



INSPIRATIONAL SOLIDARITY PROJECTS

From Ideas to Impact: Eight Journeys
of Youth Solidarity in Action

Written by Aino Paloniemi



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 [Töpfern auf Rädern – ClayConnects, Austria](#)
- 5 [Alcohol- and drug-free social evenings, Finland](#)
- 7 [ABCD – A Black Child’s Dilemma, Ireland](#)
- 9 [Trashop, Italy](#)
- 11 [The Spectrum of Wrocław, Poland](#)
- 13 [Intergenerational fairness, St. Martin](#)
- 15 [RefreshED, Slovakia](#)
- 17 [Samen onbeperkt - Together unlimited, the Netherlands](#)
- 19 [Closing words](#)



TÖPFERN AUF RÄDERN – CLAYCONNECTS

VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Free pottery workshops for young people with fewer opportunities and from marginalised groups. These workshops provide a new means of self-expression, a tool for non-violent communication. The aim is to give people a chance to connect with nature and to create something that they can be proud of.

ClayConnects is a Solidarity Project which focuses on offering free pottery workshops for self-expression. The aim of the project is to enable young people to discover a new form of communication, a new tool to express themselves, and to help them create something by themselves that they can be proud of. By engaging in crafts, the goal is for participants to develop patience, acquire motor skills and help them find a non-violent form of communication which might have a sustainable positive impact on their lives.

The project, founded by **Makbule Temel**, 30, and a team of five people, is based in Vienna, Austria. The main target group for the project is young people who are socially or economically disadvantaged, or both. Participants may, for example, be from migrant backgrounds, refugees, have disabilities or generally complex and challenging life stories. The project collaborates with institutions such as youth centres, institutions offering daytime activities and housing for people with disabilities, and residential care homes for children and young people.

One idea was to get people off their phones for at least 3–4 hours, explains Makbule, who emphasises that they want to give attendees a chance to discover their own talents. “**Most people have so much potential they don’t even know about.**” The project focuses on pottery, but the power of handcrafts has even stronger effect on people. The whole project team has been very surprised by how emotionally overwhelming the project has been so far. Makbule says, “**It’s been more amazing than I had ever imagined. I created the project because I thought it was a nice idea, but seeing the real-life results is crazy.**”



Pottery gives people the chance to be creative, and no matter how simple it is, it opens the door for wider self-expression. First, Makbule and the project team taught themselves how to make pottery. By the halfway point of the project, they had already reached over 100 people and made over 100 pieces of pottery. The project makes pottery more accessible, because workshops are often expensive and it would not have been possible without EU funding. The project team takes care of everything, from the materials to firing the ready pieces in the kiln, so that the results are completely professional.

The conversations and creativity around the workshops have really shown Makbule and the project group how much the opportunity means to people. The project has also made people feel healthier, because some of the people who attend are dealing with mental health issues. *“Boosting the children’s self-confidence is rewarding as well. We never tell them what to do in advance, and it’s amazing what the results have been. I think it’s important that more activities like this are visible,”* Makbule says. At the end of the project, there will be an exhibition as a way of collectively recognising, cherishing and valuing their work and making the project participants feel seen. Everyone has their own reasons for taking part in the workshops and attendance at the exhibition will also be voluntary.

The people on the project team come from different backgrounds, which makes the team and group stronger. Each person has their own strengths, from graphic design to pedagogical experience. During the project, the team has acquired public speaking skills, learned how to run workshops and even become competent in conflict situations. The project has also supported Makbule’s profession, as she has been and still is a trainer specialising in youth work, inclusion, European Solidarity Corps programmes and project management. *“I’ve been getting so much through my profession and with this project I wanted to give back.”*

Some of the people and children the project team work with have experienced trauma, so the way they are treated is very important. There have not been any serious issues so far, but Makbule points out that it is sometimes hard to find time because project team members work full-time. Other than that, everything has gone well so far.

Makbule encourages others to start their own Solidarity Project. If someone has an idea, no matter how small, it is worth trying. The structure is key to the project, and there’s no need to be embarrassed about not having experience, Makbule says. There are many people out there who can support you in all kinds of things, so it is important to ask for help, which can be accessed with the help of the National Agency, Makbule adds. *“Everyone should just go for it so that they can be amazed by the results,”* Makbule says.



