enhancing your safeguarding practices, ensuring that you not only protect individuals but also uphold the integrity and reputation of your organisation.

WHAT IS A SAFE-GUARDING POLICY?

A safeguarding policy is designed to protect children, young people, and adults from harm, abuse, and exploitation. It outlines the organisation's commitment to creating a safe environment and establishes a framework for safeguarding practices. This policy includes a clear statement affirming the organisation's zero-tolerance approach to any form of abuse, exploitation, harassment, or discrimination, ensuring the safety and well-being of everyone involved.

Principles for Safeguarding

- 1. Prevention Before Intervention
- 2. Do No Harm
- 3. Empowerment
- 4. Dignity







Steps to Creating or Renewing an Organisational Policy

Below is a list of steps for creating or renewing an organisational policy. We, the authors, recognise that there is an immense diversity among organisations active within the European Solidarity Corps. As mentioned earlier, the process is not about doing everything at once or immediately. It is about taking gradual steps towards a safeguarding policy that reflects your organisation's unique context and reality.



1. Appoint a Team

To develop a robust safeguarding policy, it is essential to begin by appointing a dedicated team within your organisation. By assembling a knowledgeable and diverse team, your organisation will be better equipped to develop a comprehensive and effective safeguarding policy that ensures a safe environment for the volunteers you host.

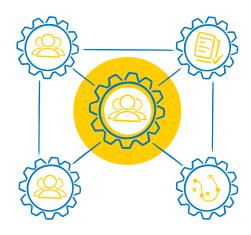
Key points to consider:

Representation

Ensure the team includes representatives from various backgrounds, departments and levels within the organisation. This should involve individuals whose roles are relevant to safeguarding and who can offer a wide range of perspectives. Make sure to include those responsible for hosting the volunteers, mentors and even former volunteers in this process, as they have a good understanding of the challenges faced by volunteers in the past and those that may arise in the future.

Knowledge and Decision-Making Power

Members of the team should have a clear understanding of safeguarding issues and possess the decision-making authority required to implement the steps related to policy development.



Team Size

A working group of 3-5 people is recommended. This allows for diverse input and ensures the capacity to progress with their mandate.

External Experts

Collaborate with external experts who can offer valuable knowledge and practical experience. This may include insights into legal frameworks, procedures from other organisations, and national best practices in safeguarding.

2. Organisational Review & Needs Assessment

To ensure your safeguarding policy is comprehensive and effective, start by conducting a thorough needs assessment, even if you already have an existing policy or practice. Reviewing the organisation's needs assessment can help identify areas for improvement and ensure your safeguarding policy is both effective and aligned with best practices.

Examine Existing Practices and Policies

Review your current safeguarding practices, policies, and procedures. Identify elements that are already in place and consider how they can be formalised or improved. You may have already described some of these elements in the Quality Label application which you can refer to for guidance. In the Quality Label you already need to specify how you plan to support the volunteer and how you will handle risk assessment and management.





What you describe there can be used in your safeguarding policy or specified and adjusted when you take further steps in your safeguarding policy.

Identify Strengths and Weaknesses

Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your existing safeguarding measures. Determine which areas are effective and which require improvement or additional resources.

Gap Analysis

Identify any gaps in your current safeguarding policy. Reflect on challenges you have faced with volunteers regarding their safety that are not yet addressed in your policy. Consider aspects such as reporting procedures, staff training, and protective measures that may be missing or insufficient.

Gather Input from Stakeholders

Seek feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, including staff, mentors, current and former volunteers, beneficiaries, and external partners. Understand their perspectives, experiences, and concerns regarding safeguarding within your organisation. Also, consider the other partners in the European Solidarity Corps Volunteeringtriangle, such as the sending and coordinating organisations, as well as the volunteers themselves.

Review Previous Volunteering Experiences

Using the information and data you have gathered, it is important to conduct a thorough review of the various experiences and profiles of volunteers.

Which young people/volunteers have you hosted or supported as a mentor? Think of their age range, background, fewer opportunities etc. If you were to create a profile of your volunteers, what would that look like? Has it changed over time? Why, or why not? What insights can you gain from their final report that will help improve or amplify the experience for future volunteers?

Public Information

Review any materials, reports, or public statements related to safe-

guarding published by authorities in the field you operate in. For example, if you are a youth organisation, you can examine materials published by the National Agency, the Ministries relevant to volunteering (such as the Ministry of Youth, Education, or Internal Affairs), and national or local Youth Councils. This is important to ensure that your policies and practices align with those of the relevant authorities in your field.

