

# 4Thought for S●olidarity



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# 1 — Introductions



Welcome to the **Report: '4Thought for Solidarity: Careful consideration of what is needed for the future'**. Its says Report, but '4Thought' has also been called a research, a study, a thinking exercise, a thought-provoking resource... and many other names, both by the authors and the Resource Centre - as well as various other audiences that have had a chance to glimpse its content during its development. '4Thought' was chosen as a title related to the **concept of forethought** (thinking in advance, before any concrete (policy) decisions were made) and also for the 4 perspectives included. However, as Shakespeare said: "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet", it is hoped this is also true for 4Thought.

On the following pages, you will find a contribution towards the **common narrative on the concept of solidarity from the perspective of research, practice, policy and young people**. It responds to the identified diversity of thoughts and approaches to solidarity in Europe, leading towards a common ground that aims to unite different people and communities around the same vision for solidarity.

*"Dialogue is the core of solidarity. It's also concretely about this 4Thought project: gathering different ideas, finding common ground, connecting humanity and dialogue. [...] This project is really good because it's focused on a common idea, it works as an operational concept. From there on, it will be easier to refer to something, to have a frame for the 4 sectors, to see the synergies and work together. This is a first step."*

*Alexandra Severino, Researcher; interview*

Building on the common ground, 4Thought attempts to identify possible ways forward for different stakeholders in the field of Solidarity and the European Solidarity Corps. 4Thought is hoping to initiate a valuable strategic impetus to the future political impact of the European Solidarity Corps, but also provide practical guidance for implementing solidarity actions in different, mostly youth work contexts.

If you are curious about solidarity and its implementation through the European Solidarity Corps, you could be reading the right document. It is hoped that this resource will stimulate your thinking about solidarity, its relevance in Europe and in the international youth work field and also clarify your role when it comes to solidarity and its application in practice. It could also motivate you to engage more in acting in solidarity and promoting it through your work and professional engagement!

## 1.1 — About the Authors

4Thought has two authors, both of whom share solid experience of the four angles of policy, practice, needs of young people and the interpretation of research. They share a passion for international youth work and learning mobility and between them have decades of experience in these specific fields. They also bring their own history and bias towards solidarity, which comes from their context, experience, values and worldviews. Hence, besides working with the data they received through the 4Thought process, they have also involved their expertise in making the conclusions.

**Susie Nicodemi** worked for the UK National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme, and for the SALTO Cultural Diversity Resource Centre, before moving on to other programmes and projects in Europe and the wider world with the British Council. In her free time, Susie has been fighting against Brexit and is passionate about Europe and about Solidarity (in a geeky way). She is involved in various projects in the role of expert, trainer, rapporteur, author... and tries to balance working in international projects with local action in the community where she lives.

**Snežana Bačlija Knoch** was born in socialist Yugoslavia and now lives in Serbia with her family. She works fully freelance as a trainer and consultant and has been active for some years in facilitating the Training and Evaluation Cycle in EVS and now European Solidarity Corps. Snežana's passions are intercultural learning, human rights education and conflict transformation. She is a member of the International Youth Work Trainers' Guild. Snežana also enjoys the challenges of research (although she is not a researcher) and writing and has contributed to many different articles, publications, handbooks and reports.

### Who else was involved

Susie and Snežana did not go through the 4Thought process alone. Quite the opposite! Besides being joined by 146 people through online surveys, another 25 through in-depth interviews, and numerous other stakeholders at different events where 4Thought had been presented, they had invaluable support from **Melanie Jacobs, Christine Keplinger and Romina Matei** at the Solidarity Corps Resource Centre in Vienna, Austria. Melanie, Christine and Romina have accompanied the process from the very beginning by supporting, advising and cheering the authors up!

## 1.2 — The Publication Chapters in Brief

And now that you have had a little bit of an insight into the context and the process behind '4Thought for Solidarity', the bullet points below offer you a short glimpse of what you can find in this document:

- **Chapter 2: Approach to the 4Thought project**, research objectives and questions, participant groups and the overall research sample;
- **Chapter 3: Path to the Solidarity Model** - which is the base of the proposed common ground, its core elements and evolution since the beginning of the research until now;
- **Chapter 4: Development and current need for solidarity**, identified through the desk research and interviews/surveys with the 4 participant groups;



- **Chapter 5: From the local to international levels**, with an emphasis on the community level: which reference groups do people attach their identity to and how do borders affect solidarity's presence and role at each level;
- **Chapter 6: European Solidarity or Solidarity in Europe**, is European Solidarity a concept that unites people and countries on an equal level, or is it a separate supranational thing that is created when peoples and countries cooperate?
- **Chapter 7: Core Concepts related to Solidarity** that constitute the proposed common ground. With 4 Cornerstone concepts in the centre, supported by others that were either common for the different participants groups or were controversial between them;
- **Chapter 8: Thoughts that came up from the process**, which encompass dilemmas, open questions and discussions that were created around the concepts of solidarity, through the 4Thought process;
- **Chapter 9: Solidarity Corps Considerations**, extracted from the whole research to serve as an impetus for further developments within the European Solidarity Corps;
- **Chapter 10: Summary of the whole process with key insights and findings**;
- **Chapter 11: Annexes**.

## 1.3 — Questions in Boxes

One of the key elements that runs through this document are questions aimed to further stimulate thoughts and reflections around the topic of solidarity and its related concepts. You can find these questions in the 'purple boxes' titled '**Something to think about**' throughout the report. They are designed to trigger and inspire you.

And the first set of questions is right here. This is a collection of the same questions that were asked to our four different participant groups. They were used in the process of creating the common ground.

### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- What is your concept and understanding of solidarity? Where does that understanding come from? What informs it?
- Do you feel the need for solidarity? If yes, why, and where does that need come from? If no, why not?
- Do you think solidarity has been addressed in previous years in youth work in Europe? If yes, how?
- How has solidarity developed over recent years in the youth work field in Europe?
- Do you feel that the different sectors (practice, policy, research, young people) are working together for the development of solidarity in the European youth field? If yes, how? If not, how could they do more?
- What is the future of solidarity? What is your vision of it?



# 2 — Approach to the 4Thought Project



## 2.1 — The Context of 4Thought for Solidarity

In its function as the European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre, under the coordination of the Austrian National Agency for Youth programmes (IZ - “Verein zur Förderung von Vielfalt, Bildung, Dialog”) was looking for experts to implement a consultation process on the European Solidarity Corps in 2019. The main objective of the consultancy was **to create a basis of information for the further strategic planning and acting of the European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre in the discussion on solidarity in the Solidarity Corps.**

This need came from the European Solidarity Corps which has been up and running in different corners of Europe with as yet no clear definition or a common ground on what solidarity means in Europe - or at least what it means in the youth work field in Europe. The idea was that this common ground would bring clarity and a frame to the continued implementation of the European Solidarity Corps and would help different stakeholders to orientate themselves within its frame. The narrative soon got a name: ‘4Thought for Solidarity’.

**The main tasks of 4Thought for Solidarity** were:

- Desk research on the narrative of solidarity in Europe;
- Stakeholder mapping in the field of solidarity on the European level;
- Collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data of the definition(s);
- Composing a discussion paper or other presentation modes for further use.

The 4Thought for Solidarity process covers the **four angles** of: practice, policy, research, and the needs of young people. This provides further development, visibility and recognition of each field as they connect to the solidarity concept and action.

The concept of **Practice** encompasses mainly those active in the international youth work field, specifically within the Erasmus+ Youth in Action programme and its predecessors, as well as the first phase of the Solidarity Corps; **Policy** refers to those working on different levels as decision and policy makers and policy influencers in the field of youth; **Research** is mainly referring to youth researchers and those closely linked to practice; and **Young People** are mainly young beneficiaries of EVS, youth initiatives, and other related actions and programmes as well as young people signed in on the European Solidarity Corps portal.

Based on the Call for Consultancy from the Solidarity Resource Centre, and the 4Thought for Solidarity Project plan, the **research objectives** were the following:

- **CONCEPT:** A critical mass of stakeholders to agree on the main understanding related to the concept of solidarity;
- **PRACTICE:** Hear examples of concrete practice - how practically solidarity has been addressed through different initiatives in the youth field in Europe;
- **NEED:** Analysing the need for solidarity: where did the need come from? Analysis of the fields of agreement and disagreement related to the concept, the needs and different actions and practices, between the four stakeholder groups.



In order to reach the objectives, 4Thought for Solidarity combined a desk mapping of practice, policy and research, together with data from interviews and online surveys:

- **desk mapping** of official documents, publications, reports, independent research;
- **two online surveys** aimed at young people, practitioners, policy makers and researchers (focus on quantitative data);
- **interviews** with young people, practitioners, policy makers and researchers (focus on qualitative data);
- **collation of good practice examples** connected to solidarity, with one of the angles covering development of solidarity in practice through time.

Below is an infographic showing the common narrative on the concept of Solidarity from Research, Practice, Policy, and Young people and the approach of the project.



Source: Nicodemi/Bacilja Knoch



# 3 — Path to the Solidarity Model



## 3.1 — First Research Phase

Common ground has been the recurring theme of the 4Thought process, not just as a destination to be reached, but as a solid starting point as well. In order to kickstart the process, there was a need to first build a proposed common basis that would be used later on for a wider public to comment on, question, challenge and further develop.

In March 2019, **the initial survey** was sent out to a representative sample of stakeholders from the four participant groups: policy makers, practitioners, researchers, and young people. They were asked to define their understanding of solidarity, as well as to mention concepts that appeared in their work that related to solidarity.

The number of initial responders was not aimed to be very big, but rather to ensure as many diverse perspectives as possible. This was achieved, as can be seen by the great diversity in the different answers, as well as in the many different angles and perspectives present in the outcomes. It became clear very quickly that one definition or even one paragraph explaining the common ground could not be extracted from the outcomes of the survey. Instead, the findings were presented in a model of solidarity - **the Concentric Circles Model**.<sup>1</sup>

This model was then used, with some additional questions, to go deeper into people's reflections and ideas. The aim was still to find a common narrative and a solid common ground on the concept of solidarity.

The majority of people involved saw the potential of using the circles as a model, finding it very helpful - not necessarily for defining solidarity but for looking at the concept from different perspectives and forming a comprehensive image.

There were **several main insights** that came out of these conversations, they were as follows:

- some of the concepts/words listed in the circles could relate to many different things and not just solidarity;
- some concepts were very relevant, even crucial for some people and were very controversial for others;
- many of the concepts in the inner circle seemed to be a legacy of the previous and current EU youth programmes or policy documents;
- some concepts were seen as relevant for solidarity in general, but not necessarily relevant for the youth field;
- a humanitarian lens was missing, as many of the concepts were somehow related to an individual rather than related to humanity on a more general level.

The Concentric Circles Model formed the basis for the next stages of the 4Thought process. Its concepts were used in the wider survey and in the in-depth interviews, as well as for identifying different directions of focus for the desk research.

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<sup>1</sup> The Concentric Circle Model can be found in Appendix A.

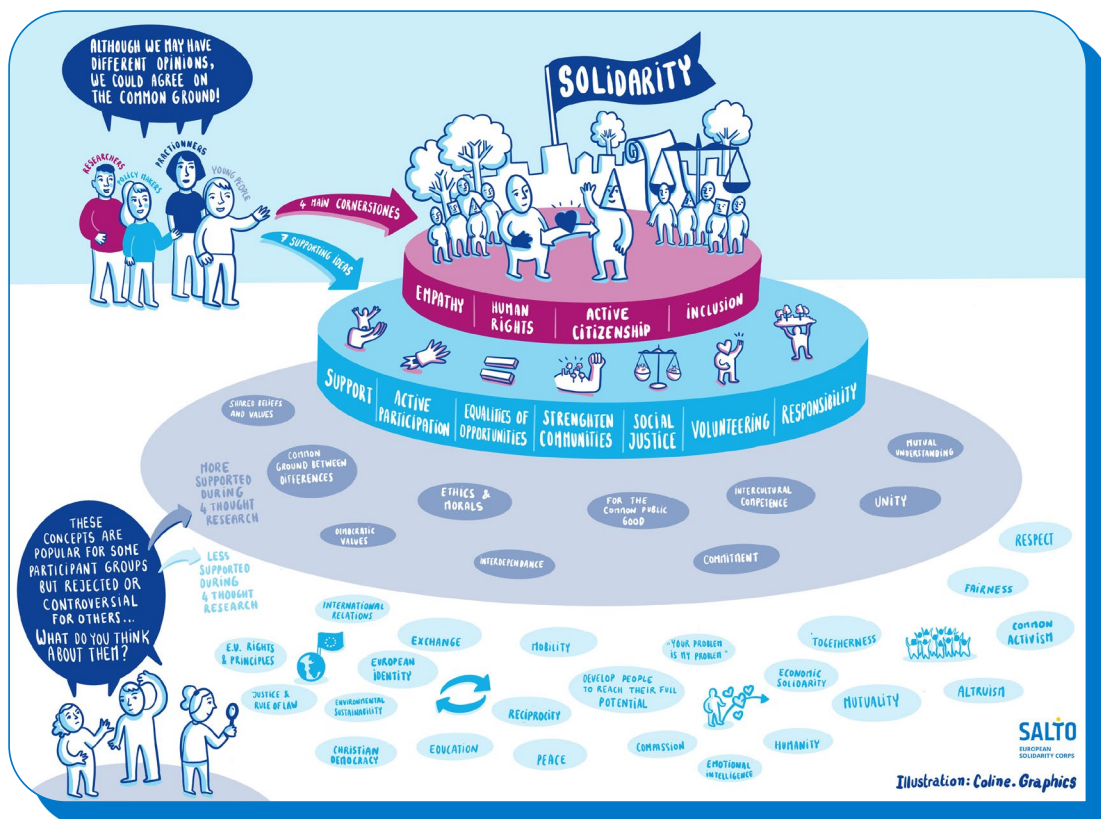
## 3.2 — Second Research Phase

In the second phase of the research, together with the **desk mapping** of official documents, publications and reports, a **wider survey was launched**. 104 people from 32 different countries responded to it. They identified which concepts of solidarity were the most relevant for them (which ones they would keep) and which were the least relevant for them (which ones they would remove). They also offered their views on the need for solidarity, its development and the (lack of) connection between the 4 different angles.

In parallel, 25 **interviews** were conducted with 11 practitioners, 5 researchers, 5 young people and 4 policy makers.

The results of these processes were used to create a **new model of solidarity**.

## 3.3 — The New Model of Solidarity



The outcomes of the second phase of the research were not suitable for concentric circles anymore since it became evident that the lines between levels of relevance are not so clear. It would be important for the **readers to define for themselves the most important concepts**, without presuming levels or lines of importance, as different people put emphasis on different ones. In addition, it was clear that it is important not only to capture the most relevant concepts, but also the ones that are controversial. These can be vital in understanding the diversity of interpretations of solidarity, according to background, experience, culture, etc.

The **4 main concepts** that are in the core of the new model became known as the '**4Cornerstones**'. They were highlighted by the majority of people from all four participant groups during interviews and surveys, as being the concepts closest to solidarity both in theory and in practice. They are:

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

The '4Cornerstones' are supported by **7 supporting concepts**, which were also highlighted to a lesser extent by people from the four participants groups:

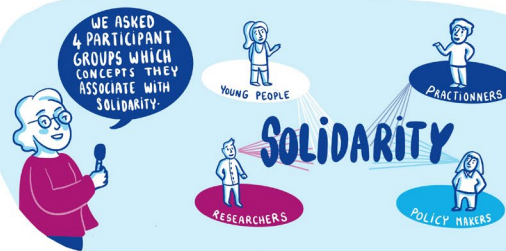
- Social justice;
- Equality of opportunity;
- Support;
- Strengthen communities;
- Active participation;
- Volunteering;
- Responsibility.

These 7 concepts complement the common ground on solidarity, as they add more nuances and more aspects to be explored. Both the 4 cornerstones and the 7 supporting concepts will be explored in more detail in Chapter 7.

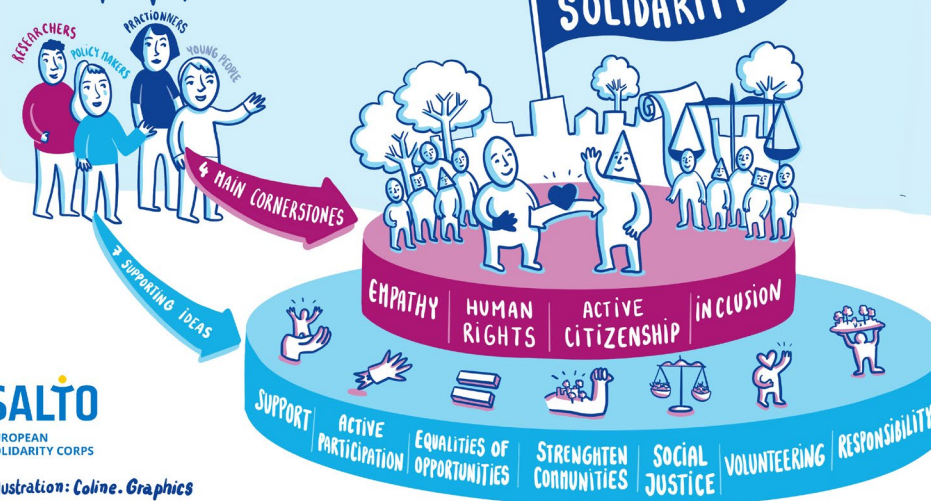
In addition, they are complemented by important concepts that did not find agreement among the 4 different participant groups. These formed a common ground of their own and sometimes created more discussions and debates than those that were in common acceptance. Since the **aim of the new model is to encourage dialogue and initiate thinking processes** they are also included as part of the report. The next visualisation should help to initiate this.

This chapter offers an overview of the concepts related to solidarity. The chapters that follow explore each concept in more depth, not by providing fixed definitions, but rather by discovering diversity of interpretations of solidarity related to norms, values, societal differences and more.

# WHAT IS SOLIDARITY?



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



**SALTO**  
EUROPEAN  
SOLIDARITY CORPS

Illustration: Coline Graphics

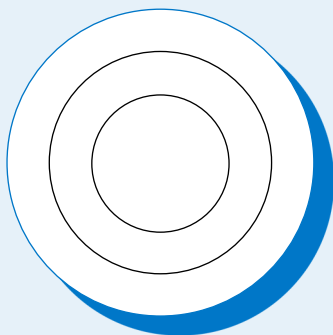
## 3.4 — Using the Solidarity Models

The Solidarity Models, both the Concentric Circles and the New Model of Solidarity have generated a lot of interest since they were introduced in the European youth work field for consultation purposes. They provided more clarity for understanding solidarity and how it connects to existing approaches and practices but perhaps even more than that, they triggered reflection, discussions and conversations.