ALCOHOL- AND DRUG-FREE SOCIAL EVENINGS FOR YOUNG ADULTS

OULU, FINLAND

Chill and easy-going alcohol- and drug-free evenings and events for young people. The project creates a place to meet new people without the pressure of going to a bar or consuming intoxicating substances. The aim was to help young people to socialise and create spaces where everyone can be themselves and feel comfortable.

The idea behind the Solidarity Project *Alcohol- and Drug-Free Social Evenings* is to create a safe and comfortable place for young people to hang out in the city of Oulu. The place would act as an alternative to bars or nightclubs for young people who do not want to go to noisy, crowded places where people are under the influence of alcohol, explain **Riku Mustonen**, 21, and **Kafia Farhan**, 19, who are part of the project team.

In this specific place, young people have the opportunity to hang out with people their own age and get to know each other better. The project started with the question: what do young people want in their own city and what is missing? Young people came forward and shared their ideas and opinions, and then the project was implemented in the way they wished.

The young people who came to the first event contributed lots of ideas, and after a group vote, the concept called hang out lounge won. From there, they got down to work and the project continued and is still growing. *"People have made new friends and met people at our events. I feel that they have really enjoyed themselves and had a fun and safe experience with us. I hope that in the future more young adults will discover this place,"* Riku says.



Events and evening gatherings are held at the Valkea shopping centre, where there is a place called the “youth corner” where young adults can meet new people without the pressure of going to a bar or consuming intoxicating substances. Once a month, on a Friday, the space is used to host different kinds of events. There have also been collaborations with artists, such as DJs to play music and painters or other artists to give workshops and craft sessions.

During the project, Riku and Kafia have learned that they are both brave enough to run a project on their own. “My capacity and skills really are enough to deal this kind of thing,” says Riku. “I’ve learned so many different things, for example, how to help others and how to do things with these kinds of formats like the European Solidarity Corps,” Kafia says.

In Solidarity Projects, people can help others and create spaces and environments where everyone can be themselves, which is what Riku and Kafia consider most important. Perhaps in this way they can also help others to find the courage to be active in their own community. “Sometimes it is hard to contact people, and that can be frustrating over time, but there’s no use thinking that it’s too big or ambitious to have your own Solidarity Project. It is not,” Riku says.

Together with the Oulu Peace Education Institute, Riku and Kafia are running the events with approximately ten other people. The project team emphasises that they received the help they needed from adults. They have been given advice on matter such as budgeting and buying the necessary materials, which has made the whole process a lot easier.

The European Union benefits from this type of project, as it allows young people to stay active and not feel so alone, Riku and Kafia believe. They are convinced that there is potential for the concept to grow and become something bigger one day. It could also easily be replicated in other cities or countries. “We are setting an example that maybe others could follow and organise alcohol- and drug-free evenings more often, rather than just once a month or so,” Riku says.



ABCD – A BLACK CHILD’S DILEMMA

CORK, IRELAND

Hip hop, poetry and storytelling workshops to help young people to express themselves and feel more connected. The project focuses on exploring identity and belonging through workshops and was developed after COVID as a way for young people to reconnect, explore identity and share experiences.

The Solidarity Project that started it all is called *ABCD – A Black Child’s Dilemma* and focused on exploring identity and belonging through creative workshops. The project was founded in 2020 and it started online based on an idea that five people had during the COVID pandemic to enable young people, especially those in immigration centres, to reconnect and share their experiences. The story this Solidarity Project continues today, with **Raphael Olympio**, 29, connecting young people with the power of hip hop, poetry and storytelling.

“The project evolved over the years and became a mixture of multiple themes related to music, self-expression and mental health,” Raphael explains. It all began with the project, and today Raphael uses creativity to rehabilitate young people struggling with their mental health. Participants create lyrics from different themes around racism and discrimination, and the more they perform the lyrics, the more they feel heard. The project team manages to mix and master their music. In this way, the project boosted participants’ confidence and the message spread. The project became so prominent that a corporation funded a complete music studio for them.