An example of how to conduct an organisational needs assessment is provided in **Annex**.

3. Define Goals for Safeguarding

Based on the outcomes of your organisational review and needs assessment, the next step is to clearly define the goals and objectives of your safeguarding policy and approach. By establishing clear and actionable objectives, your organisation can focus its efforts on specific areas that will enhance the effectiveness of your safeguarding policy and practices.

- Outline the specific goals your safeguarding policy aims to achieve.
- Identify and prioritise the key areas that need attention in order to make progress on your safeguarding approach for ESC volunteers.
- Define clear and actionable objectives to achieve these goals.
- Ensure these objectives align with your organisation's overall mission and values, reinforcing your commitment to safeguarding.

4. Action Planning

Once you have defined the objectives of your safeguarding policy and approach, the next step is to create an action plan to ensure they are met. An action plan helps you systematically work towards achieving your safeguarding policy objectives, ensuring that all necessary steps are taken in a timely and effective manner.

Identify Key Actions

Based on your objectives, list the key actions required to achieve each goal (you may have already done this in the previous step).





Set Milestones

Establish clear milestones to track progress and ensure you stay on course to meet your objectives.

Assign Responsibilities

Define who is responsible for each action to ensure accountability and effective workload distribution.

Identify Resources

Identify the necessary resources, such as budget, personnel, and materials, to support each action.

Establish a Timeline

Create a detailed timeline that outlines when each action will be completed. This timeline should be shareable with different stakeholders when necessary.

5. Identify Resources & Structural Requirements

To effectively implement your safeguarding policy and action plan, it is crucial to identify the necessary resources and structural requirements. This ensures that you have the right tools, people, and processes in place to achieve your goals. By identifying these resources and structural requirements, you can ensure the organisation is well-equipped to realise your safeguarding objectives and action plan.

Identify the specific resources needed to support the safeguarding efforts outlined in your action plan.

Identify and involve key stakeholders who will play a critical role in implementing and sustaining the safeguarding policy.

Define clear reporting lines and decision-making structures to ensure accountability and effective communication. (You may also need to pause and review the organisational structure to ensure that it supports the implementation of the safeguarding policy).

Plan for the long-term sustainability of your safeguarding efforts.

6. Drafting the Policy

Drafting the safeguarding policy is a critical step that involves creating a comprehensive document that outlines all necessary rules, guidelines, and regulations. Using the information gathered during your objective-setting and planning phase will ensure that all essential elements are included in the policy.

A possible format could include:

- Introduction, Definitions and the 'Why'
- Roles & Responsibilities
- Procedures for Responding to Concerns and Reporting
- Legal and Regulatory Requirements

7. Verify & validate

Before finalising the draft, conduct thorough checks to ensure the policy is robust and practical for the different users and structures within the organisation.

Remember, a policy needs to be understood at every level to be effective at every level.

- Use clear and accessible language so that all staff and stakeholders can easily understand the document.
- Consider translating the policy into multiple languages, if applicable, to ensure it is accessible to all.

Circulate the draft policy among key stakeholders and collaborate with external experts to gather feedback, then make necessary revisions based on this input.

8. Final review

The final review and approval process is crucial to ensure that the safeguarding policy is comprehensive, practical, and ready for implementation. Once all revisions have been made, prepare the final draft of the safeguarding policy.

After receiving approval, formally adopt the policy as an official document of the organisation.





Implementing an Organisational Policy

Implementing a safeguarding policy involves several key steps to ensure it is effectively communicated, understood, and put into practice across the organisation. These steps may vary and can be adjusted from organisation to organisation, based on their capacity, resources, and local context.

1. Communication

Dissemination

Distribute the safeguarding policy widely within the organisation. Make sure it is accessible to all staff, volunteers, participants, and external partners. Utilise multiple communication channels such as emails, meetings, and online platforms to reach all stakeholders.

Roles & Responsibilities

Clearly outline and communicate the roles and responsibilities of all key stakeholders, including staff, volunteers, participants, partners, and relevant authorities. Ensure everyone understands their part in safeguarding individuals. Key stakeholders should be engaged early on in the process of the development and review of the safeguarding policy. Their involvement is essential during the implementation stage, as they provide strong advocacy, clear ownership, and a commitment to the policy's success.

Regular Updates

Provide regular updates on safeguarding initiatives and progress through newsletters, emails, meetings, and other internal communication channels.

2. Training & Capacity Building

Organise comprehensive training sessions for all staff and volunteers. These sessions should cover the details of the new or updated safeguarding policy, clearly outlining their roles and responsibilities, and the procedures for reporting concerns.