Below are some **suggestions of the different ways to start the all-important dialogue for exploring the concept of solidarity**. These can be used for personal reflection and clarity but also by groups of colleagues and/or project partners, or even when working with a group of young people. This is just a small sample of possible activities and there are certainly many more that can address solidarity and people's understanding of it. It is important to mention that most of the activities proposed here are of experiential nature and therefore it is **important to process the experiences afterwards**. In a way that would allow people, individually and in the group, to reflect on their behaviours and actions and behaviours and actions of others. Solidarity is connected to values and can therefore trigger people's emotions in a way that it can be overwhelming and besides blocking possible learning, it can also be dangerous for people's well being. Therefore, those reactions need to be handled with care and the process facilitated in a way that it generates learning insights streaming from them.<sup>2</sup>

### What would your model look like?

One way to approach the concept is to start with an individual reflection on what solidarity means. Each person gets one sheet of paper with three concentric circles on it (apart from the circles this is blank without any list or any guidance as to what they should write). They would then write concepts that for them relate to solidarity, the most important words in the centre and less important moving outwards.



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<sup>2</sup> For more information, check T-kit on Training Essentials.

After this initial reflection, if it is happening in a group context, they could join in pairs, compare the models and 'negotiate' a common one. The process could repeat with more people joining together and continuing the 'negotiation'.

In the end, the 4Thought Concentric Model could be shown, as just another example, and a discussion could start...

### **'Scramble the eggs'**

The words (perhaps a simplified list) could be taken out of the New Model of Solidarity, each one written on a piece of paper and then scattered on the floor. The individual or a group would then have the task to reassemble them together in order of priority, exchanging arguments for and against in the process.

After they are done, they share their outcomes and compare them to the Model of Solidarity...

### **Where do I position myself?**

The 4 Cornerstones and the 7 supporting concepts (alternatively all the concepts from the models can be included) are written each on an individual sheet of paper and scattered on the floor. People are guided to reflect on them, and position themselves physically in relation to one or more of the concepts, based on the following questions:

- Which concept do you relate to the most?
- Which is the one that you have seen the most in your context related to solidarity?
- Which concept can you not relate to at all?
- Which ones would you make more prominent?
- ...

Instead of standing next to the concepts, people could put stickers with their names following each of the questions. That way, after the positioning part of the exercise is done, the overview of how people responded and positioned themselves could stay.

Afterwards, people should be encouraged to reflect on their own position and the positions of others.

- How was it to position themselves in relation to different questions?
- What do their answers say about their own understanding of solidarity?
- Were they surprised by the positioning of other people in the group? How different were they from their own?
- Are they curious to find the reason behind some of the other people's positions?
- ...

### **Where does my solidarity come from?**

Each person thinks about their understanding of solidarity and the main concepts associated with it. Once they have them, they try to track down the conceptual background of where this understanding is coming from. Where do they stand when it comes to solidarity? Where do those meanings come from? What is the role of values, beliefs and worldviews in the process of relating to solidarity?



Even if this reflection is done individually, it would still be good if it is shared with one or more other people to compare different views and try to get to an understanding of where those views are coming from.

This can follow either of the previous 'activities', as a step of going deeper into the concepts.

### Where do you stand?

Concepts from the model(s) can be turned into (provocative) statements, on which people could be asked to discuss and exchange arguments. Examples of possible statements are:

- Christian Democracy is an important milestone for the development of solidarity in Europe;
- European identity ensures that we focus on solidarity within Europe, which is the most important thing;
- EU rights and principles guarantee solidarity among EU citizens;
- Without action in real life, there is no real solidarity;
- I need to share values with people in order to act in solidarity with them;
- Altruism is more important than reciprocity in solidarity activities;
- European solidarity is the same as solidarity in Europe;
- It makes sense to show solidarity to everyone, otherwise it is always exclusion, and it has nothing to do with solidarity;
- ...

### Where would you place solidarity?<sup>3</sup>

People are asked to place solidarity (written on a moderation card) on the following scales:



Then they reflect on the overall picture and see how it influences their understanding of solidarity. They can create for themselves a new paradigm of solidarity.



<sup>3</sup> The idea for this method came through the survey and is from Anett Manniste, Programme Manager at Archimedes Foundation, Estonia

# 4 — Development and Current Need for Solidarity



This chapter gives the **background, history and development of the concept of solidarity**. It aims to show the meaning of the words behind and around it. Many of the facts and data come from the desk research, mapping, and policy mapping. The last part of this chapter is a summary of all the interviews and survey responses related to the question: “Do you feel a need for solidarity?”. Overall, this chapter aims to set the scene for further exploration of the concept of solidarity in the present day in the context of youth work in Europe.

## 4.1 — What Does the Word Solidarity Mean?

The chapter begins by tackling the word **solidarity as a concept on its own**. Later on, in chapter 6, it looks at European Solidarity, or Solidarity in Europe, and the connection between Europe as a concept and how solidarity fits in. It is important to take one concept at a time, to try to clarify it, before relating it to other complementary concepts (European, Global etc).

However, it is important to be transparent. **This project takes place in Europe, with European funding, and with respondents who live in Europe and many of whom consider themselves European.** Therefore, even when focusing specifically on the single concept of solidarity (and not European Solidarity), there are some reference frames which naturally occur. You are asked to accept these as part of the bias of the project, and forgive their inclusion also in this chapter.

### a) Etymology

**Solidarity (Oxford University Press Dictionary definition)**

**Noun**

**Unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group.**

The etymology of the word solidarity has links both to ‘solid’ (strong, uninterrupted, dependable, reliable, firm, dense, compact, not empty or hollow) and ‘solidus’ (entire, undivided, whole).<sup>1</sup>

The concept of **unity** underpins several of the definitions for the word solidarity. When we look at synonyms of the word solidarity, ‘together-ness’ and ‘one-ness’ are a common theme running through the meaning.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.etymonline.com/word/solid?ref=etymonline\\_crossreference#etymonline\\_v\\_23853](https://www.etymonline.com/word/solid?ref=etymonline_crossreference#etymonline_v_23853) and <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/solid>



**Synonyms:** unanimity, unity, like-mindedness, agreement, accord, harmony, consensus, concord, concurrence, singleness of purpose, community of interest, mutual support, cooperation, cohesion, team spirit, camaraderie, esprit de corps.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to note that it is not clear whether solidarity produces the unity or if unity is required for solidarity to exist: what comes first, unity or solidarity?

As a side note, solidarity is a noun.

The adjective to describe something that has solidarity elements is 'solidary'. Find out how to pronounce it in English by clicking on the 'speaker' button on this page from the Oxford University Press Dictionary: <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/solidary>

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- Does solidarity have a sense of whole-ness and reliability to you?
- If you close your eyes and try to sense the feeling of the word, does it have a connection to strength?
- What brings people together to feel unity? Is it a critical mass of people that feel the unity? What about the left-behinds? When unity is challenged by external crises, what is the glue that keeps people together?

## b) No common understanding or definition of solidarity

Moving away from the dryer meaning of the word, and applying the concept within societies, what is the common understanding of solidarity? If one thing has become clear during this project, it is that the **concept of solidarity means different things to different people**, including different governments (Wagner, Kraller and Baumgartner, 2018). It relates to standards and norms which are different for each and every individual.

*"Solidarity is normatively charged"*

Greiner, 2017

<sup>2</sup> Oxford University Press Dictionary online: <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/solidary>

The physical manifestation of the concept of solidarity can be seen in all its diversity through the different sign-language interpretations of the word from different countries (short video clips available here: <https://www.spreadthesign.com/en.us/word/8402/solidarity/>). Comparing the very different movements, there are many different connotations and interpretations that each person can make. There is a whole assortment of perspectives on the concept of solidarity, and the sign-language interpretations patently visually demonstrate that.

Clear definitions of the concept and how it affects society are difficult to pinpoint - it is frequently used for diverse intentions and with different definitions (Greiner 2017). As Greiner points out in the same research, for social and political scientists, the focus is more on the various forms and characteristics of solidarity and their significance for society, rather than finding a definition. **The 4Thought project mapped the diversity of social science definitions** and included them in the first stage of the project to establish an understanding of the concept in the context of the youth work field in Europe.

**The reality is that there is not just one definition.** Depending on whether you are a political scientist, a social scientist, a geographer, or any other academic discipline, there are many ways to define, divide or to frame solidarity. It has been proposed that solidarity is “a mutual recognition of shared needs and concerns”<sup>3</sup> – however which ones, and how to define them has not in any way been agreed, and many other disciplines would add facets or degrees to that interpretation. Also, are those shared needs a result of, or a precondition for solidarity?

One of the very first social scientists to broach the topic of solidarity, often still quoted in many papers and publications these days, is Emile Durkheim. In his book ‘The Division of Labour in Society’ (1893). He defined solidarity as: “the fundamental ties between members of a small or large community. Solidarity as such contains all the characteristics - —values, beliefs, cultural norms, and relationships - —that transcend individualistic and atomistic attitudes or hierarchical structures in a society.”<sup>4</sup>

This diversity of definitions for solidarity can be illustrated by showing just three (of the many that were found in the academic research phase of this project). It is interesting to see that some define it by separating it into different types of solidarity; others explain its make up by constituent parts - almost as a recipe.

3 Akarcesme, S., (European) Solidarity: Perspectives and Approaches, Genesis, 2019. p2.

4 Giannakopoulos, A., editor “Solidarity in the European Union, challenges and perspectives.” The S Daniel Abraham Centre for International and Regional Studies, Tel Aviv. 2017. p11.

## 3 different ways to define solidarity!

Through the last decades, many researchers and social scientists have tried to define the concept of solidarity. Here's a few different ones. Is there one that seems closer to the reality for you?



### Steffen Mau (2005) five types in German:



1. Self-interest solidarity ('**Eigennutzsolidarität**')
2. Bonding solidarity ('**Verbundenheitssolidarität**')
3. Fellow citizen solidarity ('**Bürgersolidarität**')
4. Movement solidarity (mobilising society via social protest movements; '**Bewegungssolidarität**')
5. Compassionate solidarity ('**Mitgefühlssolidarität**')

### Fernandes & Rubio (2010) found two types:



#### Interdependent types of solidarity:

- Organic / Structural / Mechanical / Political / Budgetary / self-interested/ cold

#### Affective types of solidarity:

- Sentiment / Responsibility / Trust / Reciprocity - network of interlinked interests

### Featherstone (2012). History/geography view.



1. **Transformative relation** - between place, activists and social groups
2. **Forged from below** - by marginalised and subaltern groups
3. **Marked by political activity** - doesn't stay neatly contained within the nation state
4. **Constructed** - through uneven power relations and geographies
5. **Inventive** - constructing new political relations

Source: Nicodemi/Baclija Knoch

## c) Three levels of solidarity - interpersonal, collective and welfare

Reading back through different academic papers, you can see that much investigation has been done into the meaning and definition of the concept of solidarity. TransSOL<sup>5</sup> was a Horizon 2020-funded project, from 2015 – 2018, where researchers mapped different existing practices and projects at the local, national and cross-national levels to provide a detailed picture of solidarity initiatives and action cases across Europe. Once all the data was gathered, it was analysed, best practices identified, and policy recommendations made on this evidence base.

One big part of this project was the desk mapping of previous solidarity research and what these different studies focused on. This is a good source for showing the diverse interpretations of solidarity.

5 <https://transsol.eu/project/objectives/>

There is a **logical connection between three different approaches to understanding solidarity - Interpersonal, Collective and Welfare**. This structure enabled the project's outputs to follow the same logic. This was a good structure for the approach to understanding solidarity, it is based on practice from the field and links well to the types of projects within the Solidarity Corps actions (interpersonal and collective), while still showing the context of society (welfare). It has been severely condensed here, taking much of the following directly from the Lahusen and Grasso's scientific publication (2018):

<b>Interpersonal</b>	Solidarity on the interpersonal level is related to how individuals connect, support and create cohesion between themselves. Trust is important here. Social solidarity can be shown in informal groups or networks and through volunteering, membership and support of voluntary associations, civil society organisations, and social movements.
<b>Collective - civil society</b>	The more structured social settings of civil society provide opportunities for people to learn about the project and the related tasks and to become actively involved. Being a member or follower of a certain initiative, association, organisation, or movement implies a commitment not only to specific norms of solidarity but also to palpable acts as well (e.g. membership fees and charitable donations, joint political protests, events of claims-making).
<b>Welfare</b>	Welfare for many people is directly linked to solidarity. To share resources, to balance inequalities, to redistribute wealth and economic risks is to act 'in solidarity' with others.

#### Why welfare is particularly relevant

For many people, solidarity has a direct association with the redistribution of wealth, or welfare. In many papers and researches, solidarity can be shown through support for redistribution as a social policy.

**Research shows that there is a very real connection between solidarity and welfare**, both conceptual and practical, where "the parameters of one shape the boundaries of the other."<sup>6</sup>

*"Welfare is the field where solidarity is most keenly felt and, accordingly, the most potent terrain for positive European impact."*

Alive & Active (2018)

<sup>6</sup> Alive & Active publication (2018) European Commission. p5.

Within the thousands of respondents to the Horizon 2020 TransSOL project (2017) from 8 European countries, “three-quarters considered the reduction of income inequalities an important public policy goal.”<sup>7</sup> For many, the interpretation of solidarity is directly linked to welfare provision - at least on a policy and international level; the redistribution of wealth to reduce inequality is inextricably linked to the concept of solidarity. This means that for them, solidarity remains housed in the national setting - and attitudinal surveys<sup>8</sup> confirm that it is their own national state whom citizens expect to be looked after in the first instance.

In another research, more than three quarters of 12,500 respondents<sup>9</sup> agree that the European Union should be responsible for the reduction of inequalities; the political institutions have a role to bridge the unequal divisions between people, especially with regard to the redistribution of wealth, from one part of the Union to another. This rate is just slightly lower than that for redistribution at the national level; the national and international reduction of inequalities are judged nearly equally. As solidarity is seen by many as redistributing wealth to reduce inequality, this indicates that people accept Europe as a space of solidarity.<sup>10</sup>

There is a sense of support from across EU countries for welfare on an international level in the EU.<sup>11</sup> This approach and topic has the potential to really bring people together. But, if there is such strong support, we would have to **change the competences of the EU to ‘take solidarity seriously’** and change the way we support welfare trans-nationally in the Union (Alive and Active, 2018).

It would be important to find out why people support it. An interesting point related to welfare on a societal level is the decrease in need for individuals to be mobilised or involved in social action themselves. **It was found that a strong and omnipresent welfare regime can “release citizens from the need to invest in substantive support action.”**<sup>12</sup> So, the increased ‘solidarity’ of the state can actually decrease the ‘solidarity’ given by individuals. Where should that balance lie?

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7 Lahusen, Christian & Maria Grasso (eds) (2018) Solidarity in Europe. Citizens’ Responses in times of crisis. Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology. Palgrave MacMillan: Cham. p136.

8 Alive & Active publication (2018) European Commission

9 The “Transnational European Solidarity Study” (TESS) was conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) in 13 European countries in the summer and autumn of 2016. Respondents in the survey are citizens eligible to vote in national elections in the respective country. The final sample consists of 12,500 respondents with approximately 1,000 respondents per country, including Austria, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, France, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, and Sweden. For Cyprus, 500 interviews were sufficient due to its scarce population.

10 Gerhards, Jürgen; Lengfeld, Holger; Ignácz, Zsófia S.; Kley, Florian K.; Priem, Maximilian (2018): How Strong Is European Solidarity? Preliminary Results from a Survey Conducted in 13 Member States of the EU.

11 Alive & Active publication (2018) European Commission

12 Lahusen, Christian & Maria Grasso (eds) (2018) Solidarity in Europe. Citizens’ Responses in times of crisis. Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology. Palgrave MacMillan: Cham. p26.

## 4.2 — Historical Development of Solidarity

When the history of the concept of solidarity is traced it can be seen that the **frequency of its use can be shown to follow or depend on different crisis moments in history**, such as revolutions, wars or economic trouble (Schmale 2017). For many, the adjective ‘solidaire’ (solidary) has its first links with the time of the French Revolution, although Schmale’s research has shown it had more legal-political meanings during that period, rather than an ethical or moral connotation.

*“‘Solidarity’ belongs to the history of emotions and propaganda but is not a stable value system that consolidates political culture.”*

Schmale, 2017

Solidarity is frequently evoked in times of crisis and drives the politicisation of the EU in terms of questions of redistribution, burden-sharing and justice (Michialidou and Trenz, 2018). European Union Member States have agreed, through several treaties, to support each other in times of difficulties. To do this, a sense of solidarity and group-identity is needed. Lahusen and Grasso (2018) describe the prioritisation process of group solidarities at times of crisis:

“Particularly in times of crisis, where citizens are exposed to feelings of scarcity, relative deprivation, and distributional conflicts (Grasso and Giugni 2016) group solidarities might be either prioritized or sorted out. And this could mean that citizens center their solidarity more strongly on their own country and/or specific groups, even if they do not discard - in principle - the need to help other Europeans.”<sup>13</sup>

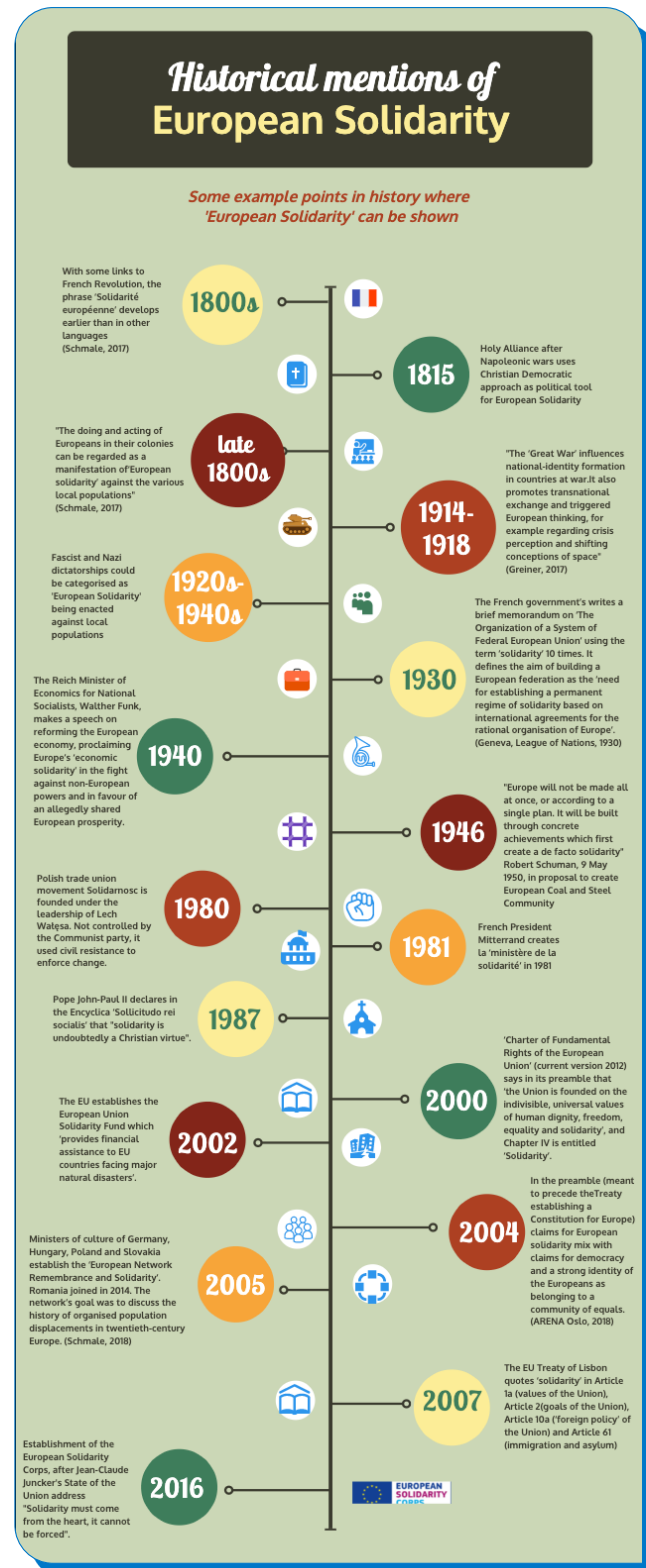
The reactions of people to terrorism acts in the recent past, as well as the refugee crisis, can highlight both the bringing together of people as well as increasing the ‘them and us’ feeling against ‘the other’.