The sense of belonging comes from the ability to improve one's language skills, Raphael emphasises. English is rarely a migrant's first language, but their proficiency improved significantly when people used it in a free and open space and mixed it with their own language when doing poetry and rapping. It became even more powerful when policy makers began attending in order to listen to the issues people raised and information about their views was disseminated.

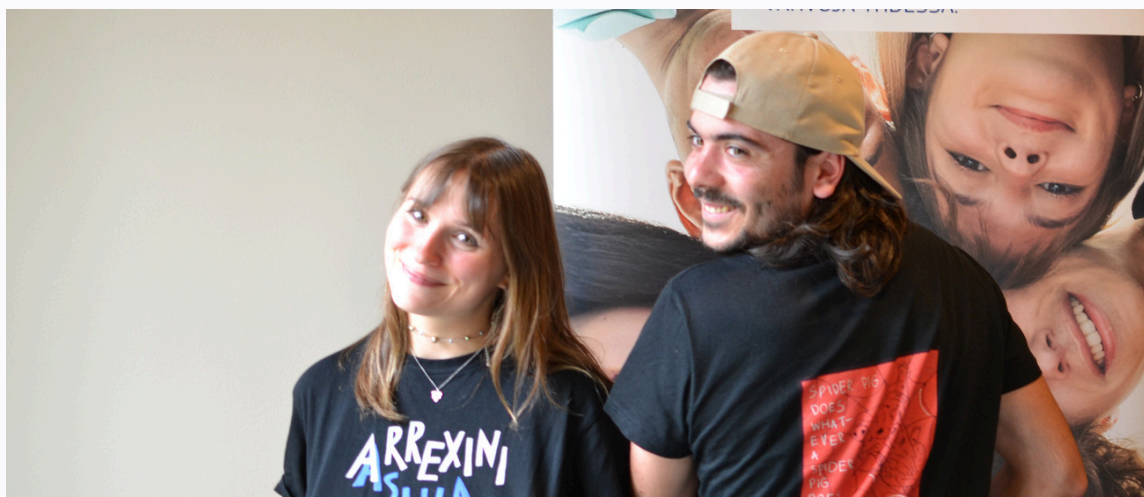
During the project, a lot was learned through trial and error.

"You'd go in and you'd leave the workshop. And you're like, 'that was horrible. That was a bad experience.' But you learn from it and then you realise, 'OK, that wasn't great. So, let's not do that again. Let's try and find something else.' And because of all the mistakes that we made, the result was powerful, because we learned from them and now, I think that in all our different areas of work and life, we don't make those mistakes again. So that's another thing about the Solidarity Project," Raphael says.

As the leader of the group, Raphael has found himself in a new situation and the project has had a big impact on him both personally and professionally. After all these years with the project, Raphael started working with the Cork Migrant Centre as an assistant programme coordinator. With the confidence he has gained, Raphael is also starting his own business as an occupational therapist.

At first, the audition for the European Solidarity Corps-related project and the presentation of the project results was difficult, and the team feared having to count money, keep receipts and take on responsibility, Raphael says. However, everything worked out well with the help and support of Ireland's National Agency. "Without the funding, it wouldn't have been possible to get started, and the Solidarity Project was a nice way to begin, because as an informal group of young people, you didn't necessarily need to be tied to an organisation." Some of the practical skills Raphael and the team have learned are related, for example, to budgeting, leadership and communication, team building and balancing being professional and informal at the same time. "Everything will eventually go well," Raphael says.

Through the project, Raphael has gained confidence and a greater sense of connection with other people. The project has also brought a strong sense of community and belonging to the project team and participants. It has also become more than just music or lyrics; it has become about taking action. "One could say we're musicians, but we also talk about social justice. This is our group, this is our hub, and we've created a space where young people from the different centres can come and continue the work we started," explains Raphael.



TRASHOP

SEULO, SARDINIA, ITALY

Creating and maintaining a community space where people can bring their "trash" items and give them a new life. The aim is to help reduce waste, upcycle and recycle things that people don't need and to give the people of a village in Sardinia the opportunity to find new treasures and contribute to saving the planet.