Provide targeted training for mentors and those in key safeguarding roles to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to effectively support and oversee safeguarding practices.

3. Tools & Resources

Create and provide practical tools and resources to support the implementation of the safeguarding policy.

- Develop clear guidelines and checklists to help staff and volunteers adhere to safeguarding procedures.
- Provide standardised forms for reporting safeguarding concerns and incidents to ensure consistency and ease of use.
- Produce easy-to-understand information sheets summarising key aspects of the safeguarding policy for quick reference.
- Ensure all tools and resources are easily accessible to everyone in the organisation, both online and in print, as needed.







Monitoring and Evaluating the Organisational Safeguarding Policy and Approach

Effective safeguarding requires ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and review (MER) to ensure that policies and procedures remain compliant, effective, and responsive to evolving needs and standards. Regular monitoring, evaluation, and review help create a culture of continuous improvement and accountability, enhancing the overall safeguarding framework.

1. Mechanisms for Monitoring

Establish clear mechanisms for continuously monitoring the implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures.

- Create a robust system for reporting and documenting safeguarding incidents, ensuring it is both accessible and confidential.
- Develop checklists to regularly assess compliance with safeguarding policies and use them during routine inspections or audits.

- Define Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to safeguarding, such as the number of reported incidents, response times, and training completion rates, and monitor them regularly.
- Collect feedback from staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries through surveys to gauge their understanding and perception of safeguarding practices.
- Conduct interviews and focus groups to gather deeper insights into the effectiveness of current safeguarding measures and identify areas for improvement.
- Regularly review safeguarding cases to analyse trends, highlight successes, and pinpoint areas in need of improvement.

2. Scheduled Reviews

Establish a schedule for periodic reviews of the safeguarding policy and approach.

- Include feedback from incident reports, audits, and evaluations.
- Confirm that any changes in legislation, regulatory requirements or best practices are acknowledged.
- Document all revisions and ensure that updated versions of the policy are disseminated to all relevant stakeholders.

3. Collect Feedback

Actively seek feedback from all levels of the organisation to ensure the safeguarding policy remains relevant and effective.

- Provide channels for anonymous feedback to allow individuals to voice concerns or suggestions without fear of repercussions.
- Schedule regular check-ins with staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries to discuss safeguarding practices and gather feedback.



Safeguarding





CODE OF CONDUCT

What is a Code of Conduct?

A safeguarding policy and a code of conduct serve different but complementary purposes within an organisation, particularly in the context of protecting individuals and upholding ethical standards.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines a code of conduct as: "A set of rules that members of an organisation or people with a particular job or position must follow" (Cambridge Dictionary)

A code of conduct outlines the expected behaviours and ethical standards for all members of the organisation, including staff, volunteers, and other stakeholders. It serves as a guide to acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, promoting integrity, professionalism, and respect.

A code of conduct is where the volunteers are actively involved in the safeguarding policy and are given a specific role in it.

You may have come across the code of conduct as a **code of ethics**, which professional organisations adopt to ensure that all professionals in the given field have the same set of core values, ethical principles, and standards of professional behaviour. For example, an internationally recognised ethical and professional standard for doctors is to keep their patients' medical information confidential.

In other words, while a code of ethics is for an entire profession, a code of conduct is tailored to the unique needs and standards of the specific organisation.

Integrating a Code of Conduct

A Code of conduct is well worth having as it makes it very clear to everyone involved what the rules are concerning European Solidarity Corps volunteers, both for all staff members in the hosting organisation and the volunteers. It provides a framework for what behaviours are considered 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' and serves as a clear reference point for addressing unwanted behaviour.

The Activity Agreement is currently the document where all parties involved (the hosting organisation, volunteer and sending organisation) agree on the volunteer's tasks, living arrangements, allowances, and other logistical or technical aspects. In other words, it serves as a very practical contract that sets out a clear framework and can be used by all the involved parties to address any issues that may arise. This is why it would make sense to also include or refer to a separate Code of Conduct which focuses not on practicalities but on the desired behaviours of everyone involved.

If your country has a code of ethics for youth workers, you must follow that as a primary guide, especially if your organisation is involved in youth work. In addition, you should develop and implement a specific code of conduct for the European Solidarity Corps volunteers you host. It is essential to ensure that the expected behaviours of both staff members and volunteers towards European Solidarity Corps volunteers are clearly outlined and remain consistent from year to year. When everyone involved in the European Solidarity Corps Volunteering within your organisation understands and follows the Code of Conduct, it becomes much easier to identify and address any problems that may occur. This clarity helps maintain a positive and supportive environment for all the parties.