**The tensions caused by crises can both bring people together and push them apart at the same time;** the priority seems to be the specific in-group they are focusing on.

<sup>13</sup> Lahusen, Christian & Maria Grasso (eds) (2018) Solidarity in Europe. Citizens’ Responses in times of crisis. Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology. Palgrave MacMillan: Cham. pp5-6.

## Some solidarity moments in history

The following pictogram reveals a short history of the concept of solidarity, focusing on European Solidarity in particular, it shows **some of the milestones or occasions in recent history where the concept was called on, referred to, or evidenced**. You can notice the relevance of crises and the diversity of institutions and movements that have connected to solidarity over the years.



Source: Nicodemi/Bacilija Knoch



## 4.3 — What Solidarity Should Definitely Not Be (according to 4Thought research)

During the 4Thought project and based on the initial model of concentric circles, it was understood that there are two parallel processes that are leading to defining the common ground of solidarity: one was identifying concepts that are strongly related to solidarity and as such are building common ground; the other was determining which concepts are not helpful in defining solidarity, due to their strong limitations.

When trying to define something, it is important to be as concrete as possible, to provide a sense of direction. And although 4Thought has not led to a singularly agreed definition or even an agreed set of concepts, common ground was still in the end composed of concepts that paint an image that can (hopefully) give a sense of orientation. At the same time, **the concepts not included in the final model can also give a sense of orientation and direction from another perspective.**

### Too general: concepts that can relate to almost anything, like process or positive outcome

The respondents removed concepts that could be applicable for many different contexts and concepts that did not necessarily bring added value to deciphering the meaning of solidarity. Examples of those are **'process'** and **'positive outcome'**. Both of these are indisputably related to solidarity which aims at a positive outcome and social change, and is undeniably a process (check Emile Durkheim's classic study, 1893, defining solidarity as "a process of social bonding which is neither linear nor marked by a clearly determined endpoint"<sup>14</sup>). However, neither word brought us any closer to understanding what solidarity means in practice, so it was agreed to leave them aside in the final modelling.

### Apophatic meanings – what solidarity is not

For some people, to grasp the meaning of something, they need to define what it is not. For several research studies, solidarity is delineated as being distinct and separate from other concepts, for different reasons:

Solidarity is distinct from...	Reasoning/explanation	Research origin
Friendship Brotherhood/Sorority Family Unity Cooperation	Solidarity is normative [related to norms and behaviours which are different for each individual]. To be able to historicise solidarity, Greiner needed to find a working definition that is value-neutral. Arguably, these concepts have inherent values that imply kinship and ties based mostly on tight ingroup affiliation. Or, in the case of cooperation, shared interests.	Greiner, F. Introduction: writing the contemporary history of European solidarity. 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Durkheim Emile, The division of labour in society, 1893, Presses Universitaire de France

Charitable help Care Humanitarian aid	Solidarity is group-bounded and there is reciprocity. These concepts are all one-way.	Lahusen, C and Grasso, M (eds). Solidarity in Europe. Citizens' responses in times of crisis. 2018.
Charity  Insurance	Considered a moral quality  Probabilistic reciprocity – seen as economic reasoning. The contribution represents an offer of returned assistance.  Neither of these are based on reciprocity, which for many is an essential element of solidarity.	Fabry, E. Synthesis of the 2010 edition of the European Think Tank Forum. 2010
Social Capital	Refers to resources or ingredients that need to be mobilised into acts of solidarity, but is not solidarity itself	Lahusen, C and Grasso, M (eds). Solidarity in Europe. Citizens' responses in times of crisis. 2018.
Loyalty Trust	The duty of sincere cooperation should be a separate concept, distinguished from solidarity, for the CEASEVAL research.	Wagner, M., Kraler, A and Baumgartner, P. Solidarity – an integral and basic concept of the common european asylum system. 2018.

## 4.4 — Some Anachronistic Aspects of Solidarity?

As discussed before, solidarity is normative, and people's understanding of the concept relates to their individual influences, culture, experiences and much more. Many of the following topics are linked to the **biased history of solidarity** that people have inherited. Several respondents and interviewees relate to them. They are part of their contexts and their backgrounds, and they have played an essential role in the development and understanding of solidarity, both on an individual level and on the level of nations or even on the European level. In the process of conducting the 4Thought project, in order to find a logic and connections between concepts that work as a common ground for most people, there are aspects of the following areas which were deemed as not so relevant anymore. These areas were dropped from the 4Thought model. However, they are **included here in the report to show the full picture of what has led to the common ground of the concept of solidarity**.

## a) Christian democracy

For some respondents in the research (especially those from Germany), solidarity was intrinsically linked to Christian Democracy. This is because of their historical and political backgrounds where it played an important role in their understanding and approach to solidarity.

### What is Christian democracy?

As explored in the Encyclopedia Britannica,<sup>15</sup> Christian Democracy is a political movement that had links to the social and economic justice philosophy of Roman Catholicism, with an emphasis on traditional church and family values, and also social welfare. It recognises the need for the state to intervene in the economy to support communities and defend human dignity. Even if the inspiration and base of support came from Christianity, the political movement has been autonomous from the church, and over time has become more secular, pushing for more pragmatic policies rather than religious themes.

### The 1815 accord - Christian democracy as a unifying political idea in Europe

*"To some extent, with the Holy Alliance, the idea of 'European solidarity' was born."*

Schmale (2017)

Although it can be argued that the French Revolution of 1789 was the catalyst for shifting political order in Europe, including movements of solidarity on a European level, there was another moment just a few decades later that was equally, if not more significant.

As Schmale (2017) writes, Europe in 1815 was trying to find some kind of political order to re-establish itself after the Napoleonic wars. The Holy Alliance was initiated by the Russian Czar Alexander I in September 1815 after the conclusion of the Congress of Vienna. The orthodox Czar convinced the Protestant Prussian King and the Catholic Austrian Emperor to base politics on the common moral ground of universal Christian principles, using the non-denominational interpretation of Christianity. More than 40 sovereigns quickly joined the accord. After nearly 30 years of uprisings and wars, the notion of Christian renewal was supported by many people.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christian-democracy>



### Fraternity/Sorority, also with religious support

For many people, the notion of fraternity as universal brotherhood is the basis on which one can feel solidarity to strangers (Michailidou and Trenz, 2018). For reasons of equality, it is important to balance this with sorority and sisterhood, and have included it in the 4Thought model. For some, there is an inherent link between fraternity/sorority and religion. Hauke Brunkhorst (2005) noted that the universalism of fraternity is a principle that binds all humans together as equals and builds solidarity among strangers. This notion has been made possible by the monotheist religions, where all humans are 'children' of the same and unique God, thus all brothers and sisters - and all equals before God (Michailidou and Trenz, 2018). For many, then, seeing others as a brother or sister, whether they are friends or strangers, provides an equity in approach, through religion, that defines solidarity.

### Christian values

For some people, the concept of solidarity is an absolute principle of assistance. In Christianity, this is portrayed in the Good Samaritan parable, where support was given to the person in need precisely because he was a stranger, and not belonging to the same 'in-group'. Echoes of this can be seen from the many Europeans who witnessed the suffering of civil war refugees and acted on impulse to assist (Michailidou and Trenz, 2018).

Humanitarian motives of wanting to 'do good' is promoted in many religions, not just Christianity. This can be the motive for some people to become actively involved in solidarity actions. In recent research<sup>16</sup> it has been found that in some Dutch cases this motive is strongly related to religion, even if religion in general does not dominate Dutch society (Hopman, Knijn and Melgar, 2017 pp 44).

**Understanding the historical development of the concept of solidarity**, and taking into account the power of the church and the social influence of Christianity across Europe over the centuries, connections can be recognised for some people even today. For many the roots of solidarity are in the development of religion in Europe, and the importance to them of helping others, whether known or unknown to them, is intrinsic to the concept of solidarity and the need or interest to support solidarity actions. However, this is **not true for all respondents**, and has its limits when considering how the religious angle fits with other concepts in our model.

### Christian Democracy is not in our model

For many respondents to 4Thought, to link the concept of solidarity to a specific religious framework automatically excludes a large number of people (those from other religions or atheists, etc). And even for those who support seeing democracy linked to solidarity, it was the 'Christian' part that made it too strictly related to religious views, and of one religion in particular. As with any definition, applying limits to one thing automatically delineates what it is not, and for solidarity this is a problem.

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<sup>16</sup> SOLIDUS research is a Horizon 2020 project of 14 research centres from 12 EU countries, exploring solidarity links to empowerment, social justice and citizenship <https://solidush2020.eu>

*"I believe you can be solidaire with people from other faiths and religions.  
And you don't have to be religious to be solidaire with people."*

Justina Garbauskaitė Jakimovska, Researcher; interview

Given that solidarity was strongly linked to human rights and inclusion and it was continuously highlighted that it needs to be expressed towards all human beings, **concepts that impose boxes to solidarity and try to limit it in some way were seen as undesirable**. They were seen as exclusive and solidarity should be just the opposite. This is why Christian Democracy is not included in the model.

## b) Workers' rights

For many, the union of workers and the coalition of masses to fight injustice in the workplace, has an indisputable relation to the meaning of solidarity. Over the last century, there have been key (crisis) moments where solidarity was linked directly to the joint fight of workers for their rights.

The well-known **Solidarność** social movement of Poland in the 1980s, under the leadership of Lech Wałęsa, used civil resistance to push for workers rights and social change in the country. At the height of its popularity, in September 1981, it had over 10 million members, which represented one third of the Polish workforce. Within 10 years of its establishment, the national government was forced to negotiate with the Solidarność-led opposition, which led to elections in 1989 and just after that, Wałęsa was elected president of Poland.

Connection on the international level came when a declaration was made by the Polish government, as part of the Lisbon EU Treaty (2007), detailing: "Poland declares that, having regard to the tradition of the social movement of 'Solidarity' and its significant contribution to the struggle for social and labour rights, it fully respects social and labour rights as established by European Union law, and in particular those reaffirmed in Title IV of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union." The 'Solidarność' movement had taken its place in history, recognised on a national and international level.

**Workers' rights were a steadfast referent in the development of solidarity policies in the last decades of the 20th century.** In the charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000), there is a specific chapter on solidarity, relating mainly to workers' rights, healthcare and the environment. Interestingly, in the European Pillar of Social Rights, in the area concerned with social protection and workers' rights, there is no mention of the concept of solidarity.

As time has passed and different socio-economic changes have affected our continent and the different democracies within it, **workers rights and trade unions are no longer the main connotation of solidarity for many people**. Respondents to the 4Thought project said that for them these concepts are not strictly related to solidarity, given that they were too specific or not completely connected to the concept of solidarity that the European Solidarity Corps is trying to promote. Although historically they have been



a very strong example of solidarity, Trade Unions were not deemed as necessarily relevant for today's reality and for young people today that are involved in solidarity activities and international youth work. The same goes for Workers' Rights, which for many should anyway be included in human rights, one of the four cornerstone concepts.

**The 4Thought project has shown that the need and meaning of the word 'solidarity' has evolved,** and a diverse community now sees and feels the need for more than a connection to workers fighting together in a union for their rights.

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- How much do you personally relate to these concepts?
- Do you feel they are currently relevant when considering solidarity within European activities?
- Could they be relevant again in the future?
- How much should beliefs be incorporated into the understanding of the concept of solidarity?
- What is solidarity NOT (for you)?

## 4.5 — Current Need for Solidarity

Having explored the term and the concept of solidarity, the question arises, why is solidarity coming up so much these days? Why is it such a popular term, a concept that is referred to for many different reasons? And why specifically now? What is happening at this moment of history for it to be so prevalent?

**All the interviewees and survey respondents unanimously said they feel the need for solidarity.**

There were different reasons for it, but far less diversity than when defining solidarity and no controversies in points of view. Interestingly, very often the answer to 'the need' covered the same aspects and interpretations of what the concept of solidarity means to people. **It's almost as if the need for solidarity is directly bridged by the meaning of solidarity.** Perhaps the need for solidarity is in itself the common ground we are looking for?



For some, the need for solidarity comes from how society is structured, and how it works: there is a feeling that the rule of markets means people should compete against each other or that society is becoming more and more selfish. Society is changing so rapidly that many are not equipped to deal with it. On a global level our systems are failing us - the more failure experienced, the more there is a need for solidarity. Citizen action can compensate for the lack of government involvement. For some people, human beings create a system to be able to live together and have a responsibility to think and act in solidarity with others, both within and across national borders; there is a need for knowledge and awareness of EU common values, principles and responsibilities as citizens. Through taking and giving, as individuals, as groups, as a society - there is a need to connect to others, there is a need for common understanding, and a need for common acts of solidarity for society to grow.

For other people, it was related to the need for more togetherness, for more unity.

*"I study chemistry, and I love the basic knowledge, when a cell meets another cell, the first thing it does is share information"*

Michele Corsini, Policy Maker; interview

They felt that society is becoming more and more divided, polarised, tribal, into groups of 'us and them'; **there is a need to enhance networks and relations, to create a way of solutions together**; if problems are faced together, then the solutions should be shared together, see the issues through the same lens - interdependence is vital, and as a global community people have a responsibility towards one another. Solidarity is a universal need based on being human, which is something cross-cultural that everyone should be able to relate to. **Either people try to be compassionate, to feel together, to act together, or the human species will die.**<sup>17</sup> There is an urgent need to realise the connections between people - how actions impact on others, and vice versa.

The need for solidarity can also be related to people's right to be involved, to not be excluded; **it's about human rights, basic needs, respect, dignity and social justice**. Solidarity is needed in the fight against discrimination, no matter your sexual orientation, disabilities, etc. It is for the benefit of the whole community; rights should be equal for everyone, including immigrants. **It is connected to ensuring space for everyone to be able to participate in society.**<sup>18</sup> It helps different generations to understand each other better. The values of humanity and respect should be re-visited and recalled - also as the basis for any future European programme development.

17 Davide Tonon, Practitioner; interview

18 Daniel Grebeldinger, Practitioner; interview

*"As too often these days, the picture is far from being bright: a seriously concerning geopolitical situation, the rise of populist, short-sighted and increasingly xenophobic discourse and a clear lack of ambition from our leaders are putting at risk the great achievements of European integration for the last 60 years. Young people are standing united; young people are bringing courage, determination and solidarity. Young people are bringing hope."*

European Youth Forum Statement, Europe is facing threats, March 2017

There is a feeling that solidarity is needed to fight inequalities, which are increasing everywhere in the world. Different groups of people still get different opportunities. By individuals thinking only of their own luxuries and not how it disadvantages others; by focusing only on their own needs, society can't change for everyone to have the same opportunities. The welfare state is no longer able to answer the inequalities of our time. **Solidarity is needed to increase fairness, equality, justice and integrity.**

There is a need to support other people, a responsibility to share time (not just material or money), to do something practical to help those less fortunate; it is about the privileges some have in society and the decisions taken on what to do with those; it is about the way an individual is brought up and socialised to provide help to others.

*"Only by sharing can we survive, otherwise we are just a collection of individuals, like the Hunger Games".*

Gabriella Civico, Practitioner; interview

For many people, **the need for solidarity comes from the state of the world right now.** The impending issues of climate change, the destruction of the world we live on and the actions taken to raise awareness; the shrinking space for civil society and the need to share resources; the increase of individualism, the rise of technology that separates people, the loss of community identity and values that can lead to isolation and extremism; radicalisation; populism; fascism; nationalism; immigration, the need to hear the stories of people that don't have a right to vote for their own future.

It's about the labels that are made for those that deserve solidarity,  
and those that don't.

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- Who is worth it, and who is not?
- How do you decide that?
- Who decides that?

*"Paris, I'm not a humanitarian. I am not there to 'aid'. I stand with you in solidarity. We do not need medals. We do not need authorities deciding about who is a 'hero' and who is 'illegal'. In fact they are in no position to make this call, because we are all equal."*

Pia Klemp (captain of Italian refugee rescue ship)  
refusing the Medaille Grand Vermeil from the Mayor of Paris, Summer 2019

# 5 — From the Local to the International Levels



**Solidarity can be enacted at many different levels.** It is a complex and multi-layered concept that is present in all levels in society. The community level, being the place where the need for solidarity is felt and most solidarity activities take place, must be given its importance. Civil society, in its role of connecting communities across different kinds of boundaries, also helps us consider the solidarity relationship between the community and the international levels, and whether they are mutually accepting and supportive to each other.

## 5.1 — Solidarity Acting at Different Levels

When defining solidarity through a geographical lens, solidarity can include many different levels: the community, the region, the nation, transatlantic, the 'West', humanity, and many others. Policy documents state that solidarity can be found between citizens and the EU member states (Proposal for Regulation 2018) as well as among local and regional communities belonging to those Member States.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, within the make-up of the European Solidarity Corps, this recognition of different levels is shown through the provision of grants and project types, where solidarity activities are supported for a whole diversity of national, regional and local actors (Regulation for legal framework, 2018).