Trashop was born from an idea by young people from Arrexini Asula to help the inhabitants of locals of a small village called Seulo, located in the centre of the island of Sardinia to recycle things they don't need and find treasures for themselves. The Solidarity Project involves working with the local community to help reduce waste and build and maintain a community space. If any items need repairing, the project team members do it themselves, explains **Anastasija Ciesa**, 25, and **Riccardo Elia Murgia**, 26, from Arrexini Asula.

Anastasija emphasises the importance of the project for the people involved: In many cases, the entire shop and every step of the process, from marketing to production, are managed by marginalised young people. It has given them their first opportunity to take on responsibility. Upcycling has also become more popular, which supports the project's theme. With the help of Trashop, items that are in good condition and still useful are not thrown away. The project team collaborates with a local recycling centre in the village called Ecocentro and has secured some space from different actors, which has strengthened cooperation with the municipality. The most rewarding moment during the project is always when somebody finds something special that they can't find anywhere else, Anastasija and Riccardo say.



“Spreading awareness of the importance and results of the projects around the village has also helped keep young people active and made them feel and realise that they are part of something bigger,” Riccardo says. Some of the young people living in the village do not really know what the European Union is. With the help of the project, a lot more people have gained a deeper understanding of what the European Solidarity Corps does, for example.

Similar recycling options and greener solutions in the form of a Solidarity Project could be replicated in other small places in Europe, Anastasija and Riccardo believe. The duo recognises that this kind of project would not be impossible without funding from the European Solidarity Corps, but that the funding has made it easier. “We bought some tools for upcycling stuff, but in general, it's a very low-cost project,” Riccardo explains.

The municipality and the entire community of the village of Seulo has incorporated Trashop into their lives. The shop is open three days a week, but sometimes, when there is more demand, people simply call Riccardo to arrange a visit. The project is still growing to this day, and the shop is open for villagers. “We have a location which is our recycling hub and shop. We have an amazing team of youngsters who manage the shop. People come to us to bring us things and take things away,” Riccardo summarises.

The project has also supported and deepened the international experience of Anastasija, who is Latvian. Trashop has been her first opportunity to work with young people in Italy and has also given her a new perspective, having lived in the country for a year and a half. “Working with young people is something I want to continue to do in the future, even in ten years’ time,” she says. For Riccardo, the project has provided new experiences to help him keep up with the financial and accounting side of things.

They believe that there are only good reasons to start one’s own Solidarity Project, and that it should be done even if starting from scratch. There is a lot of information available, although it might sometimes be hard to find. Even if an application is not accepted on the first attempt, Anastasija emphasises the importance of the feedback received after each call. “It’s worth trying. That way, you can improve your next application, refine it and resubmit it. Then your chances of getting funding will be higher, so you should just start from somewhere.”



THE SPECTRUM OF WROCŁAW

WROCŁAW, POLAND

TSspreading awareness about people with autism spectrum disorders and different special interests in many ways. Seeking to promote inclusion and even provide information about autism to local authorities with the aim of changing the way people think by challenging prejudices.

“We always go too big,” says **Izabela Sojewska**, 28, when describing the *Spectrum of Wrocław* Solidarity Project, which she coordinates together with **Sebastian Smolarczyk**, 30. Both are part of a larger group called Kontrasty (Contrasts), and together with six other people from the project team, their main goal was and still is to spread awareness about people with autism spectrum disorders and different special interests.

In the first project, called *Us and Them*, their mission was to educate people about social polarisation, information bubbles and prejudices, and to promote an open and empathetic attitude towards people with different views. The project led to another, and now the group has continued with the European Solidarity Corps on another project.

In the *Spectrum of Wrocław*, the project team addresses the three main aspects of the project. These are: 1. Knowledge, 2. The interests of people with autism spectrum disorders, and 3. The perception of the city. The knowledge aspect focuses on researching these disorders and the people who have them, and how it is perceived. This aspect also addresses the subject and diagnoses from a psychological point of view. The second aspect refers to the stereotypes that people often have, and the third to the perception of the city, where the project team conducted workshops during which people with and without autism have designed a space that is welcoming to everyone.