If your country does not have a Code of Ethics for youth workers or other professionals in your organisation, it is in your hands to define the rules for ethical behaviour for everyone working with the European Solidarity Corps volunteers, including the volunteers themselves.

You can incorporate elements of the code of conduct into the activity agreement or reference a separate code of conduct that is included as part of the contract between your organisation, the volunteers, and the sending organisation. It is important to ensure that everyone involved has ongoing access to this document and that it clearly outlines procedures for addressing any issues that may arise.

Example elements for a code of conduct

□ I will be respectful, tolerant, and considerate of other people and their cultures.
 □ I will proactively create an inclusive and respectful environ ment to enable a safe space for learning, exchanging ideas, and collaboration.
 □ I will treat everyone equally, irrespective of their gender, age, race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, socio-economic background, disabilities, sexual orientation, gender expression, or any other basis of discrimination, abstaining from any direct or indirect discrimination as well as any form of harassment.
 □ I understand that it is my responsibility to seek and receive consent before engaging in private communication or intimate relations.
 □ I will keep the volunteer's information private and confidential.

The code of conduct can also include rules on how the volunteers should treat the target groups they work with, such as children, people with disabilities, etc.

Reflection questions

To assist you in the process of developing a code of conduct, the following reflections are designed to help guide your process:

- Who should be involved in developing your code of conduct (e.g., staff, volunteers, mentors, former volunteers)?
- What should be included in the activity agreement? What should belong in a separate code of conduct? How do these two complement and reinforce each other?
- What rules would you like to include in the code of conduct?
 Considering all aspects of the volunteering experience (working places, living conditions, target groups, specific realities of the hosting countries, ...)
- How will you ensure everyone involved is aware of the code of conduct?
- What steps do you need to take to start developing the code of conduct, and how will it be documented and disseminated?
 Where will the code of conduct be stored?
- How will you ensure that everyone is aware of the code of conduct?





For organisations in countries where a code of ethics for youth workers exists, you should also think about:

- Which rules from your national code of ethics for youth workers should be incorporated into your organisation's code of conduct?
- Which existing reporting mechanisms in your country should be included in your code of conduct?

Consider establishing clear rules regarding confidentiality and privacy between the hosting organisation and the volunteers. As a representative of the hosting organisation, you must ensure that any information shared by the volunteers remains confidential, that their personal data is stored safely, and their privacy is respected, for example by not entering their rooms without prior notice or consent.

It is also important to define what information is considered confidential and what needs to be shared. For instance, if a volunteer has a medical condition that their colleagues should be aware of, it is the volunteer's responsibility to share that information appropriately.

Building trust among all parties is crucial for creating a safe learning environment for the volunteers. Volunteers should know where to report issues or seek support if they face challenges. Additionally, consider guidelines for handling money, the rules volunteers must follow when representing the organisation, and protocols for working with specific target groups, such as children, young people, or vulnerable individuals.

Finally, ensure that you have the mechanisms in place and that support is available to address any concerns or violations regarding all points within the code of conduct.









REPORTING AND ESCALATION MECHANISM

The responsibility for managing safeguarding concerns rests primarily with the hosting organisation and, when necessary, with the statutory or government agencies of the country involved.

It is also important to define the key stakeholders and their roles and responsibilities within the reporting and escalation process. These stakeholders may include the mentor, a member of the Senior Management Team, a contact person from the National

Agency (NA), a safeguarding lead, and others as appropriate. The specific roles and responsibilities will depend on your organisation and the individuals involved in safeguarding.

By following a structured approach, organisations can effectively safeguard individuals and the organisation's reputation. The simplified example below outlines the steps for handling safeguarding reports, taking into account their severity.

STAGE	STEPS	wнo
Report made	A safeguarding report or contact is made via email, verbal communication, or other staff member.	Volunteer
Initial action	 Provide immediate support through active listening and giving ample time to the individual to express themselves. Take notes (using a reporting form if available) and begin general follow-up if the matter is straightforward. If the situation is unclear or complex, escalate to the next level. Remember, never promise anything or guarantee confidentiality to the person reporting. 	Staff member / Mentor