*"There are spatial differences [in solidarity] not just between national and transnational but between core and peripheral regions and even intra-urban inequalities"*

Alive & Active, 2018

**These levels have very different meanings and implications for solidarity.** People attach themselves to different reference groups, and much academic research has found that it's necessary to differentiate between solidarity with people within the respondents' country, with other people within the EU, and with people beyond Europe. These are seen as three different groups (Lahusen and Grasso, 2018). The same project found its respondents feel most attached to their own country and to general humankind, while fewer feel European (More about this in the 'European Solidarity' Chapter 6).

Whichever group people feel more attached to, **balancing the national needs and the national notions of solidarity with those of the international** is important. There are borders built, both with legal physical limits within the European Union and more intangible or mental borders between people. Does each individual and each Member State agree on the notion of what it means to be 'European'?

1 Committee of the Regions opinion on the European Solidarity Corps, 5 Dec 2018

Is solidarity a strong element of that? Research shows that the notion of European legitimacy is built on solidarity as a principle factor, but that solidarity is hampered by national considerations and (mental) borders (Raspotnik et al. 2012, quoted in Wagner et al 2018). It seems that there are some things that stop people being more solidary, some are tangible and solid and others more conceptual. For many people this demands a prioritisation of national needs first.

*"I know we are working in Europe, with values coming from the French revolution (and predominant religions), but I don't think it is the only link to European levels."*

Davide Tonon, Practitioner; interview

There remain differences and separations between levels, the understanding and interpretation of the **concept of 'solidarity' is still contested at all levels: global, regional (EU), national and sub-national levels** (Wagner et al, 2018). No matter how you approach it, there is no clear-cut agreement on what solidarity is.

## 5.2 — Importance of Community/Local Level

Everybody lives in a local community - even if your physical neighbour is kilometres away from you. Things that are 'wrong' in everyday life most often happen on the local level. Feelings of social exclusion, as addressed through solidarity activities, are likely to be local and identity-focused; citizens and organisations will therefore prioritise these local concerns and act at the local level (Lahusen and Grasso, 2018).

The role of the local and regional level in young people's civic engagement was highlighted by the Committee of the Regions in their opinion on the European Solidarity Corps (Dec 2018), identifying this as a first essential point of contact for young people in the area of solidarity. **The level to reach out to young people, to get them involved in something, is the local level.**

*"Now, with the new solidarity aspect, I hope we can focus again more on the communities, on common things and common responsibilities."*

Survey response

The results, impact or effects of a solidarity project should be felt by the local community too, including their needs and expectations,<sup>2</sup> according to the European Parliament, by addressing societal challenges and needs, solidarity actions within the Solidarity Corps should be to the benefit of the community or to society as a whole.<sup>3</sup> Through solidarity activities, young people are encouraged to express their **commitment** for the **benefit** of the community.<sup>4</sup>

For the 2019 activities within the Solidarity Corps, the following outcomes are expected for the communities involved: “increased ability to address societal challenges; greater understanding and responsiveness to social, linguistic and cultural diversity.”<sup>5</sup>

**This focus on community** (the level where solidarity is felt, and where it is used to meet the societal needs) means that community impact might well naturally become a higher priority for the field in the coming years. This is not to say that competence development or individual learning will be left behind - just that the adjustment of priorities related to solidarity will most probably have a ripple effect at various levels. It can be argued that both the communities where the solidarity activity takes place, and the communities where the protagonists come from, should be impacted, by the solidarity activity.<sup>6</sup>

Connecting the local level to the international or European is not always obvious and some studies have found that these activities don't always find a strong European connection (Alive and Active, 2018). However, as mentioned in the same publication, there are some **significant objectives of solidarity activities that are relevant across the European Union**: empowerment, understanding, and social cohesion in times of crisis. This connects to the concept of European added value that is required for local projects to be funded in the European Solidarity Corps.<sup>7</sup> These common areas of relevance that are felt in small communities in different corners of the EU help to provide congruence, while at the same time respecting the diversity that exists.

Bringing Europe, or transnational projects, down to the grassroots level has been a **perennial challenge**. Seeing ‘Europe’ as an institution of ivory towers, far from the needs of the ‘common people’ is a raw feeling these days (ie. see Brexit referendum results of 2016). Creating the connection between individual communities all across Europe and the international level is not an easy task. At the end of the previous European youth programme (The Youth in Action Programme) there was a movement and a manifesto produced by SALTO Participation to lobby for the continuation of Youth Initiatives in future programmes, precisely to bring the European Union closer to all young people:

“Funding these projects is a chance for the EU to be directly relevant to young people's lives and the lives of their communities at the local level. Young people's awareness of being not only national citizens but European citizens as well can thus be raised and strengthened.”<sup>8</sup>

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2 Regulation for legal framework for European Solidarity Corps, 2018

3 European Parliament's first reading of the European Solidarity Corps, 12 March 2019

4 European Solidarity Corps guide 2019

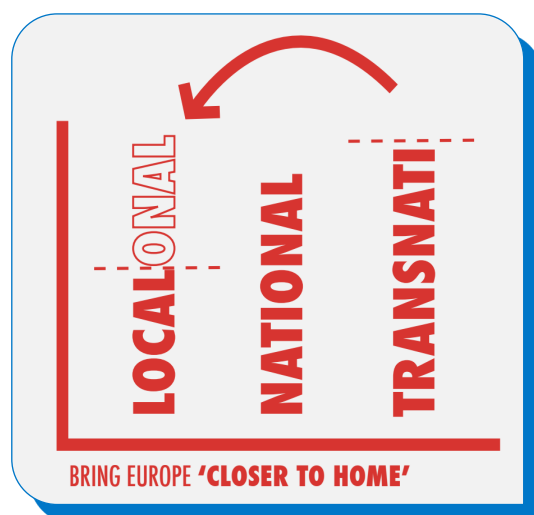
5 *ibid.* p15.

6 Report from EPLM conference 'POWER of Learning Mobility: Community Impact' 2019

7 European Parliament's first reading of the European Solidarity Corps, 12 March 2019

8 SALTO Participation. A manifesto for Youth Initiatives to continue in the Erasmus+ Youth in Action programme 2014-2020. 2013





Source: Nicodemi/Baclija Knoch

It didn't work. Youth Initiatives were discontinued for the next seven years. However, in the current European Solidarity Corps, Solidarity Projects have a similar aim, transferring European values, through granted activities, to the local level. By offering European-level grants for local projects, this also produces a side effect of the Corps which is to include more young people that haven't yet been involved. It could be described as reaching across the levels, from the European to the local: **using solidarity to bridge the differences.**

### 5.3 — Civil Society Organisations Cross Traditional Boundaries

The structure of most EU and European countries includes policy and governmental structures connecting on regional, national and international levels. This Europe of borders and boundaries that has been inherited from the wars and socio-political influences of the past few hundred years has meant that flows of resources, money, power and programmes are often channelled through traditional bureaucratic systems, which are often not very flexible or responsive to the fast changing needs of different communities. The structures which are put in place don't always encourage connection or communication between groups.

*"Solidarity can transcend the traditional boundaries within society. The social orientation of solidarity can change the community axes, rather than sticking with the historically defined borders of nationality, solidarity can even bring people together from the extreme left, the church, neoliberals etc. All the people can find their place to act and make a difference together, regardless of their political and social positions."*

Max Fras, Researcher; interview



**Civil society is important.** In this ever-more-connected world of information and social media, traditional boundaries are becoming less and less important. However, it was found (TransSOL. Horizon 2020 Project findings, 2018) that most CSOs act most frequently at their national level because that is where funding, policies and beneficiaries are located.<sup>9</sup> The same research found that CSOs also have the inherent potential to **bridge that gap between spatial and political solidarities**: they cross traditional boundaries; bring people together in value-based activism; provide structures for momentum and channels for activities to impact positively on societies and communities, no matter where the national boundaries are.

In developing the Solidarity Corps, the Commission documents advocate for solidarity activities to address unmet societal needs and challenges, both current and future, for positive societal change.<sup>10</sup> The legal base for the Corps states that solidarity projects respond to different societal challenges and crises; national and local actors can be supported with these by working together with NGOs, youth organisations and local stakeholders.<sup>11</sup> Encouraging sustained dialogue between CSOs and municipalities and supporting the active involvement of citizens is something the Europe For Citizens Programme also supports.<sup>12</sup> The European Parliament, in its response to the proposal to establish the Solidarity Corps, confirmed this approach too, stating that; “dialogue with local and regional authorities and European networks specialised in urgent social problems, should be encouraged, in order to best determine unmet societal needs and ensure a needs-oriented programme,”<sup>13</sup> especially “where activities have a strong impact for the benefit of a community or society as a whole.”<sup>14</sup>

The very concept of civil society, connecting through values and across national boundaries, shows the enactment of solidarity on a European level. For many, international volunteering embodies the EU values. One survey respondent for 4Thought directly requested that volunteering should be more supported by the EU institutions and policies because of this potential.

## a) Need for political space

Comparing the different ‘levels’, the Horizon 2020 research has shown that transnational solidarity is seen as a weaker tier, between national and cosmopolitan/universal concerns (Lahusen and Grasso, 2018). To strengthen it, the Commission’s document Alive & Active (2018) expresses the **need for a more developed political space** to support and act on it. The same document shows that the need for political space and support from a wider constituency is also replicated in the field of civil society organisations and their volunteers, on whom we are dependent for the delivery of most solidarity activities on a transnational level.

9 TransSOL, “Publishable Synthesis of Main Findings”, Deliverable 7.10, p95, [https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/194579\\_en.html](https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/194579_en.html)

10 European Commission’s proposal for a regulation for the European Solidarity Corps, June 2018

11 Regulation for legal framework for European Solidarity Corps, 2018

12 Europe for citizens programme priorities 2019 - 2020

13 European Parliament’s first reading of the European Solidarity Corps, 12 March 2019

14 European Parliament Committee on Culture and Education, 15 Feb 2019



*"The development of solidarity activities has been limited by the lack of a political space and constituency to mobilise support."*

Alive & Active, 2018

**The shrinking spaces for civil society** in recent years put this approach under threat. Increasing infringements on the freedom of association, assembly and expression for civil society organisations.<sup>15</sup> This makes it "harder for them to support the protection, promotion and fulfilment of human rights within the Union due to both legal and practical restrictions",<sup>16</sup> as stated by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights.

## b) Solidarity capacity - volunteering

Capacity for volunteers, and for the volunteering organisations that support them, must be increased. Encouraging the capacity of existing organisations is also an aspect that the European Parliament supports<sup>17</sup> and the European Youth Strategy (2019-2027) within the 'connect' fields of 'engage', 'connect', and 'empower,' aims to address. It states that. "To encourage young people's engagement in solidarity, Member States should focus (among other things) on the promotion of support schemes and capacity-building of organisations active in this area."<sup>18</sup> It seems to be accepted that preparation and sustainable systems within the CSO sector are essential to enable more young people to be involved in solidarity activities.

Solidarity actions which are led by citizens are very often dependent on volunteers.<sup>19</sup> This **citizen approach** is the fundamental base for the European Solidarity Corps programme, which uses volunteering as its main way "to promote solidarity as a value."<sup>20</sup> This is related to the principles and standards of behaviour that are expected from solidarity activities, that are indivisible from those of volunteering. So much so, that the natural conduit for the European Union to provide needs-based and principled humanitarian aid, is through volunteers, according to the European Parliament.<sup>21</sup> (There is more about this in Chapter 7b).

This does bring into question the recognition and support for the CSO sector, as there are often operational obstacles to making this happen (barriers related to funding, staff turnover, organisational weaknesses etc). **Attitudes and support for volunteering are very diverse across the EU.**

There are several movements in current times on a policy level to increase recognition and support in a more uniform way, or at least with shared minimum common denominators, across the EU: The

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/shrinking-space#\(%2240721995%22:\[1\]\)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/shrinking-space#(%2240721995%22:[1]))

<sup>16</sup> <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/challenges-facing-civil-society-orgs-human-rights-eu>

<sup>17</sup> Outcome of European Parliament's first reading, 12th March 2019

<sup>18</sup> Engaging, connecting and empowering young people: a new European Youth Strategy (May 2018)

<sup>19</sup> (Alive & Active, 2018) European Commission

<sup>20</sup> European Solidarity Corps work programme 2019

<sup>21</sup> European Parliament's first reading of the European Solidarity Corps, 12 March 2019

European Parliament has recognised the need for volunteering to have increased visibility and awareness, as a lifelong activity for citizens of the European Union;<sup>22</sup> A renewed resolution on volunteering is, at time of writing, being prepared by the European Commission in a consultative process throughout 2019 and 2020; **Recognition of volunteering** as a priority will be echoed through the German Presidency of the EU in 2020 and 2021 which will focus on the value and importance of building a community through volunteering.<sup>23</sup>

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- How important is volunteering for you?
- Is volunteering always a solidarity activity?
- Are the values of volunteering mirrored by the values of solidarity?
- What is the relation between solidarity and the capacity of volunteering organisations and the recognition of volunteering?
- How can the increase of political focus on solidarity help to prevent the shrinking spaces for civil society?

## 5.4 — International Solidarity

Following the research of the Berlin Studies of the Sociology of Europe,<sup>24</sup> European solidarity turns out to be more established than global solidarity. There seems to be a stronger connection for individuals to the European level than the Global one. Perhaps it's easier to identify with something that is closer and more tangible, with aspects that touch everyday life, rather than something which is more conceptual and more distant?

*"It's good that solidarity goes from micro level to macro level - that it transcends through the levels of society. But for this to happen, you need solidarity to be present in politics, media... in fact in every sphere in public life."*

Anonymous; interview

22 European Parliament legislative resolution of 12 March 2019

23 Appendix IV Workplan for: Engaging, connecting and empowering young people: a new European Youth Strategy (May 2018)  
[https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy_en)

24 [https://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/soziologie/arbeitsbereiche/makrosoziologie/arbeitspapiere/bsse\\_37.html](https://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/soziologie/arbeitsbereiche/makrosoziologie/arbeitspapiere/bsse_37.html)

## Global solidarity

The highest level possible, when comparing levels and putting them in a structure, is global solidarity. This is **solidarity with citizens and states outside the EU**, extending to encompass all the citizens of the world. 'Global solidarity' is often referred to by civil-society organisations, which are active internationally or intercontinentally, as well as by trade unions, religious communities and the United Nations (Schmale 2017). This 'community of interest' approach, very often today facilitated through technology and social media, links to the concept that civil-society can transcend boundaries and traditional national borders, through the sharing of values and attitudes, as shown above.

*"[Solidarity] is bigger than European/national identity, it's more a global identity that you reach with these solidarity actions. That's why it's important, because it's bigger than all the borders existing in the world. I'm always sceptical [of a hidden EU policy agenda] working in EU projects, I understand what it is, but [a project's aim] is more than that."*

Tuba Ardic, Practitioner; interview

At the same time, to **not** work towards global solidarity implies putting limits and boundaries on it. (Please see chapter 7d for more on this aspect of inclusion and exclusion). By focusing on one continent only (even if that continent is where the current conversations on solidarity in the youth field are taking place) it is **too limiting and exclusive**. Therefore, efforts need to be made to awaken global solidarity in people's hearts and minds, especially having in mind current challenges that affect not only nation states or Europe, but our planet as a whole.

### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- Is it possible to feel solidarity on several levels at once?
- What about you - do you feel more attached to your community, your region, your country, the EU, or humankind?
- How many of these do you feel solidarity with at the same time?
- What links can you draw between solidarity activities at local level and the concept of global solidarity?
- What effect do borders have on the concept of solidarity?



# 6 — European Solidarity or Solidarity in Europe



This 4Thought project, and the European Solidarity Corps, are both **framed by Europe**, and more specifically the European Union. Although we have recognised above that providing limits and boundaries goes against the concept of solidarity for many, it is important to acknowledge that European solidarity is a fundamental base of the Union, from a historical policy position at least. The socio-political development of this continent has included many struggles and conflicts that when resolved then resulted in improved relations and an improved sense of unity, combining common values for a peaceful future. That, for many people, defines a positive way forward for living together and should be the direction in which an ever closer union should be built between the people's of these Member States, with one hand also connecting to the neighbouring countries.

From European Treaties to European Programmes to policy initiatives, solidarity is often capitalised upon by the EU institutions as the fibre that both brings people together and provides the ties that bind people together. For example, according to the legal basis of the European Solidarity Corps, solidarity provides social cohesion, strengthens communities and the sense of belonging, builds social relationships and encourages shared values and kinship.<sup>1</sup>

To state the obvious, Solidarity, and European Solidarity, are **different things**. And there is also a difference between Solidarity in Europe and European Solidarity. To be clear from the beginning - there are no definite answers in this chapter. It is hoped the questions and issues that are provoked will help you think through your understanding of the concepts.

## 6.1 — Political Developments of European Solidarity

### a) History of the term

According to research, the composition of the term 'solidarity' and 'European' or 'Europe' seems to have emerged during the nineteenth century. In his publication mapping the use and frequency of terms, Schmale (2017) notes that the French term 'solidarité européenne' develops earlier than in other languages. In English, German, Italian and Spanish, the notion acquires relevance in the late nineteenth century. It's curious to reflect on the reason for this, and to appreciate the influence of the French revolution on our modern European culture.

The development and use of the term 'European Solidarity' has changed over time. In examining its current use in different literature and newspapers, Schmale (2017) notes that '**solidarité européenne**' does not refer to the European institutions themselves, but to the behaviour of European countries or governments; therefore, 'solidarity' is not genuinely European but 'borrowed from the national political vocabulary'. Following this logic, solidarity starts as a national concept, and is then shared between several nations that support the concept.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation for legal framework for European Solidarity Corps, 2018

According to Michailidou and Trenz (2018), the principle of European Solidarity was originally conceived to create **social bonds among Europeans** and to drive social cohesion. Others describe it as a mechanism of social integration, providing the vehicle for societies to constitute and legitimise themselves on a social, political and cultural level (Greiner 2017). So if there were specific intentions behind it, what does it currently aim for?

## b) But what does the term 'European Solidarity' mean?

In short, there are **no clear answers** (yet).

The two terms in themselves are elusive. What is Europe? What is solidarity? How to define either of them! Even in the dependable world of social science research, there are no definite answers. In recent years, the concept of European solidarity "has become one of the most contested claims in public debates, turning the concept into a force for mobilisation for intellectuals, political actors and citizens' movements."<sup>2</sup> Many assumptions (both explicit and implicit) are made about 'European Solidarity', especially in discussions about redirecting the European project (Greiner 2017).

Within the Treaty of Rome (1957) and the Solemn Declaration of European Union (1983), as well as the Treaty of Lisbon (2009), there is a focus on an **ever-growing union** between the peoples of Europe. Sangiovanni (2013) notes that this expanded the concept of solidarity from not just a value binding member states on a macro level but also binding the citizens of each and every member state on a micro level. It is not just about countries working together, but that solidarity is something **expected from each individual**.