Also as regards the second aspect, special interests, the project team conducted photo shoots with ethnographic interviews of people with autism spectrum disorders about the things they like and are interested in. Moreover, these shoots were run by a person on the autism spectrum who is a member of the project team. The photos were exhibited in a popular Polish museum. The team also plans to exhibit them in other locations, as many entities have contacted them and expressed interest in doing so. Another result of the project is a film which is currently in production.

The project team has also prepared a report on the specific needs of people with autism spectrum disorder, with recommendations for the Wrocław city authorities. During the project, there were also photography workshops held, which 50 people attended. The project team organised photography and crochet workshops, run by people with autism spectrum disorder. *"It was a great opportunity to give space to people with autism spectrum disorders, who were able to showcase their talents in practice,"* Izabela says.

Personally, Izabela and Sebastian have gotten a lot from the projects and they play a big part in their lives. Izabela says that, due to her profession as a lawyer, she does not have the opportunity to do a lot of creative things. People with autism have said that the project is great for them. Also, thanks to the project, Izabela says she is gaining knowledge about the special needs of other people, which allows her to understand and support them better. It is also important to be able to change people's mindsets, whether it is two people or more. *"The moment you see that people are really interested in the subject, I know we're not doing it for nothing. There are people for whom this is important,"* Sebastian says.

They want to emphasise that "being on the spectrum" is not a disability, and that is what their project is also about. *"I think this educational stuff can be attractive to people because, when you're not interested in the spectrum, it can make it more visible by giving it more recognition and making everyone feel part of society,"* explains Izabela. She also says that the project is like the project team's baby and having great experiences with it also brings balance to their life and daily work.

Without the funding from the European Union, the project would have not been possible, especially on this scale. Izabela and Sebastian emphasised that they wanted to be taken seriously with their project, which was also why they wanted the result to be as professional and of the highest quality possible. They purchased good equipment to document and film the project. They are also confident that similar projects and themes could be replicated and brought to the attention of people in all parts of the world. *"It's a great way to raise awareness anywhere with similar projects."*



INTERGENERATIONAL FAIRNESS

ST. MARTIN

The aim was to create a tea garden in collaboration between older and younger people, while also encouraging the inhabitants of the island of Saint Martin to grow more of what they eat themselves. The project encourages a greener lifestyle, highlights the benefits of plants and brings opportunities to socialise.

On the vibrant island of Saint Martin, a heartwarming community initiative is taking root, both literally and figuratively. The Solidarity Project called *The Intergenerational Fairness*, led by **Tomeeka Matthew** and her project team, focuses on growing herbs and vegetables in a community tea garden while promoting healthier, plant-based eating, particularly among the elderly.

The initiative goes beyond food. It encourages people of all ages to grow their own plants to strengthen local food systems, foster community, and combat climate change. The project offers elderly residents the opportunity to garden outdoors in a low-effort, accessible way. Through this project, participants have harvested basil and peppers, among other things. One phase of the project involved transplanting the sprouted plants to a garden that is easy to access, even for people using wheelchairs or other mobility aids. Inclusivity and accessibility remain core principles of the initiative.

The project team recognised a broader need for healthier lifestyles, particularly among older adults. They believe that people should not wait until their health declines to start living better. At the same time, they see this project as a proactive way to start right now. The idea has sparked interest, as many residents find it both engaging and important. Beyond nutrition and sustainability, the project addresses social issues such as loneliness and inactivity among seniors and people with disabilities.



Many elderly participants had long wanted to take up gardening but believed they could no longer do so due to physical limitations. The project team provides them with the opportunity to take part in a meaningful, low-effort outdoor activity. The Solidarity Project is something that has brought a lot of joy, and Tomeeka says it has been very heartwarming to see so many people engaging with the garden.

“We wanted elderly people to feel like they're still included in society. We want everyone, no matter their disability or health situation, to get out and, in doing so, help alleviate their loneliness, knowing that they're doing something,” Tomeeka says.