STAGE	STEPS	WHO
Assessment of severity	 Determine if the issue requires escalation or further support. Gather further information or evidence. Assess the severity of the reported issue and take the next steps based on the level of concern: Minor concern: Proceed with general follow-up, without escalation. Moderate concern: Consult the Safeguarding Lead to agree on the required support. Major concern: Escalate immediately for urgent intervention. 	Staff member / Mentor / Safeguarding Lead (or other title in the organisation)
Action	Take appropriate actions based on the report and the safeguarding of the individual. The specific actions will vary depending on the severity of the concern.	Safeguarding Lead (or other title in the organisation)
Follow-Up	Ensure follow-up for the individuals concerned, after the report is made. For example: Provide regular updates on the progress of their report. Conduct more frequent check-ins. Offer additional support through the mentor or an external counsellor. Contact the NA.	Staff member / Mentor
Documentation	This entire process must be documented from start to finish. This ensures the entire process is followed diligently, with appropriate support and actions thoroughly discussed and provided, ultimately protecting the host organisation. Proper documentation contributes to the organisation's continuous learning and improvement in handling safeguarding concerns.	All





Remember, any staff member who receives a safeguarding report should listen actively, clarify understanding without putting words into the reporter's mouth and take detailed, verbatim notes of the report. These notes should then be shared confidentially with the relevant staff member responsible for safeguarding, and the necessary steps and escalation measures should be taken.

Minor: Low likelihood of significant harm. Any harm caused (e.g. deep offence) is unlikely to persist or can be generally resolved through mediation and/or an apology.

Moderate: Higher potential for harm. The impact may be more lasting, potentially involving a notable breach of the code of conduct, where the affected individual may feel that an apology alone is insufficient to remedy the issue.

Major: High risk of severe harm. The impact is likely to be prolonged and may involve a serious violation of the code of conduct and/ or local laws.

If minor issues occur repeatedly, they should be escalated to moderate or even serious concerns, as they may indicate deliberate intent rather than merely a mistake or ignorance.

All necessary mechanisms to protect both the volunteer and the organisation should be in place in the event of a more serious violation of any part of the safeguarding policy or code of conduct occurring, despite all the precautions taken.

Host organisations are encouraged to adapt these processes to meet their specific organisational and national needs.

RISK MITIGATION AND PREVENTION

Effective risk mitigation and prevention of safeguarding concerns are essential to ensuring the safety and well-being of all volunteers. You can minimise risks and foster a safe working and living environment that prevents harm in various ways. While you may already have various tools and processes in place, the following additional recommendations can further support the integration of safeguarding prevention into your organisation.

Risk Assessment

Understanding and assessing possible risks is the first step in prevention. This involves:

- Conducting thorough risk assessments to identify potential safe guarding risks for volunteers in their roles, within the organisation, and during events.
- Analysing risks related to factors such as the nature of any events, the context of the host location, living conditions, cultural aspects, well-being, exposure to different stakeholders, and any other relevant factors.
- Reviewing past challenges or safeguarding concerns to anticipate and mitigate potential issues in the future. This should include examining final reports of previous volunteers or discussing experiences with mentors and other parties.

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct sets clear expectations for behaviour and provides guidelines to ensure a safe and respectful environment for all participants. Key actions include:

• Incorporating relevant rules from the national code of ethics for youth workers.







- Adding specific rules tailored to mentors and volunteers, ensuring all roles are adequately covered.
- Ensuring everyone involved is aware of and understands the code oconduct.
- Establishing clear escalation and reporting lines to address breaches of the code of conduct.

It is crucial that the organisation has the capacity and plans in place to enforce the code of conduct effectively.

Supporting procedures

Different procedures should be designed or updated to support the implementation of the safeguarding policy, ensuring a consistent response to safeguarding concerns. This includes:

- Developing efficient and transparent procedures for managing safeguarding concerns, ensuring they are known and accessible to all volunteers and staff. This should comprise a range of tools, from written and verbal reporting forms to one-on-one counselling and support options outlined in the safeguarding policy.
- Establishing clear internal reporting procedures for individuals directly affected by or witnesses to safeguarding incidents. Provide specific guidelines for those receiving reports to ensure they follow a consistent approach, protect privacy, and maintain respect, leaving no room for misinterpretation.
- Scheduling regular review meetings with the safeguarding team to discuss incidents or concerns, ensuring continuous improvement of procedures and the safeguarding policy in practice.

Training

Training is crucial to equip staff and volunteers with the knowledge and skills needed to uphold the safeguarding policy effectively.

• Offer training and support to host organisations on conducting risk assessments, including detailed guidance on how and when these assessments should be conducted.

- Develop and implement training programmes covering the safeguarding policy, procedures, expected behaviours, and reporting mechanisms.
- Provide ongoing training opportunities to keep all team members informed about the latest safeguarding approaches and practices.
- Incorporate safeguarding as a module during the onboarding training for new volunteers. This should cover the policy, procedures, expectations and information on accessing support.
- Upskill staff members to enable them to offer additional wellbeing support when needed.