## c) European Union - formation

For the European Commission, solidarity defines the **European Project**.<sup>3</sup> From the very beginning of the Union solidarity has played a role, as stated in the Europe for Citizens programme Guidance:

"The European Union is built on solidarity: solidarity between its citizens, solidarity across borders between its Member States, and solidarity through support actions inside and outside the Union."<sup>4</sup>

One of the fundamental reasons for creating the European Union was as a peace project. Robert Schuman in his declaration for creating the European Coal and Steel Community of 9 May 1950, said:

"The contribution which an organised and living Europe can bring to civilization is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations."<sup>5</sup>

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2 Michailidou, A. and Trenz H-J., ARENA Working Paper 5/2018, European Solidarity in times of crisis, towards differentiated integration. June 2018

3 European Solidarity Corps Programme Guide 2019

4 Europe for Citizens Programme Priorities, 2019-2020

5 [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/europe-day/schuman-declaration\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/europe-day/schuman-declaration_en)

*“Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.”*

Robert Schuman, 9 May 1950

The concrete achievements by those living in the Member States that have created a ‘de facto solidarity’, as referenced by Schuman, have helped to define the Union<sup>6</sup> as it is today. Schmale (2017) also echoes this with his view that the history of European integration can often be seen through the history of European solidarity in practice.

Solidarity is referred to as a concept and employed within European treaties and measures, and has been for decades. **Mutual political solidarity among member states** was a cornerstone of the Lisbon treaty (2007). In cases of crisis the member states have agreed to act jointly. The solidarity clause of the ‘Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union’, created after the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004, proposes that states “act jointly” and “provide assistance to another EU country which is the victim of a natural or man-made disaster.”<sup>7</sup> This ‘emergency mechanism’ demands cohesion and the fair sharing of responsibility in areas of economic, social, territorial, welfare, and transnational solidarity (Michaliaidou and Trenz, 2018).

Parallel to this, the European Union has developed a number of **policy measures for financial assistance**, or ‘fiscal solidarity’ between member states (e.g. the ‘European Financial Stability Facility’, the ‘European Stability Mechanism’ and the ‘Stability and Growth Pact’).

So, many policies include the concept of solidarity, employing the phrase relating to finance, crisis, different programmes and in the normal everyday cooperative approach of the European Union. It can be described as a fundamental linchpin that connects Member States and citizens alike.

In recent years, the development of European Programmes has also scaffolded the formation and support of the European Union, especially aimed at the involvement of young people as the future generation that will inherit it. According to the process of setting up the European Solidarity Corps, the aim was to “build a better European Union”<sup>8</sup> that is relevant to young people... “therefore solidarity actions should stimulate their interest in the common European project.”<sup>9</sup> “The Programme Guide also suggests to raise awareness of its positive impact.”<sup>10</sup> As per the discussion in Chapter 5, the bridging of the European and the local level - even by the funding of local projects in small communities across the continent - it seems there is intention to use solidarity to help mould and form the Union.

6 European Solidarity Corps Programme Guide 2019

7 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/solidarity\\_clause.html](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/solidarity_clause.html)

8 Regulation for legal framework for European Solidarity Corps, 2018

9 ibid

10 European Solidarity Corps Programme Guide 2019



### What is the common legal term?

Solidarity is mentioned many times as a principle in EU treaties and in EU law. But how enforceable are the obligations in them? There is **no consensus on definition**, no shared understanding - no singular agreed notion of what solidarity is or what distinguishes 'enough' solidarity from 'not enough'. How can solidarity be measured? Who does it relate to, and what are the moral duties and responsibilities of those who act in solidarity? According to Michialidou and Trenz (2018), there is no legal or fixed answer to these questions.

Similarly in the academic world, there are just different expressions of solidarity or '**islands of solidarity**' (Tsourdi 2017; Thym and Tsourdi 2017; Moreno-Lax 2016, as quoted in Wagner et al 2018). The definitions just aren't there to be found.

There has been much research carried out over the decades in sociology, economics, political sciences, and psychology, etc. into the forms and conditions of social integration and cohesion to better understand the social foundations of societies (Durkheim 1893; Marshall 1950; Parsons 1966). The focus has been mostly on national societies. This means that our knowledge about the transnational dimension of solidarity and in particular about European solidarity, is rather limited.

*"The vagueness attending the use of solidarity in EC communications, as well as the nature of solidarity as formulated in the Treaty of Lisbon, reflects the fact that in contrast to quantifiable indices estimating the progress of socio-economic and regional integration, solidarity is: a) hardly measurable, and b) contingent upon a special kind of togetherness and mutual obligations."*

Giannakopolus, Ed, 2017

The Commission's publication *Alive & Active* (2018), based on the Horizon 2020 research, notes that the emphasis on solidarity within EU Treaties is rather at the level of the Member State or public bodies. It underlines the lack of any common European interpretation of the limits and application of solidarity in legal terms between the different Member States. This publication itself states that an appropriate legal framework is needed, and the **policy framework for solidarity needs to be improved**, this is emphasised by European Commission paper *Solidarity in Europe*:

"Spontaneous and voluntary engagement [by member states] to provide short-term critical relief does not constitute a sustainable, systemic or embedded policy framework [of solidarity]".<sup>11</sup>

The lack of any agreed definition for the concept of solidarity is also reflected in the academic world, in policy documents and in the practice field of CSOs in general. Despite being employed as a term; from legal documents that form the basis of Union for the 27 European countries, to titles of European programmes

<sup>11</sup> European Commission DG RI B.B.6 (Oct 2018) *Solidarity in Europe – Alive and Active*  
[https://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy\\_reviews/solidarity\\_in\\_europe.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy_reviews/solidarity_in_europe.pdf). p8.

providing millions of Euro grants for young people across the continent, to academic research from a wide diversity of disciplines, etc. the meaning of solidarity, and therefore also European Solidarity, is only implied and inferred. No overt legal framing of the concept has been agreed, and therefore no measurements of it can be made. Yet, there is still something within solidarity that encourages togetherness and increases unity, and the continuing direction of the European project still echoes that.

#### d) European integration and European identity

The Lisbon Treaty of 2009, encouraging an ever-closer union of the peoples of Europe, demonstrates that there has been a shaping of solidarity between Member States over the decades.

*“Solidarity serves as a European welding force, both in theory and in practice... The notion of a European solidarity union has been essential to validating the integration process.”*

Greiner 2017

In one mapping of social science research,<sup>12</sup> it was found that feelings of belongingness to the European community have gradually been established through 60 years of European integration, enabling shared identification with European institutions, as well as European and cosmopolitan identities (Delanty and Rumford 2005; Beck and Grande 2007). European integration has also furthered cross-national experiences and contact among citizens, as well as transnational trust between the European peoples (Delhey 2007).

One of the main general objectives of the European Solidarity Corps<sup>13</sup> is that, by delivering a programme with solidarity activities across the continent, **European cooperation will increase** and become more relevant to young people, stimulate their interest, guide them in their ‘aspirations for a better Union’, and actively engage them in Union citizenship. The Europe for Citizens Programme<sup>14</sup> also aims to provide different actions and coordinated efforts to bring Europe closer to its citizens and to enable them to help construct an ever-closer Union. For example, projects funded within this programme in 2019-2020<sup>15</sup> should raise awareness of the European integration process based on solidarity and common values.

In the European Commission’s contribution to the leader’s meeting in Gothenburg (2018), it was noted that a **common sense of identity and shared values** gives strength to many people.<sup>16</sup> When setting up the European Solidarity Corps in 2016, the European Commission proposed to reinforce the sense

12 Horizon 2020 TransSOL project

13 Regulation for legal framework for European Solidarity Corps, 2018

14 Europe for Citizens Programme priorities 2019

15 Europe for Citizens call for projects 2019

16 Education & Culture: EUROPEAN COMMISSION Strasbourg, 14.11.2017 COM(2017) 673 final COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE

of belonging to a wider community and to develop a specific solidarity spirit of the Programme.<sup>17</sup> The European Youth Strategy promotes **young people as agents of solidarity** and positive change for communities across Europe, 'inspired by EU values and a European identity'.<sup>18</sup>

Concrete solidarity actions and activities in local communities, framed within a **value-based approach**, should strengthen this sense of European identity.<sup>19</sup> Even if the activities are not face to face, and people don't meet but rather connect online (such as in the E-twinning Move2Learn, Learn2Move project<sup>20</sup>) there is still potential to increase European consciousness.

The issue was raised, by interviewees and survey responses to 4Thought concerning EU rights and principles or European identity, as to whether these are intrinsic concepts that relate directly to solidarity or not. For this project, following the feedback from respondents, the decision was taken to incorporate EU rights and principles with Human Rights, which is already there as one of the four cornerstone concepts (see Chapter 7a).

As for **European identity**, this was a contentious topic with no clear answers or direction given. It is true that 'Europe' on its own is a complex concept, which is interpreted by different people in different ways - is it a political structure, a geographical landmass, a western culture, etc? Where is the line to include or exclude these concepts in any definition of solidarity? Should your European identity delineate your European solidarity?

When it comes to shared identity, Hopman et al (2017) show that it is integral to be able to start acting in solidarity. According to them, there are 3 main steps to be taken:

- awareness of a problem;
- recognition of this 'shared identity';
- preparedness to actually get involved and become active.

It seems then that having a 'European layer' in one's identity is required to be able to feel and act in European solidarity with others.

Some research (Michaliadou and Trenz, 2018) argues that the old politics of European identity is being left behind, and that a new politics of differentiated solidarity in the EU can be distinguished. This same paper states that **solidarity is different from identity**. For them, solidarity is not a single unit where preferences and values converge, it doesn't rely on an ethic of shared membership. It is increasingly replacing those concepts with discourse related to charity, humanitarian assistance and equality of rights.

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17 Regulation for legal framework for European Solidarity Corps, 2018

18 Engaging, connecting and empowering young people: a new European Youth Strategy (May 2018)

19 European Council, Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council request Nov 2018

20 E-twinning learn 2 move, move 2 learn project [https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-17-650\\_en.htm](https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-17-650_en.htm)

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- How integrated would you like the European Union to be?
- How does your view compare to your peers and families?
- Which aspects should always remain in the national competence of the Member States?
- What mental borders do you think there are against European integration?
- What is the overlap between the political solidarity in the case of crisis in the EU and the concept of solidarity employed in activities with young people?

## 6.2 — European Solidarity or Solidarity in Europe?

Citizens of EU countries are both national citizens as well as citizens of the European Union. Solidarity can be most obvious at the local level (where needs and activities are most visible) but regional and national needs and concerns are often important too. When it comes to European Solidarity, this is another layer of complexity, and another layer of identity, that people have to consider.

To differentiate between the national and transnational, Greiner (2017) provides the frame that states that ideas and practices of solidarity may take shape on a transnational level (European solidarity) or in a national context (solidarity in Europe). This means that citizens may understand European solidarity as a pan-European concept or confine themselves to its implications on a national level, within a member state of the European community.

In a different research Gerhards et al (2018) established that European Solidarity, “can only be relationally determined in comparison to other territorial spaces:

- (1) solidarity between citizens and regions of the same nation state;
- (2) solidarity between the citizens and states within the EU;
- (3) solidarity with citizens and states outside of the EU.”<sup>21</sup>

During this research, when measuring the levels of solidarity in different EU Member States, they used the parameters of double majority support from the population. This is explained in Gerhards et al (2018) research where they reference Habermas (2011) who found that European citizens have two roles in the constitution of the European Union: (1) as citizens of their home nation, and (2) as citizens of the European Union. So, it is not enough if just the majority of all Europeans support the idea of European solidarity: The majority of citizens in each individual Member State must favour the idea of solidarity in Europe as well.

Again, there is a link, and a difference, between the national and the international level of European Solidarity between EU member states.

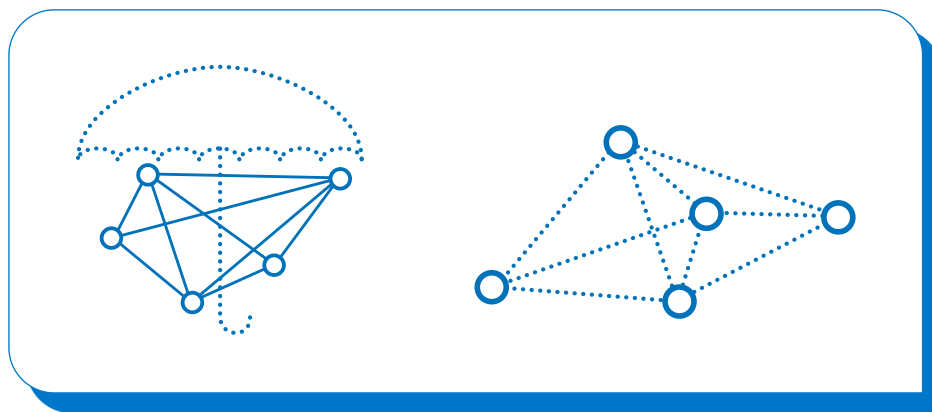
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21 Gerhards et al: How Strong Is European Solidarity? Preliminary Results from a Survey Conducted in 13 Member States of the EU. 2018. p19.

### European Union: bigger than the sum of its parts?

‘Solidarity in Europe’ is a concept that transcends the national level. It is something **supranational**, that binds people (overcoming national boundaries) and creates something that is superlative. There is an extra value that creates Europe, making the Union bigger than the sum of its parts. The transnational connection creates a cohesive, tighter network between countries. It knits people closer together, despite language or geography. It is about solidary actions within a European context.

Intra-national European solidarity vs the Supra-national model (where the umbrella is a metaphor for European Solidarity, something over-arching, more than (just) the connection between the countries.)



Source: Nicodemi/Bacilija Knoch

It is not possible to say that one of these interpretations is better than the other. It depends on an individual's identity, their understanding of solidarity, what Europe means to them and how they interpret these questions and concepts. It is interesting to note the diversity of opinions.

### What next?

Even if European Solidarity is not (yet) defined and different levels and interpretations of it exist, it is still the basis of international treaties, laws, European funding programmes... and more. There are still debates going on about whether the European Union should be further integrated, whether it should be separated into different streams of different ‘speeds’ and whether, for example, Brexit will tear the fabric of European Solidarity more than anyone expected. The closer linking of the national and European level of a person's identity is not a foregone conclusion for many Europeans. European Solidarity, in its insubstantial obscurity, could provide a **vehicle for many to help navigate through the unforeseen challenges** of the next few years.

Strangely it is its lack of definition and vagueness that allows people to rub along together in diversity. Do we really want to set a more concrete precise framework that can be measured? One that can be used to criticise and judge when scaled standards are not met?

Within the structures of the European Commission, the European Solidarity Corps now connects to the 'Innovation and youth' strand and also indirectly to the strand 'European way of life'. The definition of a border can impose restrictions that some people resist. Does this influence how European Solidarity or Solidarity in Europe is seen?

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- Is European solidarity a solidarity between individual nations?
- Or is it a value or attitude shared by people, no matter where they live?
- Is European Solidarity something more than the sum of the national political cultures?
- Does your strength of European Solidarity change depending if you are supporting people in your own country, in other EU countries, or in countries outside of the European Union?
- Should European Solidarity be defined more precisely?



# 7 — Findings from the 4Thought Project



## Common Ground for 4 Solidarity Cornerstone Concepts

The understanding of solidarity very much depends on a persons' personal and professional background. A diversity of thoughts and backgrounds have contributed to shaping the common ground on solidarity and the concepts that make it. As seen through all the desk mapping in the chapters above, it is normative. Whether respondents are from a former communist country or they have been active in the field of volunteering or are currently working for a humanitarian aid organisation or are actively fighting Brexit... their **personal history of solidarity is loaded and so is the general history of solidarity**. All this was very much reflected in the diversity of answers to: what is the concept of solidarity? In the survey, all the concepts offered (except two), had at least some votes to include them in the final concept and some to exclude them. Some of them had an almost equal number of both.

Any concept that relates to personal ideology makes it very difficult to have a common understanding and to find common ground. It is culture-specific, and each culture has a different understanding of solidarity - and that's not just 'national culture' related to countries and nations and languages, but also sub-cultures and cultures of communities of values.

If there is any conclusion to make, it's that even groups of people connected by a certain identity trait (for example practitioners in the field of international youth work that contributed to 4Thought project) do not offer the same understanding of solidarity or related concepts. Therefore, there is a **need for dialogue** for interpretations to be explained and differences to be understood and built upon.

What solidarity does is highlight the diversity we have in our 'European culture'. You can see the different walks of life that are drawn together for shared values and a shared approach. Ironically **unity in diversity** seems to underpin the concept of solidarity.

This chapter gives an introduction to the main findings of the 4Thought research activity. Each topic is touched on, and some background is given on the connection for that topic to the concept of solidarity.

It is important to have the main findings in mind when acting in solidarity and when developing solidarity activities with and for young people; they help provide the common ground.

### The four cornerstone concepts

Following the findings from the 4Thought project, there are four concepts that are most closely linked to the definition and narrative of solidarity. They are the ones that received the highest results in the research, with no contradictions from any of the other respondent groups. The four cornerstone concepts are:

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

It is acknowledged that these four cornerstones of solidarity are a mix of values, attitudes, priorities and approaches; a **mix of elements on a mix of levels**, which in themselves can mean different things to different people. This 4Thought project does not aim to define these concepts, or provide an explanation



for the differing interpretations that the respondents had for them. Accepting that for many involved in international youth work there is a certain amount of common ground for these concepts, we left it up to the individual to decide the meaning for themselves, and therefore to prioritise the ones that help define and build solidarity.

Interestingly, the concept of 'Inclusion' was strongly supported by practitioners and young people. 'Active Citizenship' was most strongly supported by the researchers, and it was young people in particular that supported Empathy. However, Human Rights was by far and away the most supported aspect for all respondents in the research, so let's start with that.

## 7.1 — Human Rights

Human Rights had the highest support from all four groups in the 4Thought project. All of them strongly supported it, with policy makers and young people giving the highest percentages of support. It was also the topic most referred to in interviews when going more in-depth into questions and reasoning. Human Rights, as a topic, was identified as being essentially very close to their understanding of solidarity.

*"Human rights are like armour: they protect you; they are like rules, because they tell you how you can behave; and they are like judges, because you can appeal to them. They are abstract - like emotions; and like emotions, they belong to everyone and they exist no matter what happens.*

*They are like nature because they can be violated; and like the spirit because they cannot be destroyed. Like time, they treat us all in the same way - rich and poor, old and young, white and black, tall and short. They offer us respect, and they charge us to treat others with respect. Like goodness, truth and justice, we may sometimes disagree about their definition, but we recognise them when we see them violated."*

COMPASS p.382

Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world, from birth until death. They define the basic standards that are necessary for a life of dignity. They apply regardless of where you are from, what you believe or how you choose to live your life. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights<sup>1</sup> has very obvious and direct links to solidarity, with such articles as the Freedom of Assembly, the Right to Democracy, Social Security, Workers Rights and the Responsibility to others.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

As the COMPASS Manual says (2015), the universality of human rights is derived from the fact that **all humans are equal** (in this respect at least). Human rights can never be taken away, although they can sometimes be restricted - for example if a person breaks the law or in the interests of national security. These basic rights are based on shared values like dignity, fairness, equality, respect and independence. These values are defined and protected by law.