Workshops on greener living are also part of the initiative. Tomeeka has pointed out that positive change can start in one's own backyard, and these sessions are meant to empower people to take those first steps at home. For Tomeeka personally, the project has also become a journey of growth. It has strengthened her leadership skills and helped her become more comfortable with public speaking. She explains that she used to avoid speaking roles, often preferring to pass the responsibility on to someone else. However, being pushed out of her comfort zone has led to personal development and increased confidence. Participating in additional trainings has further enriched her knowledge and motivation.

Teamwork dynamics and the division of responsibilities have required ongoing attention. Support from the EU has also played a crucial role, with Tomeeka acknowledging that without it, the project might not have been possible at all. The project team collaborates with some local stores and businesses and Tomeeka sees this as a sign that institutions are willing to invest in grassroots efforts that improve communities and protect the environment. Reflecting on her experience, Tomeeka encourages others with community-minded ideas to give them a chance in the form of a Solidarity Project: develop a plan, submit it and keep applying even if things do not work out right away.

There is nothing that Tomeeka wishes she had known before starting. For her, every step has been part of a learning journey. Each place she visits and each person she meets has taught her something. “I feel that I have become more compassionate through the project,” she says. Looking ahead, she hopes the project will inspire similar initiatives elsewhere. She believes that even if others replicate only parts of the project, the core aim —making people feel involved and a greater connecting with the planet among young people and adults —can have a powerful impact on an emotional, mental and physical level.



REFRESHED

NITRA, SLOVAKIA *Gymnazium Golianova*

Improving university life through different areas and themes, approaching the topic from an ecological, relaxational and educational point of view. Offering related activities to students about topics which they are already familiar with.

The *RefreshED* project focuses on educating students of a secondary school on topics that are not part of the curriculum, such as active citizenship, sexual education, opportunities for young people provided by the EU, and mental health. The Solidarity Project introduces three thematic areas across the school. The project was initially called *University of Life*, but then the project team members, **Ema Riznárová**, 19, and **Jakub Remeň**, 20, wanted to take it further.

The results are visible in the everyday life of the school, Ema says. Students now use the new spaces to read, relax, and play games during breaks. She finds it very rewarding to see others enjoying what they have built together. Jakub emphasises that EU funding played a key role in making the project happen and believes it has helped students better understand the opportunities offered by EU membership. They now see that, with a good idea, support is available and that they too can lead projects in their own communities.



One space and theme of the project is dedicated to ecology and included an upcycling event and a workshop on greenwashing. In the workshop, an expert explained how to identify and prevent misleading environmental claims. Another space focuses on relaxation and offers activities such as meditation, art therapy and Pilates. The third space promotes literacy, with reading workshops in English and Slovak, featuring a well-known Slovak author, and a student book swap. The project was carried out in cooperation with various organisations and managed by five students through the school parliament. Their goal was to create extra learning opportunities while making the school hallways more enjoyable for everyone.

Ema and Jakub say that the project has taught them a lot about leadership, responsibility and time management. Jakub admitted that he once thought organising a workshop was simple, but now he knows that it involves detailed planning, communication with school staff, and securing resources. They also learned not to overload the schedule, especially during exam periods. Ema points out that too many activities in a short period of time can be overwhelming, not just for the organisers, but for participants too.

Jakub advises other young people interested in community work to keep their documentation up to date throughout the project. It is easier to manage things step by step than to do it all at once at the end. Ema and Jakub hope their example will inspire others. [“Even small problems can be opportunities to bring people together and create positive change, if someone is willing to take the first step,”](#) they say.



SAMEN ONBEPERKT – TOGETHER UNLIMITED

NETERDEN, THE NETHERLANDS

Focusing on connecting people with physical disabilities by organising activities where everyone can feel included, engaged, and part of a community. The project is all about creating moments of joy, building friendships, and breaking down barriers.

Small, consistent actions can make a big difference in people's lives, **Jesse van Dee**, 23, believes. With the Solidarity Project *Together Unlimited*, the goal is to offer events and evenings where people with disabilities can connect and build new friendships. “Disabilities are something people don't often even think about too much,” Jesse says. There are also many things one should consider when arranging activities to make them accessible to all. As an example, Jesse mentions how the location and design of the toilets in the venue can affect accessibility, not only for people with physical disabilities but also for those with hearing or visual impairments.