These approaches not only help identify and address potential risks but also contribute to fostering a culture of safety within the organisation. All team members must fully understand their roles and responsibilities in upholding the safeguarding policy and its associated procedures, ensuring that safeguarding is universally understood and prioritised across the organisation.







BEST PRACTICES

shared by participants of the residential seminar 'Ensuring Safe and Secure Environment for European Solidarity Corps Volunteers', held in September 2024 in Riga



1. Confidential letter

A recurring challenge for hosting organisations is that volunteers often do not tell them about their medical or mental health issues out of fear that this may affect their selection or that the provided information could be used against them. A confidential letter is a tool to address this issue. This document includes specific questions and clearly states that the purpose of collecting this information by the hosting organisation is to ensure the volunteer receives the necessary support and outlines who will have access to this information. This provides a safe space for the volunteer to share sensitive information.

2. 'What is an Emergency' Fact Sheet

Another common issue for hosting organisations and mentors regarding safeguarding is determining whether a late-night message from a volunteer constitutes an emergency or is a non-urgent issue that can wait until regular working hours. To address this and provide clarity for everyone involved, several organisations have created a fact sheet specifying what qualifies as an emergency, what situations the volunteer can handle independently, and when to contact the organisation or their mentor.

3. Building a network of partners

from this seminar is crucial, as all participating organisations are committed to safeguarding and are willing to work together with all involved actors to create safer environments for everyone in the European Solidarity Corps volunteering. Safeguarding should be an integral discussion topic in every European Solidarity Corps volunteering partnership.

Both documents can be included as part of either the activity agreement or the code of conduct.





RESOURCES & FURTHER INFORMATION



A variety of resources, helplines, and support services are available for individuals who have experienced harm or need assistance with safeguarding concerns. These resources offer essential support, guidance, and information to help individuals navigate challenges related to safeguarding. Organisations need to familiarise themselves with these services and ensure that individuals know how to access them when needed.

- List of external experts/contacts Ensure that your organisation can handle any safeguarding issues by identifying **who**, **where** and **how** to seek expert assistance in designing and implementing these policies and practices.
- How to conduct an organisational <u>needs assessment</u> for Safeguarding (<u>Annex</u>).
- Role description and competencies (Annex) These are key to ensuring that individuals involved in safeguarding have the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support and oversee safeguarding practices.



Practitioner Recommendations from European Solidarity Corps Organisation

'Ensuring Safe and Secure Environment for European Solidarity Corps Volunteers' (2024)

Engage National Experts

Identify national safeguarding experts who can assist organisations in implementing established guidelines. These experts should include specialists in specific areas, e.g. sexual harassment, and can also provide support with casework within the context of European Solidarity Corps volunteering.

Utilise Ambassadors

Involve former volunteers as ambassadors to share their experiences and insights, helping bridge gaps between hosting organisations and volunteers and promoting best practices.

Incorporate Volunteer Feedback

Encourage current and former volunteers to provide feedback or participate in discussions to ensure their perspectives are included in shaping safeguarding practices.

Involve Mentors

Ensure mentors are actively engaged in the process, providing feed-back on the guidelines and helping refine and improve them based on practical experience.

Build a Trust Network

Foster a network of trust where individuals can share experiences and challenges in a non-judgmental environment, thus creating a safe space for open dialogue.





Develop Tools for Vulnerable Volunteers

Create specific resources tailored to the needs of vulnerable volunteers, ensuring inclusivity by involving diverse groups, such as Roma communities or individuals from non-European countries.

Dedicate Time for Partnership Development

Allocate a significant portion of time, including during events, to understanding other organisations' initiatives, and fostering the development of new partnerships that strengthen collective safeguarding efforts.

Simplify Documentation

Produce clear, concise materials (rather than lengthy guidelines) to outline your safeguarding efforts and use concrete examples to make them engaging. This should encourage reflection on important issues while keeping the information accessible.

Website

www.salto-youth.net/rc/solidarity







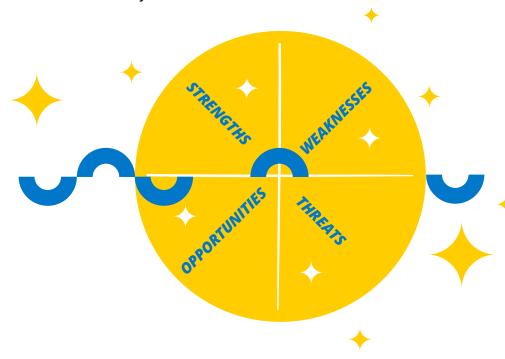


ANNEX

Conducting an Organisational Needs Assessment

To ensure your safeguarding policy is comprehensive and effective, it is crucial to conduct a thorough needs assessment. This will help identify areas for improvement and ensure that your safeguarding policy aligns with best practices. This Annex provides a structured approach for conducting a needs analysis using a SWOT framework.