It is in taking a stand and acting in order to assure that **everyone is living a life of dignity** that solidarity can be identified. When we recognise that someone is struggling to access their rights, that someone is discriminated against or that their dignity is being violated, and we act because we want to make sure that they are able to enjoy their rights to the full extent, just like everyone else. Just like us. That is solidarity. Solidarity is also seen in recognising that we have privileges and that we are **using those privileges for others** and not for ourselves.

*"Why do people feel moved to act? They are trying to defend or promote the rights of others. Whether it is right to healthcare, education, clean environment... When we are compelled to act to take care of ourselves and our close ones, it is not solidarity. It is when we act for those we are not directly responsible for, we want to defend them and promote their rights."*

Gabriella Civico, Practitioner; interview

We don't need to wait for a serious human rights violation to happen in order to stand in solidarity - continuously fighting for equal rights for everyone is an essential act of solidarity.

One interviewee highlighted the disparity for young people who want to get involved with something, to act in solidarity, and those they are 'helping' or supporting. They said that research has shown that very often in some EU countries, it's middle-class people who want to help those worse off, to support the poor who can't go to school or shelter young people who have 'negligent' parents, etc. This form of solidarity is always for someone who is in a less favorable position and never for someone 'like me'. The interviewee expressed that solidarity isn't about ethics and morals or your task as a 'good religious person' or reaching out as part of the elite to help those worse off (even if all those things are needed and appreciated), solidarity is more that 'we are together in that and some of us do not have the same rights as others'.<sup>2</sup>

2 Manfred Zentner, Researcher; interview

## Support

Highlighted as one of the seven supporting concepts, the root of the word comes from the Latin 'supportare', from; sub, 'from below' + portare, 'to carry'.<sup>3</sup> This notion does indeed imply strength or a difference in position.

These days, the concept of support brings the idea of rather **giving strength to someone**, to look after their needs; it can have connotations of help and assistance, of sustaining, even to endure difficulties. It is a polysemous word with a large number of associations to it. Perhaps because of that, and the positive bridge it can provide to other concepts offered as part of the recipe of solidarity, it is endorsed by many respondents to 4Thought project to be a main ingredient.

Support also has the **quality to transcend the different levels**, because it can imply supporting one person that is in need or supporting the growth of the whole community or supporting those fighting climate change all around the globe. It is open enough to encompass many different forms of solidarity and its main advantage perhaps is that it does not depend on affiliation to any ingroups.

Below are five further findings from the mapping and project findings of 4Thought that link to Human Rights:

## Humanity

One of the overarching dimensions that came from the respondents of the 4Thought project was the concept of **humanity** and the importance of seeing every human being as equal and 'deserving' of solidarity. The concept supports the notion that everyone's rights should be promoted and respected, regardless of whether they belong to our group(s) or not. It was proposed during the 4Thought research as an additional concept that is a part of solidarity and several people recommend it to be additionally considered in the modelling discussions. As one interviewee stated, humanity ensures a win-win situation for everybody. It is good for oneself, for others and for the whole community.<sup>4</sup>

*"In all of the five countries and their investigated initiatives, the preparedness of people to become actively involved in solidarity initiatives appears to be based in humanitarian values, such as justice, fairness and egalitarianism."*

SOLIDUS, Hopman et al, 2017, p41

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/support>

<sup>4</sup> Nina Nentwich, Practitioner; interview,

Humanity essentially ensures that **we see everyone as humans** and that we stand up for each other. It is about recognising when someone is not able to fulfil their rights and acting to support them (or even fight with them) to get access to their rights. They can be from very different walks of life but it is the cause they are fighting for that brings people into solidarity with them.

## Togetherhness

Humanity is closely linked to togetherness or feeling closely related to others. While togetherness can also imply being closed to 'outsiders', for the respondents in 4Thought it meant a feeling of closeness or unity among humans. This has a direct link to unity, as discussed in the first chapter - the concept of oneness that joins the individuals.

Solidarity is about people doing things **together**, building something together, while respecting each other's needs, helping achieve these needs together for the community and while doing that, growing together.

It reflects the attitude of: "we are in this together" and even if something is not happening directly to me at the given moment, I will still stand in solidarity with those who are facing it, with fellow humans.

**Strengthening communities** was underlined as one of the seven additional supporting concepts to the 4Thought model. Having a tight-knit safety net or building sustainable future proof systems, can enable the togetherness of a community to have a sense of security and longevity.

## Respect

With togetherness comes respect for each other. Respecting others because they are human beings just like us. Because when you respect someone, you feel empathy and responsibility and you are compelled to act. You feel the things and you engage. As one interviewee noted,<sup>5</sup> you have to respect the people that are challenged by a problem so you can be a part of it and then move to shared interests. Without respect, that step towards solidarity with others cannot come.

*"You respect other human beings just because they are human beings. I don't have to love them, but I can still respect them. I do not believe in unicorns and rainbows but minimum respect is necessary to exist together."*

Ozgehan Senyuva, Researcher; interview

5 Atta Durani, Practitioner; interview

Respect for others also implies **respect of difference** - acknowledgement and acceptance of another way to be, to do, to act. Another interviewee<sup>6</sup> noted that to be in solidarity with someone is not to eliminate the differences between but to use them as a resource, a richness.

As an outcome of the research process, the concept of respect was suggested by several contributors as an additional key concept that should be included in the modelling and discussions about solidarity. It was also requested in the 4Thought survey that the values of humanity and respect should be re-visited - also as the basis for any future European programme development.

## Privileges

Instead of sacrifice for others (or charity), it emerged from the research that it makes sense to look at the privileges that some have in society. It is for people in a situation of privilege, to make a decision about what to do with this position. To use or abuse it?

*"I am very lucky to be born in Germany in those years. But it is by chance. I feel a responsibility to care for others, who are not in that lucky position."*

Rita Bergstein, Policy Maker; interview

Solidarity is then about recognising and using privileges to **support others** who have not been born into the same privileges. This, of course requires the person to first be aware of their privileges, as many people are in denial or not ready/able to accept them.<sup>7</sup>

One interview mentioned the willingness to give away something, using their privileges less for themselves and more for someone else - not because they are nice but because those they are standing in solidarity with are not able to enjoy their (human) rights as much as they should. Also mentioned was the importance to reflect on one's own perspective, and to be aware of the difference that this position can make, the position to be not just talking, but working, and acting. This all relates to **responsibility**, which was one of the seven supporting concepts supported in the 4Thought model, especially by practitioners and young people. The root of the word solidarity can be described as having 'mutual responsibility'.<sup>8</sup> It's about having a duty, or an obligation towards others, especially when privileges increase power in a situation. As Uncle Ben in Spider Man famously says: 'with power comes great responsibility'.

In addition, privilege should be considered in relation to solidarity because it is the increasing division between those who are privileged and those who are not that might actually generate more need for solidarity.

6 Francesco Perra, Practitioner; interview

7 Check Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young people, for the activity "Take a Step Forward"

8 <https://www.etymonline.com/word/solidarity>

*"My biggest concern was the increasing division among different groups of people: privileged, articulate and confident vs non-privileged, poor, marginalised young people... and how those divisions are growing. My issue is how do we bring different types of young people closer together, so they discover what they share and not what divides them?"*

Howard Williamson, Researcher; interview

When looking at privileges through the lens of European solidarity, on a general level, many Europeans are more privileged than those outside of Europe. This is yet another reason not to focus just on solidarity within Europe but beyond as well.

## Social justice

Referred to by many in the 4Thought research process, a higher number of policy makers and researchers supported the concept compared to practitioners and young people. Voted as one of the 7 additional supporting concepts.

**Social justice (Oxford University Press definition)<sup>9</sup>**

**Noun**

**Justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.**

A precondition for solidarity, according to Durkheim (1893), is individuality being replaced by social justice, a system with social justice would change everything that may prevent the free development of individual talents and abilities.

This would mean, for example, that the established order would have to be changed to the extent that it provides the lower classes with access to new functions in society. For Durkheim, this was a question of social justice for "justice is the necessary accompaniment to every kind of solidarity" and is "necessarily encountered everywhere men live a life in common,"<sup>10</sup> be that as a result of social division of labour or the result of attraction of like to like. In this sense, social justice is also connected to an **implied social**

<sup>9</sup> Oxford University Press definition: [https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/social\\_justice](https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/social_justice)

<sup>10</sup> Durkheim Emile, The division of labour in society, 1893, Presses Universitaire de France. p77.

**contract**, which is the basis of acting in solidarity with others. It's a way of holding society together. In fact, it is social justice-led values and actions that comprise solidarity initiatives in different policy domains such as food banks, debt support, migrant assistance, employment campaigns and housing projects.<sup>11</sup>

Interestingly, according to Michailidou and Trenz (2018) **social justice is not so present in Europe today**, as there is no organised and systemic approach to solidarity.

*“The notion of European solidarity has thus been gradually decoupled from struggles of social justice, which remain the prerogative of national welfare states. Solidarity is primarily envisaged as case-specific salvation, and no longer as system related revolution. [...] A wider notion of European solidarity is needed, therefore, to embrace these ethics of humanitarianism as detached from community and identity. Only on this basis, the challenges to social justice, which contemporary Europe is facing, can be addressed properly.”*

Michailidou and Trenz. p6.

## 7.2 — Empathy

Empathy received support or strong support from all 4 sectors, with young people rating as the highest supporting sector. 41% of young people that responded to the survey and interviews rated it as one of the top 5 concepts that define solidarity.

Empathy is closely related to solidarity, because it is that **spiritus movens** that compels us to act. It is about understanding and feeling with others, recognising that someone is in need, sharing the sense of injustice and being motivated to act. One interviewee underlined that the lack of empathy, provoked by young people being glued to the screens, in turn provoked deficiency of solidarity.<sup>12</sup>

Empathy is closely linked to **compassion** - to be able to sympathise with the suffering of others. During the 4Thought process, compassion as a concept had support from practitioners but not from young people, it was not mentioned once by policy makers, and 29% of researchers put it as a concept they would actively exclude.

11 Alive and Active (2018) European Commission  
12 Daniel Grebeldinger, Practitioner; interview

Feeling empathy is essential for solidarity because without it, solidarity could be a set of empty acts, almost like mechanical motions. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, it ensures that solidarity acts are based on genuine feelings for the people and for the cause.

There are several important **elements to empathy**:

- Perspective taking - seeing things from the perspective of the other, recognising their 'truth';
- Staying out of judgment and not deciding what is right and wrong;
- Recognising the emotion in other, even when they don't recognise it themselves;
- Connecting with the other - connecting with something in me that knows that feeling;
- Not offering solutions or advice. Being there. Being in solidarity.

Being truly able to empathise does not limit us only to the close ones, or even those with shared values and beliefs, but it ensures the feeling empathy with every living being, including the environment as a whole. That said, empathy is related to **sustainability in solidarity** as well, in being able to empathise both with the future generations and future developments related to our planet.

### The role of empathy

Empathy is essential in reaching out and acting in solidarity with those who are not in the close and closed circles, since it allows us to **see things from a different perspective**, to begin to understand their (potentially) different worldviews and behaviours. Empathy helps in understanding the situation in which people who need solidarity are in.

However, many people say that empathy, like solidarity, is not limitless and that in order to feel empathy, there needs to be at least a shared base of values to connect with. At the same time, one could argue (and some people during the interviews and surveys did) that insisting on the same values reinforces the exclusive potential of solidarity and closes the door of genuine solidarity based on humanity. Some see this as a selfish motivation for solidarity, however, seen from another perspective it can also be that we act together **for the common good**.

*"The most striking example [of solidarity activities] are those whose objective is a positive effect to the broader society and not just a specific group."*

Sanne Hogesteeger, Practitioner; interview

There is an ongoing debate as to whether empathy is a value or a skill. Is it an ability that can be practised, taught and improved? Or is it a value, to live the feelings of another?

## Solidarity as a value

Similar questions have been asked in relation to solidarity - is it a core value, an attitude that can be developed or a skill that can be practiced. Or perhaps all those three things together?

Solidarity as a concept that provides principles or standards of behaviour, is strongly promoted on a political level,<sup>13</sup> and for some, strongly felt.<sup>14</sup> It is listed as one of the four fundamental Universal Values in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity.

Jean-Claude Juncker, in his State of the Union address (2016) pointed out that “[Solidarity] must come from the heart. It cannot be forced.” Indeed, reflecting this value-based approach, the newly established European Solidarity Corps Programme can be found under Heading 2 of the Multi-Financial Framework of the European Commission, titled ‘Cohesion and Values’.

The sense of unity is important within this value; to be **stronger together**. In the Rome declaration (2017), enhanced unity and solidarity are cited to increase the strength and resilience of the EU, where “standing together is our best chance to influence [global dynamics], and to defend our common interests and values.”<sup>15</sup> Repeated again in the Sibiu declaration (2019), the position of solidarity for the EU member states is to stand together in times of need: “We can and we will speak with one voice.”<sup>16</sup> In the establishment of the European Solidarity Corps and other European programmes, it is noted that the unity and cohesion<sup>17</sup> that solidarity gives will help society cope with the current and future challenges,<sup>18</sup> by holding a ‘strong moral ground.’<sup>19</sup>

It seems to be that a shift in recent years has been moved towards a **value-based approach**, and this is where the policy world is placing the concept of solidarity. The value-based approach links empathy and solidarity even more closely together as values that shape its foundation.

## Link to emotions

For many, to be and act in solidarity, you have to **FEEL the need** for solidarity. It comes from the heart. The commitment for you to show solidarity or be involved in solidarity acts, has to be rooted in an emotion. Indeed, research shows that solidarity actions can be informed by feelings or emotions and they can be informed by norms and interests (Michailidou and Trenz, 2018).

It could be said that the creation of a group, and the solidarity within that group, is reinforced by the development of shared emotions. This has been seen often, for example within right wing populist groups and their ability to steer in-group solidarity by encouraging and inflaming emotions against outgroups.

For others, solidarity is a focus on attitude, rather than the action, the product or the result of activism. One interviewee notes that...

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13 European Solidarity Corps Guide 2019 & Work programme 2019 & European Parliament’s response to it

14 Regulation establishing the European Solidarity Corps, October 2018

15 Rome declaration 2017, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/03/25/rome-declaration/>

16 Sibiu Declaration 2019, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/05/09/the-sibiu-declaration/>

17 Europe for citizens call for projects 2019-20

18 Commission proposal for a regulation establishing the European Solidarity Corps, June 2018

19 European Solidarity Corps Guide 2019

*“Solidarity should be moved from a direct action, a result-oriented thing, to something deeper. It’s rather an attitude to be encouraged.”*

Alexandra Severino, Researcher; interview

Interestingly, some research has shown that solidarity has gone through a de-emotionalisation of its meaning in recent years. In his research that looked at the frequency of the use of the term solidarity in literature of 5 languages, Schmale (2017) showed that the terms connected to it have developed in a more technical direction over the last 60 years. It can be shown that the French version: ‘solidarité européenne’ has moved from being associated with terms such as...

‘fraternité’, ‘entraide’ and ‘responsabilité’  
to  
‘cohésion’, ‘coopération’, ‘efficacité’ and ‘renouvellement’.

It helps to question these changes. Is this a sign that solidarity is changing in its references over time? Or is it a result of the power and use of emotion, probably more on the policy level, in connection to in-group behaviour?

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- Is empathy a skill or a value?
- How can you develop or improve your own empathy?
- How much do you have to feel emotionally connected to something to be part of it?
- Thinking of some groups or activism you have been involved with, which emotions were underpinning the connection?
- How much do politicians use emotion to encourage group behaviour?

## 7.3 — Active Citizenship

Active Citizenship as a concept received support or strong support from all 4 sectors of practice, policy, research and young people in the 4Thought interviews and surveys. It is seen as a concept that links directly with their understanding of solidarity. Researchers gave the strongest support for this topic.

Throughout 4Thought, it was highlighted that solidarity **needs to be about acting**. About doing something, making a stand and influencing positive social change. Active Citizenship implies that 'I take a stand and I act', instead of being a passive observer and receiver of 'what is being served to me'.

*"Of course we need hope. But the one thing we need more than hope is action. Because once we start to act, hope is everywhere."*

Greta Thunberg, environmental activist

### a) Action

There was an overwhelming response from the 4Thought project, both from the survey and interviews, that solidarity can never be just about feelings. There was a general consensus that in order to be involved in a solidarity activity, you have to feel the need, and experience a drive or commitment. Many respondents referred time and again to the need not just to feel solidarity but to transfer those **feelings into action**, solidarity means to be involved actively and to do something. It can be to support a victim, to raise awareness, to prevent the cause of injustice, to sign a petition - all of these have been quoted as solidarity activities.

*"In Turkish, the root of the word means 'taking a stand with'. It's a commitment. You don't just wake up one morning and feel solidarity with LGBT."*

Gulesin Nemutlu Enal, Practitioner; interview

## Solidarity is more than a feeling

The following visualisation came from the iterative evaluation of the qualitative interview process of 4Thought:



Source: Nicodemi/Baclija Knoch

## b) What is Active Citizenship?

According to the Council of Europe<sup>20</sup>, active citizenship is, “The capacity for thoughtful and responsible participation in political, economic, social and cultural life.”

The citizenship part of this concept is connected to **rights and obligations** that all members of society have. In relation to solidarity, it means that “I act for the greater good of everyone,” that “I recognise inequalities and human rights violations,” and that “I feel compelled to act in solidarity with those who are facing those challenges.” It is closely related to the concept of responsibility, not just for ones self but also for others in society. Civil society organisations are an integral part of acting for solidarity.

The groups that each of us belong to, set certain demands and expectations in order to be an (active) part of them. This is true for informal groups as well as more formal groups, such as nation-states - entities that require social integration.<sup>21</sup> Solidarity here is tied to citizenship, and also to formalised rights and obligations (Turner 1990). This can link directly to the engagement and active involvement of the democratic process of the ‘groups’ you belong to.