The organisers realised how much a project like this was needed when they contacted the local newspaper and the radio station to announce it to the public and 30 people applied. Due to the capacity of the project team, which consisted of seven people, led by Jesse, they had to reduce it to 25 people. Jesse knew four of the project team members beforehand and quickly got to know the rest. Jesse thinks that the project could easily be replicated in other countries too. The most rewarding thing for her could be that, after the project, the attendees were able to stay connected and became friends. She hopes that they can continue the project and organise something occasionally. These meet-ups do not need to be expensive and could be as simple as catching up over a cup of coffee.



The project would not have been possible without EU funding, as the intention was for it to be open to all. The funding from the EU ensured that this was the case. Through the project, participants feel that the world is opening for them, and that is what makes the project unique for the participants. Jesse describes the 'wow' moment they are creating for the participants. On a personal level, the project has helped Jesse grow and given him a unique experience of leading a team, organising an event and taking action to achieve a better and more equal society. "The best part is seeing people happy. Because it's completely voluntary, I have to do it in my own time, and sometimes it can be hard. It is, however, nice to see other people happy and to give something back," he says.

What surprised Jesse was the impact of the project. At first, he wasn't sure if the message was reaching the right audience and if people wanted to participate, but the popularity took him completely by surprise. Jesse suggests that others should think carefully about how many actions are reasonable for a project. Also, accessibility has been an issue at times, but on the other hand, he has been surprised by how many places are accessible, for example, with a wheelchair. Sometimes it is a challenge to think about what kind of activity is suitable for such a wide range of people, from those who cannot move to those who are physically active.

A year is a long time and sometimes motivation can wane. However, Jesse reminded himself of the importance of the project and that helped him keep going. In hindsight, he might have reduced the number of meetings to six, i.e., one every two months. Six large, active activities instead of 12 smaller ones would be more manageable in terms of coordination. The idea of a project has also been very important for the people on the project team, Jesse says: "You have to really stand behind it, because the first few months are fun and everything's new and exciting. But after six or eight months, you still have to finish it and document everything."



Closing Words

This publication shares **eight European Solidarity Corps Solidarity Projects** where young people spotted needs in their communities and turned them into opportunities for change, making places more inclusive, healthier, and sustainable.

From Austria to Finland, Ireland to Italy, Poland to Caribbean Islands, Slovakia to the Netherlands, these projects show innovation and resilience in action. Whether it's turning clay into art for self-expression, creating safe alcohol-free hangouts, or upcycling "trash" into community treasures, each idea proves that even **small steps can lead to big, lasting change**.

The teams **learned by doing**, facing challenges, **discovering hidden strengths**, and **building skills & competences**, values, and confidence they'll carry for life. Many also focused on **mental health**, creating **spaces for connection** and support that boost well-being and **fight isolation**. Along the way, they learned to listen, adapt, and work together, **breaking down barriers between generations, abilities and cultures**.

The projects were interviewed in May 2025 during the International Solidarity project Meet-Up coordinated by SALTO European Solidarity Corps and hosted by the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI).

We hope these stories spark new ideas, inspire action, and show that the smallest step can have a much bigger impact than you ever imagined.





EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

The European Solidarity Corps is a programme of the European Union that creates opportunities for young people aged 18-30 to volunteer and run their own Solidarity Projects that benefit communities.



Want to get started?

Find out how to apply for funding and get in touch with your National Agency [here](#)



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 Author: Aino Paloniemi | Coordination: Barbara Eglitis & Miguel Tabera – SALTO European Solidarity Corps | T + 43 153408-0 | rc-solidarity@oead.at | Visual on Cover page: Agne Rapalaite-Rasiule | Vienna, August 2025

Special Thanks

A special thanks goes to our Finnish colleagues - without your support and enthusiasm, this publication would not have been possible. Thank you for partnering with us and always walking the extra mile with our SALTO Centre! Another big thanks to the project team members for running these fantastic projects and your honesty and openness in sharing the learnings! You are true ambassadors of what solidarity means!

About SALTO European Solidarity Corps

SALTO ESC supports National Agencies and organisations in the volunteering 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 and Solidarity project teams.

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.talkingsolidarity.eu & www.salto-youth.net/solidarity