SWOT Analysis Framework



STRENGTHS

- 1. What are your organisation's strengths in safeguarding?
- 2. What good practices do you have in place?
- **3.** What are you proud of regarding your safeguarding efforts?
- **4.** Who on your team is a valuable asset for safeguarding initiatives?
- 5. What comes naturally for your team in terms of safeguarding?

WEAKNESSES

- **1.** What areas in safeguarding is your organisation struggling with?
- 2. What is missing from your current practices?
- 3. Whose support do you lack?
- **4.** What specific safeguarding elements are insufficient?

OPPORTUNITIES

- **1.** What additional safeguarding initiatives could you pursue?
- **2.** What successful situations with volunteers can you build on?
- **3.** Who else in the organisation could contribute to your safeguarding efforts?
- **4.** What extra resources or practices from other organisations can you adopt?

THREATS

- 1. What potential challenges should you prepare for?
- **2.** What limitations does your organisation face regarding safeguarding?
- **3.** What contingency plans do you need to have in place for emergencies?









Partner Organisations Review

As mentioned before, this review can help in drafting a safeguarding policy with all involved stakeholders and/or determining how much safeguarding practises are already mentioned in the Activity Agreement between hosting organisation, sending/suppporting organisation, volunteer and if applicable coordinating organisation.

Based on the European Solidarity Corps triangle

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats



What are the strengths of your partner organisations in the European Solidarity Corps regarding safeguarding?

2. Weaknesses

What weaknesses do they have that you are aware of?

3. Opportunities

What collaborative opportunities exist for improving safeguarding together?

4. Threats

What potential safeguarding threats do you and your partner organisations face together?

Reflection questions

- What questions do you need to ask your partners about their safeguarding practices?
- Where do your organisations complement each other?
- Where are you weak, and how can you address these areas together?
- What changes need to be made collectively in your safeguarding approach?









Focus on Volunteers

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

1. Strengths

What are the strengths of your volunteers when it comes to safeguarding?

2. Weaknesses

What weaknesses should you be aware of?

3. Opportunities

What opportunities exist to enhance volunteer involvement in safeguarding?

4. Threats

What potential threats do volunteers face?

Volunteer Engagement

- What do you need to know about your volunteers regarding safeguarding?
- What questions should you ask them to gain further insights?
- How can you work together with volunteers to tackle safeguarding challenges?







Safeguarding Role Competences within an Organisation

Safeguarding is a fundamental responsibility that requires a dedicated and skilled team to protect the well-being of individuals, particularly those who are vulnerable. The staff tasked with safeguarding plays a pivotal role in ensuring that effective measures are in place to prevent harm and promote a safe environment. This Annex outlines the essential competences required of safeguarding personnel, emphasising their diverse responsibilities in responding to emergencies, training others, and fostering inclusive practices. And providing guidance to volunteers.

Effective safeguarding demands not only the ability to respond promptly to critical incidents but also a deep understanding of the diverse backgrounds of the individuals involved. Cultural intelligence is essential, as it enables staff to create inclusive safeguarding practices that respect and reflect the unique experiences of all community members. Furthermore, the ability to critically evaluate existing policies and practices allows safeguarding staff to identify areas for improvement, ensuring that the safeguarding framework remains robust and responsive to ever-changing needs.

Experience in managing volunteers is also crucial, as building trust and rapport with both volunteers and stakeholders enhances collaborative efforts in safeguarding. Equally important is the compassionate handling of sensitive situations, along with the ability to communicate effectively — both verbally and in writing — to ensure that information is conveyed clearly and responsibly. Finally, the capacity to identify, assess, and manage risks is central to safeguarding efforts, enabling staff to address potential threats proactively and maintain a secure environment.