According to the Guide for the European Solidarity Corps, and the European Youth Strategy, young people taking part in solidarity activities are **agents of solidarity and positive change for communities** across Europe. They make a meaningful contribution to society<sup>22</sup> and contribute to strengthening cohesion, solidarity, democracy and citizenship in Europe.<sup>23</sup> The European Parliament’s response to the Commission’s proposals to establish the Solidarity Corps continues this, underlining that the citizens and long-term residents of the EU, from all walks of life and ages, are able to engage as active citizens due to the Union’s principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination.<sup>24</sup>

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20 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/enter/glossary>

21 Horizon 2020 TransSOL research 2018

22 Regulation for legal framework for European Solidarity Corps, 2018

23 Solidarity Corps Programme Guide 2019

24 European Parliament’s first reading of the European Solidarity Corps, 12 March 2019



### c) Active participation

Active participation has been at the core of all the EU youth programmes as an essential pillar of **empowerment of young people** to take their space and become active members of society. Firstly, to have access to different structures in the society and then to have competence and confidence to act within the structures, to have their voices heard and to have a space to make a change and shape the society according to their needs.

*“The term participation means that someone can be part, has or gives a part of something. Thus, participation in social life implies that someone is able to use existing opportunities and has access to existing offers, including information, education, labour market and social rights. In political terms participation means that someone can make their voice heard and can get involved in existing decision making processes.*

*Therefore participation means the active involvement in shaping the diverse environments one lives in and according to the needs and interests.”*

Youth Partnership Glossary on Youth<sup>25</sup>

The willingness to engage a generation of young people<sup>26</sup> to make a meaningful contribution to society (as referenced in Juncker’s State of the Union speech 2016<sup>27</sup>) and the eagerness to show solidarity towards people and places in need,<sup>28</sup> should be catered for within the European Solidarity Corps. Once young people have taken part in a solidarity activity, it’s hoped that they would continue to be active citizens afterwards - that the atmosphere generated by the activities would increase motivation<sup>29</sup> and that the commitment would continue.

*“[There should be] active participation, in everything. In a democracy, people should be proactive, to use their rights and help others to use their rights.”*

Lora Egle, Young Person; interview

25 Youth Partnership: Glossary on Youth

26 Solidarity Corps 2019 Work Programme

27 Juncker’s speech, referenced in the Commission’s proposal for a Regulation for the Corps, June 2018

28 Engaging, connecting and empowering young people: a new European Youth Strategy (May 2018)

29 Outcome of the European Parliament’s first reading, March 2019



For many this active participation in society, combined with a shared feeling for the need of positive change, is an integral part of the concept of solidarity, it is important to balance the feeling and the acting.

The importance of active citizenship, being active within the democratic structures of the society where you live, was also underlined by many. For many people, there is a certain level of responsibility as a citizen or duty within that role, within the expectations of solidarity.

But first you have to feel it and that comes down to emotions, attitudes and values.

#### d) Democratic values

It can be argued that active citizenship and active participation in civil society and the democratic life have a strong overlap with each other - through the values which are integral to democracy.

To change things on a societal level it is important to use democratic processes and values. Democracy can be a “key dimension of solidarity initiatives that succeed in achieving social impact.”<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the Programmes set up by the European Union have democratic values as a baseline. Objectives of the European Programmes (Erasmus+ Youth in Action programme) can be linked directly to values inherent to democracy, such as respect for cultural diversity or inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities or special needs, as well as working against discrimination, intolerance, racism and xenophobia (RAY Long Term Effects 2018).

*“Most interviewees express a high awareness of and their appreciation for ‘democracy values’. All except a few also vote or have an intention to vote in elections once they become eligible, and they indicate mostly equality, solidarity or freedom as values [inherent to democracy], which are important to them.”*

RAY-Long Term Effects, 2018

The regulation setting up the European Solidarity Corps (2018) notes that the programme links to EU policies related to citizenship and democratic participation. The second strand of the Europe for Citizens Programme, notes in its Programme Guide, support for “projects and initiatives that develop opportunities for mutual understanding, intercultural dialogue, solidarity, societal engagement and volunteering at Union level.” This is a clear message supporting **democratic engagement and civic participation**.

30 Hopman, M., Knijn, T. & Melgar P. (2017) Research Report on Inter- and Intragroup Solidarity, SOLIDUS project. p23

## e) Volunteering

To volunteer is to do an activity (or set of activities) without payment for the benefit of the community. The volunteer involved might be a professional offering their expertise pro bono or it might be the volunteering has no link to their profession and they are driven by personal motivation and a willingness to help.<sup>31</sup>

The focus on an activity for the good of others or generating added value for the common good, is where there is a direct link to solidarity. The connection of volunteering to action, being involved in the community and playing a part is clear. After the process of research, it was noted as one of the seven supporting concepts in the 4Thought model, with many respondents from the different groups supporting it (young people the most, then practitioners and researchers, then policy makers). Several respondents to 4Thought said that volunteering is **one of the most visible expressions of solidarity**.

However, it can be questioned as to whether all volunteering is driven by solidarity or creates solidarity as an effect.

### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- How are your feelings and actions of solidarity connected?
- Are volunteering and solidarity inextricably linked?
- How is an increase of public welfare, as a result of a solidarity activity, measured?
- How do activities' time constraints fit with the reality of complex community actions and individuals involvements?
- Does solidarity support the creation of active citizenship, or does increased active citizenship create more solidarity?

## 7.4 — Inclusion

In the findings of our interviews and survey, practitioners and young people particularly saw inclusion as a key part of the solidarity concept, with a balance percentage (once those that would exclude it had been taken into account) of 28% and 35% respectively. 19% of policy makers and 14% of researchers supported it. This gives an average of 26% of all respondents from all sectors that say it is part of the concept for them.

**Social inclusion** is “an on-going process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have greater participation in decision-making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights.”<sup>32</sup>

31 Youth Partnership glossary on youth <https://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/glossary>

32 Inclusion A to Z, SALTO Inclusion. 2014

Social inclusion is a process of preventing or reversing the process of social exclusion by empowering and equipping individuals and groups with opportunities and resources needed to **fully participate in society**. This implies participation in decision-making and democratic processes, and access to fundamental rights, which should lead to a sense of belonging.

Solidarity is an essential element in ensuring inclusion of everyone in society, given that those who are excluded need others to act and make sure barriers that are preventing them to fully participate in society are being removed. Inclusion is a long-term process and as such, requires a mindset of solidarity that is not just linked to one-off events and short-term actions. Solidarity needs to be aimed at **changing systems, structures, policies and attitudes**, to think wider about how people have an opportunity to be included. The impact of solidarity activities should make social change, see the opening opportunities or the making of things better for others in the future. It is not about providing the same for everyone - it's about adaptation for different needs to permit equity of inclusion.

According to research,<sup>33</sup> engaging in solidarity is not confined to particular groups shaped by gender, age, education or class. This is an interesting finding to show that the willingness to engage isn't self-selecting by any category - especially when comparing against those that do participate in international volunteering for example. Using participation data from both Erasmus+ and the former Youth in Action Programme, it has been shown that those that do take part in international volunteering are usually already in a privileged position (Şenyuva and Nicodemi, 2017). If participation of individuals in solidarity activities does not discriminate by gender/education/class but the resulting reality of who actually takes part in the end is very different, then there are questions to be raised about systems, access, support and equity (rather than equality) of involvement.

*"In Latvia I was in a social bubble - where there are people just like me. I am here [volunteering in another country], I see these youngsters, these are in these centres, with problematic social backgrounds, without parents. This is a different reality."*

Lora Egle, Young Person; interview



There are questions about the active citizenship of those with fewer opportunities and how their voice is heard in structures of society. It can be shown through research that political behaviour is patterned by social inequalities and forms of social exclusion.<sup>34</sup> Solidarity could provide some options here, as a resource to be tapped into, leveraging political communities with shared values to counter inequalities (Lahusen and Grasso, 2018). **Overcoming these divides** could be a game-changer for millions of young people across Europe.

### Importance of inclusion for solidarity

Despite being voted one of the four key cornerstone concepts, not many respondents spoke about inclusion during the project research phase. It seems to be such a keyword, so absorbed into the international youth work approach, that people don't elaborate on it. It almost seems as if people take it for granted.

If there is a chance to have solidarity, the one that goes beyond the limits and barriers often presented to it, inclusion needs to play a key role in this process. With the Solidarity Corps approach, these discussions about the meaning and directions to choose from, have come to the surface and this opportunity should be used. Inclusion needs to be given a priority in order to build solidary attitudes among the people. And not just solidary attitudes towards people close to them, the like minded ones, but also towards all the others on the principle of humanity.

Comment was made repeatedly for European Programmes to be more simple: the simpler they are, the easier they are for practitioners to work with. People with special needs have some opportunities but it could be more.<sup>35</sup> There needs to be more work to prepare and support them to participate: "It's not that they are not interested - they are - but they are scared."<sup>36</sup> Very often young people are not in a position to extricate themselves from other responsibilities or attitudes that restrict their involvement. And if they are struggling to participate as it is, they might be struggling with showing and receiving solidarity as well.

Some people need a supporting hand to reach out for them to access opportunities and to be included. This is the inextricable link between inclusion and solidarity.

### Diversity

We are all different. The many layers that make up each person's identity, the experiences they go through, the other people they interact with, all build a picture of millions of individuals, none of whom is the same as any other.

Following this logic, the phrase 'young people with fewer opportunities' can cover a very wide range of individuals. From a solidarity perspective, what is important to note is that all young people are deserving of solidarity and all of them have solidarity to show and act upon.

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34 (Brady et al. 1995; Kronauer 1998; Grasso 2013; Dunn et al. 2014; Giugni and Grasso 2015a; Grasso et al. 2017b). sourced from Lahusen and Grasso, 2018

35 Nina Nentwich, Practitioner; interview

36 Howard Williamson, Researcher; interview

But what about the young people whose values are not shared by those developing solidarity activities? How are their voices heard? How are they included? By 'preaching to the converted', the limited audience that many European programmes have reached so far, is already a self-selecting in-group.<sup>37</sup> The same needs are being catered for and the same values are re-iterated from project to project. The barriers of 'us and them' is therefore, continued and increased.

Solidarity activities, if done in a truly inclusive way, can overcome this.

*"Volunteering actively prevents Hate Speech. It promotes inclusion and tolerance and enables citizens to be directly active in developing the Europe they strive for."*

Gabriella Civico, Practitioner; interview

### Solidary approach

For many people, inclusion is an attitude; it says 'I'm open', it says 'I'm thinking outside the box', rejecting the pre-set limits and confines that we set or are set for us, and finding ways to increase the participation of the 'other'.

It is important to consider the integrity with which solidarity activities are developed. It would be wrong to develop them in a tick-box manner simply as a means to an end. **Walking the talk** is vital here. A solidary approach must be adopted in the development of solidarity activities. It's not just the objective of the project but also the way it is developed, the manner in which it is delivered, the team's approach, etc. Inclusion, as a cornerstone of the concept of solidarity must also be prevalent at those phases. It should be enacted as **an attitude - a solidary approach**.

### Using 4Thought as an example

Through the research phase of the 4Thought project, several respondents commented on the mix of concepts that were included in the testing model: "You can see diversity - different cultures and different walks of life."<sup>38</sup> People commented that there were concepts included that they really didn't agree with but they were happy to have them included in the model.<sup>39</sup> This showed the variance in understanding - contradictions of interpretation according to different experiences and cultural backgrounds. It wasn't important to have one definition framed, but to have a diversity of definitions mapped in front of them, to share the space with people with different values, different experiences and different definitions was important for them.

37 Max Fras, Researcher; interview

38 Sanne Hogesteeger, Practitioner; interview

39 Nina Nentwich, Practitioner; interview

## Reaching out

As shown in more detail later in Chapter 8b, people developing solidarity activities very often choose from and create in-groups and out-groups. However, having inclusion as a cornerstone can be what breaks down the limits of this exclusion approach. Inclusion can make solidarity. Being in solidarity with someone isn't just about feeling connected to your neighbour or having something in common with someone who shares the same political views as you. By encouraging - and even demanding - an inclusive approach, a momentum should be started for **reaching out to the 'other'**, to the people you don't see, to the ones that are excluded or marginalised, to those suffering in other places, even to future generations.

*"It makes sense to show solidarity to everyone, if you show inclusion, otherwise it's always exclusion, and nothing to do with solidarity."*

Nina Nentwich, Practitioner; interview

Inclusion is such a crucial aspect to turn community activism into a solidarity approach. It's a vital cornerstone to be included. Overcoming the barriers, opening up participation, changing attitudes to think outside the box and include the 'other', is a fundamental aspect to make solidarity well-grounded.

## Global solidarity (again)

The emphasis on the European context can be limiting. As shown in Chapter 8c, the barriers and boundaries that it gives (both physical and mental) can lead to closing itself against the 'other'. Inclusion has a global and diverse dimension. We should actively try to look beyond the boundaries that we set or are set for us, when creating solidarity activities and in developing a solidary approach. This can include thinking wider, looking beyond Europe towards global solidarity but also breaking down other boundaries such as time - with a focus on sustainability for the future, for example, and using solidarity as an environmental approach (more about this in Chapters 8 and 9).

*"I think it would be great if ESC developed towards a more global, rather than EU-centric concept of solidarity. This development would, in my opinion, make the term more understandable to the general public, as well as foster more inclusion in general".*

Survey Respondent



This global solidarity approach should be overt, even in the most local of projects. The domain within which solidarity activities are developed should not be restricted by artificial boundaries. An inclusive approach is fundamental for solidarity to reach its full potential.

### Equality of opportunity

26% of respondents to the 4Thought project would include 'equality of opportunity' as a concept directly linked to solidarity.

Equality of opportunity is about making sure that each and everyone has access to the same offer. It relates to the concept of **equity and fairness**. This is a key element of an inclusive approach and therefore a solidary approach.

During the 4Thought interview process it was mentioned that solidarity could indeed be used to overcome the differences between people, to level-up the opportunities. This also relates to welfare and sharing of resources (see Chapter 4). To have equity between people is important - and adjustments should be made so that everyone should have the same chance. Even if their needs are different, they should have more help to reach the same level as others. Depending on their starting point, a tailored solution is necessary. This would demand a change in the system.

### Inclusion on community level

As seen in Chapter 5, the community level is fundamental for solidarity activities, as that is where solidarity is felt and the needs for solidarity assessed. As inclusion is such an important cornerstone of solidarity as a concept, then the community aspect of inclusion is also vital. A tighter-knit community, including the diversity that exists, allows people to enjoy more solidarity in a more comfortable and secure way. No-one is seen as an outsider. No-one is the 'other'. No matter how small the community is. No matter what type of community we are talking about (village, community of interests, a group of shared values and responsibilities...). This **local focus for inclusion** is a very important aspect and provides the elementary other end of the scale - from local to global, solidarity must be inclusive.

*"Where there is a lack, a lack of inclusion, leading to a fractured society, there is a lack of security and safe space. Socially-included societies are mostly secure for everyone."*

Gabriella Civico, Practitioner; interview

# 8 — 4Thoughts That Came Up From the Process



4Thought for Solidarity was set up to find a common ground on solidarity in the youth work field in Europe. And while it was soon evident that a common definition was not possible, in the end a rich common ground was established through the project with the 4 Cornerstones in the middle, supported by a number of other concepts. This is, without a doubt, very beneficial and hopefully it will serve its purpose to support the creation of links and joint understanding within European Solidarity Corps and through its implementation.

At the same time, while searching for the common, solid points, which would be agreed on by the majority of stakeholders, many **controversies, discussions and open questions** have been generated. Some of them were simply not agreed upon by the 4 main stakeholders, some were intriguing but had no concrete conclusions, and some pointed out some perhaps not so comfortable aspects of solidarity. And even though none of them could be seen as the common ground, all those discussions and open questions generated a lot of perspectives and **food for thought**, so they simply had to find their place within this report.

## 8.1 — Motivation: Altruism, Reciprocity, Reward, Sacrifice

*Why get involved in solidarity actions? What impulse is needed for someone to stand and act in solidarity? How to inspire and encourage people to act in solidarity?*

According to the Oxford University Press Dictionary motivation is “a reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way.”<sup>1</sup> Motivation (from the Latin *movere*, to move) implies travel, distance or a change in state from A to B.

*“Taking into account motives for people to become actively involved as well as the somewhat arbitrary choice for a social problem, it becomes again evident that all identify on the level of humanity and sameness. ‘The other’ is not seen as an ‘other’, and we should therefore conclude that intra-group identification is a stronger force in solidarity actions than intergroup identification.”*

SOLIDUS project. Hopman et al, 2017

And while it is clear that there needs to be a motivation (rooted in values, beliefs and worldviews) for people to really feel and act in solidarity, what this motivation is or what it should be, generated a lot of discussion and opposing views by the respondents of 4Thought. In fact, this topic was perhaps the cause of the greatest divide among people that took part in the surveys and interviews. It is far from simple,

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/motivation> from Oxford University Press

but it can be simplified in two extreme poles: one that says that acting in solidarity can only be based on pure altruism and cannot imply any type of reward; and the other that claims that solidarity goes beyond altruism and is about the common good, equality of opportunity, and other different types of personal reward/gain.

## a) Altruism

Greiner (2017) notes that altruism is “a willingness to commit to others without legal obligation or the pursuit of one’s own interests as one’s primary concern.”<sup>2</sup> For the Oxford University Press Dictionary it is a “disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others”, and the word stems from the Italian ‘altrui’, meaning ‘somebody else’<sup>3</sup> - the focus is on the other person.

For some people, the action of supporting, helping, or coming to the aid of someone else in need is in itself an act of solidarity. There should be nothing else presumed beforehand or expected afterwards, in relation to the act. An action that is done in defence of the rights of others is to support them, especially those that are less fortunate than ourselves, without concern or motivation for personal benefit.

*“There should be no intention to generate any benefit in return. For this reason, solidarity can only take place in a not-for-profit context.”*

Gabriella Civico, Practitioner; interview

## Unequal relationship

When considering altruism, the question of hierarchy and relationship is raised. For some interviewees and survey responders, solidarity is bigger than altruism and helping - there are more dimensions to it. By leaving it solely as altruism, this implies a hierarchical relationship between those that need help and those that have the privilege/possibility to provide it. And this goes against equality of opportunity, which is one of the supporting concepts in the common ground. On the other hand, according to Michailidou and Trenz (2018), it is noted that mutual support in the ‘spirit of solidarity’, related to EU treaties and accords, is meant as “an altruistic relationship between donors and receivers and not as a relationship of reciprocity among equals.”<sup>4</sup> The conclusion from the paper is that solidarity does not have the aim of longer-term integration and community coming together on equal terms but is rather an ‘exceptional measure’, in times of need.

There were many responses from the interviews and the survey (qualitative and quantitative) that showed that altruism isn’t automatically an integral part of the solidarity concept for everyone. For some the exchange or the expectation of something in return, also comes into play.