Role competences

- Proficiency in responding effectively to emergencies or critical incidents related to safeguarding, ensuring immediate and appropriate actions are taken.
- Awareness and understanding of diverse backgrounds and experiences, enabling the implementation of inclusive safeguarding practices that respect and address the needs of all individuals.
- Experience in designing and delivering training programs on safeguarding policies and procedures for staff and volunteers, ensuring everyone is knowledgeable and prepared.
- Ability to critically assess situations, policies, and practices to identify gaps and areas for improvement, promoting a culture of continuous improvement in safeguarding measures.
- Expertise in managing and supporting volunteers, fostering trust and rapport with them, as well as with staff and stakeholders, to enhance collaborative safeguarding efforts.
- Capacity to handle sensitive situations with empathy and understanding, ensuring individuals feel supported and respected during challenging times.
- Strong verbal and written communication skills to ensure clear and accurate reporting, facilitating effective information sharing and documentation of safeguarding concerns.
- Competence in identifying, assessing, and managing risks associated with safeguarding, enabling proactive measures to maintain a safe environment for all.



Safeguarding







Active listening

Active Listening is a communication technique that involves fully focusing, understanding, responding to, and remembering what the speaker is saying. It goes beyond simply hearing words; it requires engagement and a genuine interest in the speaker's message. Active listeners demonstrate empathy and provide feedback, creating a supportive environment that encourages open dialogue.



Developing Active Listening Skills

1. Practice Mindfulness

Stay present during conversations by minimising distractions. Focus on the speaker, maintain eye contact, and avoid multitasking.

2. Reflect Back

After the speaker has finished, summarise what you heard to confirm your understanding. For example, "So, if I understand correctly, you feel that ..."

3. Ask Open-Ended Questions

Encourage deeper conversation by asking questions that invite elaboration such as "Can you tell me more about that?

4. Avoid Interrupting

Allow the speaker to finish their thoughts without interruption. This shows respect and ensures you fully understand their message.

5. Provide Non-Verbal Feedback

Use body language, such as nodding or leaning slightly forward, to show that you are engaged and attentive.

6. Self-Reflect

After conversations, reflect on how well you listened. Consider areas where you can improve and set goals for future interactions.





Example of an Emergency Fact sheet

- What is the emergency?
- What makes it an emergency?
- What action is required to solve this emergency?
- Can you, the volunteer, take this action?
- If yes, do you need support? Who can or should support you?
- When do you need this support? Immediately or can it wait?

If the answer is 'immediately', contact the appropriate emergency services or your emergency contact person!

If you do not need support immediately, contact your contact person or mentor during working or agreed hours.

If you can not take the action to solve the emergency. Who can?

When? Immediately or can it wait?

If the answer is 'immediately', contact the appropriate emergency services or your emergency contact person!

If you do not need support immediately, contact your contact person or mentor during working or agreed hours.











SALTO European Solidarity Corps

SALTO ESC supports National Agencies and organisations in the youth field and beyond with the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps programme. The mission is to explore the potential of solidarity as a core value in European societies and to promote the use of the European Solidarity Corps as a tool for understanding and living solidarity. SALTO ESC coordinates networking activities, training, seminars and events that will support the quality implementation of the programme and maximise its impact. By doing this, SALTO ESC contributes to building a European Solidarity Corps community of organisations. SALTO ESC is hosted by OeAD. The OeAD is the national agency for the implementation of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps in Austria. SALTO ESC is part of a European network of SALTO Resource Centres with the mission to improve the quality and impact of the EU youth programmes as well as to support and develop European youth work.

Find us online at

www.salto-youth.net, www.oead.at and www.salto-youth.net/solidarity

Strategic National Agencies Cooperation on volunteering

The development of these safeguarding guidelines is part of a broader effort by the Strategic National Agencies Cooperation on volunteering (SNAC vol), coordinated by the SALTO European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre, to enhance the quality and impact of youth volunteering in Europe.

www.salto-youth.net

Creative commons licence

This work is published under licence: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) This publication was created with the support of the European Solidarity Corps programme of the European Commission. The European Commission's support in producing this publication does not constitute an endorsement of its contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.











Editorial info Editor and Publisher: OeAD-GmbH | Ebendorferstraße 7 1010 Vienna | Headquarters: Vienna | FN 320219k | Commercial Court Vienna | ATU 64808925 | Managing Director: Jacob Calice, PhD Authors: Sian Bagshaw, Ann Daniels | Coordination: European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre | T+43 153408-0 | rc-solidarity@oead.at Graphic Design: Schneeweis Wittmann ≈ www.schneeweiswittmann.at Illustrations: streamline



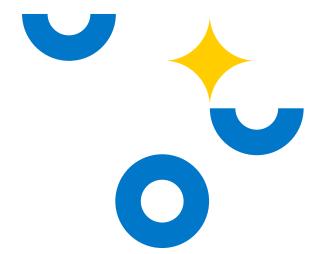














Safeguarding Guidelines