2 Greiner, Florian (2017) Introduction: writing the contemporary history of European solidarity, *European Review of History*:

3 Oxford University Press Dictionary definition: <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/altruism>

4 Official Journal of the European Union: art 222



## b) Reciprocity

If solidarity is not all about giving, do people get involved in solidarity activities explicitly for what they get out of it? Do they focus on the gain? Are there expectations raised for the contributions or efforts given? Can there be different levels of reciprocity, or different reasons for it? A Paris-based think-tank 'Notre Europe' proposed to differentiate between European solidarity based on "reciprocity" and another based on "enlightened self-interests" (Fabry, 2010).

*"To give something in solidarity, you don't expect solidarity immediately in return - although of course it's great if it's a JOINT feeling of solidarity"*

Sanne Hogesteeger, Practitioner; interview

The focus on the common good, serving the public interest, strengthening communities and encouraging a sense of responsibility and generosity is underlined in many policy documents on the European level. The Legal Base for the Solidarity Corps emphasises how the actions should be concrete, with no consideration of return service.<sup>5</sup> The European Parliament<sup>6</sup> supported this approach, as did the 2019 call for projects in the Europe for Citizens programme, but also calling on the concept of reciprocity for activities with a dimension of solidarity.

An interesting reflection point is to compare the process of a solidarity action with the product. Is there an expectation to receive something in return once you have made, finished, completed, supported something to happen? Or does the solidarity come through the actions and journey to reaching that goal?

Reciprocity is not just identified on the people-to-people level but is something that is being practiced on other levels as well, as evidenced by Michialidou and Trenz (2018): "Solidarity relations within the nation follow this model of reciprocal solidarity within the family by posing expectations of return payments to future generations. This comes at the price of conflating solidarity with collective identity: the nation as a kinship relationship of reciprocity among equals." Therefore, in these kinds of systems reciprocity is not just desirable, but it is also expected.

The interviews in our project outlined the importance of **working together in a spirit of mutuality and reciprocity** for solidarity actions. Where the focus is on mutual gain, this provides a balance, a win-win in the interaction. The deed is required, it puts you on the same level of action as each other and provides those very much needed equal opportunities.

The reasons for acting in solidarity can be many. It can relate to shared values, the need to support victims, to fight against injustice, to act on the sense of responsibility for the common good or the community benefit, etc. For some the possible future that 'it could easily be me' is also a reason behind the action.

5 Regulation for legal framework for European Solidarity Corps, 2018

6 European Parliament legislative resolution of 12 March 2019

*"I felt solidaire, and demonstrated solidarity, when women in Poland were fighting for their reproductive rights. It's a catholic country which doesn't tolerate abortions. It's limiting reproductive rights up to the point that some women die being pregnant. It's not just the business of Polish women, it can touch Ukrainian women. Is that reciprocity - do I expect anything in return? No, but I believe our society should be bothered by this, in a border country for us, because one day it can come to Ukraine. There could be a decision to limit reproductive freedoms for Ukrainian women. I do this because I believe that the world would become a better place for everybody, including myself, because I am also a woman. But if I wasn't a woman, I would still care for this."*

Oksana Yuruk, Practitioner; interview

#### Wish to respond vs moral duty

The notion of **pay-back** is included in the concept of reciprocity, which gives certain moral obligations and responsibility for the person who is receiving the benefits (Michailidou and Trenz, 2018). This also links to deservingness. Pay-backs can be displaced in space and time, making it, "possible to add a temporal dimension to solidarity, which is crucial for building a community of shared interests."<sup>7</sup>

For one of our interviewees, however, the moral duty of reciprocity is an old-fashioned honour, losing its place in today's world.

*"Reciprocity is something that is forgotten nowadays. You cannot rely on going on a protest for one group, and then you expect that they will come back and support your needs when you are endangered."*

Manfred Zentner, Researcher; interview

<sup>7</sup> Michailidou, A. and Trenz H-J., ARENA Working Paper 5/2018, European Solidarity in times of crisis, towards differentiated integration. June 2018. p4.

The film PRIDE is set in 1984 UK and is based on what historically actually happened. The LGBT community strongly supported the miners who were operating massive strikes across the country. After the strikes were over when LGBT rights legislation was being presented to Parliament, it was the biggest miners union who supported the legislation and forced it to pass.

### Your problem is my problem

This is a contentious aspect of solidarity that received some very strong support and some responses that stated they did not understand it or why it should be included. From the interview process of our project, there was much discussion and contribution on the theme.

If solidarity is a broad universal concept, then it is based on something innate and common: humanity. The connection between everyone, between one and the other, is something that is 'unifying'. It is to form a (solid) unit with someone else, to support them and to share assets, hardships and joy with them.

**Support** comes very strongly through this perspective of motivation for solidarity.

One interviewee<sup>8</sup> gave the link to the French revolution and the concept of fraternité. The sense of brotherhood / sorority is to feel **compassion for the other person**, to feel empathy with their plight, is bound together in a sense of interdependence and responsibility.

*"It is your problem - I can stand with you to solve the problem but it is not my problem. I do not identify myself as LGBTIIG. I do not face discrimination with how I express myself but I can stand in solidarity. I can volunteer to facilitate but I will never go out and talk in their name. There are things that you do and things you do not do when you are in solidarity with other people."*

Gulesin Nemutlu Unal, Practitioner; interview

8 Davide Tonon, Practitioner; interview

And then there are those that say they do not understand the concept. Either our own 'selfishness' blocks us from wholly owning someone else's problem or we cannot 'own' other people's problems. We cannot talk for others. The problem is yours. The context is yours. The difficulties, lack of rights, lack of access, etc. are your problem - although solidarity allows us to support, emotionally and physically, for the problem to be recognised or to be changed or defeated.

### c) Reward

To do something good for others brings rewards. For some, the sense of feeling good or happiness is the reward. As noted by Hopman et al (2017), "there is always a bit of self-interest involved; people generally feel good about doing good."<sup>9</sup>

*"Happiness is a reward, but it's not the goal. You don't do it for that - in a perfect world"*

Mathieu Fortunier, Practitioner; interview

The dimension of **win-win** was noted in one interview, where the sense of feeling good, learning things, discovering people can be seen as a sense of winning for the protagonist. Moreover, the people they support also benefit and also 'win', because they now have a person to help and support them.<sup>10</sup> Others have mentioned building networks, a sense of satisfaction seeing progress and development, an increase in competences, reciprocal support, etc. It was underlined from one interviewee<sup>11</sup> that solidarity actions should not have anything to do with money, although very often in youth work active participation starts with rewards. To give young people a push by the temptation of a reward, even if it's a small one (such as cookies or an invitation to the cinema) means they often start to participate in a solidarity activity. Once involved, they are often happy with just that - the act of participating is enough reward for some.

In all this, there is an interesting paradox of showing solidarity that ends up **strengthening the community** which one is a part of, especially if the motivation is to build and strengthen that community in the first place. They might still be acting to support other groups in the community, those that are facing hardships or are having their rights endangered but at the same time the benefit could be felt in the whole of the community. This just shows that the question of rewards is neither a simple nor straightforward one.

9 Hopman, M., Knijn, T. & Melgar P. (2017) Research Report on Inter- and Intragroup Solidarity, SOLIDUS project. p41.

10 Daniel Grebeldinger, Practitioner; interview

11 Nina Nentwich, Practitioner; interview

## d) Sacrifice and Charity

### Sacrifice

When thinking about levelling-up or giving away in order to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities, as one of the important elements of solidarity, a number of people in the interviews and surveys mentioned that solidarity is about the willing and conscious sacrifice for others. By making sure that you give up something, that you sacrifice what you have (both in material and non-material sense), in order to make sure that someone else has what they would need.

*“Sacrifice ...[is] a choice that is made willingly, one that is driven by the desire to help others in need even at one’s own cost.”*

Greiner, 2017

Nonetheless, some other people thought differently.

Solidarity might be seen as a sacrifice but it can also be seen as **commitment**. Loyalty to a common goal, dedication to building things together, to strengthening relationships and communities. Even if you sacrifice your time and your efforts, you ultimately do it for yourself, as one small part of humanity. One interviewee<sup>12</sup> requested that the Solidarity Corps should use its position to break the approach of only focusing on this limited charitable perception of the ‘natural catastrophe in neighbouring countries’, for example. She went on to say that solidarity can be a conduit for **celebrating something together** - a positive force, something that brings happiness and a feeling of togetherness. European programmes have the opportunity to lead people more in this direction.

*“Sacrifice for others. It’s a choice of words. The choice of words becomes important. When you sacrifice, it is an act but it is an unhappy thing for you. But standing in solidarity - I will do it because it will help me feel better in my dignity. Using some of my resources not for myself but for someone else but I would not call it sacrifice.”*

Gulesin Nemutlu Unal, Practitioner; interview

<sup>12</sup> Tuba Ardic, Practitioner; interview

## Charity

Charity is another aspect to be considered when thinking about both solidarity and sacrifice for others. Charity is fairly well developed in Europe and it might be seen as one way of solidarity, one way of supporting 'those in need'. However, there are several challenges which are presented by linking solidarity directly to charity.

Charity might be seen as a short-term 'relief' solidarity that does not go deep enough in addressing inequalities and could actually **neglect access to the rights** of people who are benefiting from the charitable act.

For some of our interviewees and respondents, there was a clear **need for follow-up**. Solidarity doesn't just happen in a vacuum and cannot happen without changes to the situation which caused it or there would be no sustainable difference next time. As mentioned directly by one interviewee,<sup>13</sup> solidarity is about the empowerment of the other person and the sense of responsibility that comes with that. It is not charity - it is not just a selfless act - but rather something you commit to and you continue working with. Therefore, solidarity cannot be about one-time acts, without making sure that the receiver is empowered to get out of their unfortunate situation. It should be about improving the conditions that cause inequality, **not just dealing with the consequences**. Indeed, for some people, by only providing support through those onetime acts, this might actually end up contributing to the long-term inequalities in society.

Charity is also fairly selective and often does not appear to take into account the **humanitarian perspective** which is to focus on people's access to rights rather than in which in-group they belong to. These solidarity acts based on the selective approach on both the individual and or country level instead of on the principle of humanity, human rights and equality of opportunity, then go against the essence of solidarity. Indeed, the unilateral decisions of charity taken in one European country can be highly contested in other European countries and can have consequences for the solidarity construct of the whole continent and its relationship to the world (Michailidou and Trenz, 2018). What one EU country decides to do on a national level, according to its own national approach, can shake the very foundations of the solidarity it is building with other European countries.

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13 Manuel Gonçalves Gil, Practitioner; interview

*“Scholarly writing has tended to focus on the (financial) help to the needy, thus privileging the charitable dimension of solidarity. While this aspect is important, it downplays the **political and rights-based** dimension of solidarity. [...] People demonstrate solidarity with other persons in struggle or in need when participating in collective actions (e.g. public claims-making, political protests, communication campaigns) that strive to improve the situation of these groups by mobilising on behalf of their rights and entitlements (Giugni and Passy 2001; Scholz 2008). This political dimension seems of particular importance when dealing with the European Union.”*

Michailidou and Trenz, 2018

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- If it was a scale, with altruism at one end and reciprocity at the other, where would you place yourself, according to your interpretation of what solidarity means?
- Do you believe that it is ‘true’ solidarity if there are any rewards at the end? Is community building a reward or the process?
- Does altruism imply a power position of those that act in solidarity? Or is it simply acting on one’s own privilege for others instead of for oneself?
- Is solidarity reciprocity among equals?
- Would you expect reciprocity for acting in solidarity with someone?
- Does an act of solidarity imply a certain level of sacrifice? Even if it is just your time?
- Think about a charitable act you have carried out for someone else - did it change the cause or the effect of the imbalance of rights?



## 8.2 — Group Boundedness

*Who are you most likely to stand in solidarity with? Are there any particular groups that receive more solidarity in your society than the others? What is hiding behind this group bondedness and ingroup - outgroup relations? These and more dilemmas await on the following pages.*

Through the 4Thought project, one very interesting contradiction emerged: although solidarity should be an inclusive concept, something that many people perceived as selfless and streaming from humanity as the main principle, in practice it is more often than not limited to groups that are close to us and with whom we feel a stronger bond. Solidarity is very connected to community and **group boundedness**.

As the name suggests, this group boundedness is based on the common bond that exists (within and) between different groups of people: "Group solidarity emerges from - and depends on - exchange relations between their members."<sup>14</sup> This boundedness or the sense of belonging also comes with 'loyalty' and obligation to one's own group. The membership is connected to the **expectation of mutual support**, which is mostly informal and voluntary but it can also be in the form of binding rights and obligations. Or, in the case of solidarity activities, implied engagement in solidarity with people from the same group.

*"Solidarity is tied to a (imagined) community or group, whose members are expected to support each other in order to fulfil the mutual rights and obligations associated with group membership."*

Hunt and Benford 2004

Some people see this group as including all human beings, at least on the declarative level. But for many others, it is often the choice of who are those that are included in our solidarity circles and who are those that are not. According to Sterjno (2011) this is the decisive factor for acting in solidarity or remaining a bystander, is this person in my group, in my solidarity circle?

*"According to Bayertz (1999) solidarity requires a common ground between groups of people, which implies that solidarity is basically always an intra-group process: people need to share a trait whether this is an 'identity' like gender or religion or a 'higher-level identity' such as being citizens of the same city, region, state or just for being human."*

Hopman et al, 2017, p38

<sup>14</sup> Hechter, M. (1987). Principles of Group Solidarity. University of California Press

As one interviewee mentioned, solidarity is about **being there for others**, doing some kind of action for them but it should benefit the individual too - and sometimes the benefit comes in the guise of “I’m part of the same group” or “I feel a sense of belonging to the same problem.”<sup>15</sup> This then brings us to the paradox of strengthening one’s community, which is perhaps the most direct example of **ingroup solidarity**.

There is another angle to look at regarding group boundedness which is that this sense of belonging might actually come after different people or different groups have acted in solidarity with each other.

“While actors may have common ties a priori, this is not a prerequisite. In fact, practices of solidarity may lead to forming such bonds.”<sup>16</sup>

### Ingroups and outgroups (us and them)

Whenever there is more than one group, there is a (conscious or subconscious) choice to be made when engaging in a solidarity act. Very often, people will turn to the ingroups and invest their solidarity within, so solidarity has both exclusionary and inclusionary implications (Putnam 2000). The where and how of that line being chosen is a big question. It is, therefore, important to see to what extent people engage in solidarity when ‘dissimilar’ groups are concerned, such as disabled people, refugees/asylum seekers, and the unemployed (Lahusen and Grasso, 2018).

### Europe/EU

This is very relevant to the European context, since Europe can be seen as competing against other ‘smaller’ groups when it comes to solidarity. And not just Europe, as it is a general problem of solidarity being taken to the next, higher or even political level.

*“We must acknowledge that solidarities are in themselves contentious, because groups maintain both complementary but also competitive relations to each other (Bandy and Smith 2005; Scholz 2008). As an individual, one might feel in solidarity with one’s own family, neighbourhood, region, and nation, and this feeling might not stand in competition to a sense of solidarity with Europe or humankind in general.”*

Lahusen and Grasso, 2018

And here, not for the first time, we start discovering some aspects of solidarity which are not so positive. By defining Europe or EU countries as an in-group, this automatically leads to exclusion and discrimination. As Greiner (2017) points out this requires a negotiation around questions of belonging and then the discussion on Europe’s relationship with the rest of the world. Looking at the **potential of solidarity to exclude rather than include**, the concept of ‘European solidarity’ can be seen as problematic and

15 Manfred Zentner, Researcher; interview

16 Greiner, Florian (2017) Introduction: writing the contemporary history of European solidarity, European Review of History

limiting. Adding a geographical or political or even social label on solidarity, even if well-meant, can be counterproductive and call for looking inward instead of acting on humanitarian driven grounds. Kymlicka (2015) describes this progressive dilemma of solidarity as this: “the need to enter a trade-off between the humanitarian solidarity towards the outsiders and the egalitarian solidarity towards the insiders.”<sup>17</sup> With Europe itself becoming the in-group and the rest of the world would automatically turn into the out-group(s). ‘Fortress Europe’, the term used by many in the past decade to describe the closing of borders against refugees and asylum seekers, is one result of this.

We do feel solidarity with the ones closest to us - but does that mean geographically? Linguistically? Culturally? Intellectually? Each one of these will draw a limit - the result is always an Us vs Them. Perhaps the potential for solidarity in the future is to “focus on the global good or the public good - something to join people together for a better future.”<sup>18</sup>

### Solidarity with outgroups

While solidarity has the potential to exclude and it might feel that solidarity with ingroups prevails, there is still quite a strong dimension of **solidarity with outgroups or ‘strangers’**.

Sociologist Hauke Brunkhorst described this change (which happened during the twentieth century when fewer people were tied to regional and national borders) as a shift from ‘solidarity amongst friends’ to ‘solidarity amongst strangers’. This is built on the extension of the notion of fraternity - not as a closed group relationship with kin but more a principle that binds all humans together as equals. This solidarity is also connected to the global outlook and the **sense of global (social) justice**. What helps to develop this global outlook and bonds with outgroups is establishing connections with ‘others’. In fact, as noted by Hopman et al (2017), social cohesion and solidarity can also be built by end-users identifying with each other regarding the problem they all encounter. So, even if there are large differences between people or some belong to an ‘out-group’ compared to those who are reaching out with a solidarity activity, the end-user experience can provide common ground and connection between such groups, thereby actually bringing them together through the experience of solidarity.

*“For me, solidarity is offering your time to other people, even when they are not connected with you, just because you want to help.”*

Gabriel Arredondo, Young Person; interview

17 Kymlicka, W. Solidarity in diverse societies: beyond neoliberal multiculturalism and welfare chauvinism. 2015

18 Sanne Hogesteege, Practitioner; interview

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- What are the in-groups that you belong to? How is your sense of solidarity towards them?
- Which are the groups that are the most likely to be seen as 'out-groups' in your community? How likely are you to act in solidarity with them?
- How can you build support for different out-groups? How can you feel solidarity with those that do not share any of your layers of identity?
- How to transcend values and beliefs? Would you be able to act in solidarity with someone who has opposite values and/or worldviews from you? Would you even consider it needed?
- Can it be the other way around - can acting in solidarity bring ties that would break out-group borders?
- Would empathising and standing in solidarity with those that do not hold your values and beliefs be the most needed thing in Europe today?

## 8.3 — Limits to Solidarity in Europe

*Is solidarity a limitless concept? Or does it, perhaps unintentionally, exclude certain groups or certain causes? How inclusive is solidarity in Europe? Keep on reading and discover more about (potential) limits and borders to solidarity.*

Many of the respondents and interviewees stated that solidarity as seen in the European context has the potential to be rather limiting and exclusive and that it is necessary to work towards a concept of solidarity that is as open as possible. Nonetheless, it was not clear how open is 'as open as possible' and would that mean that solidarity includes everyone or there are some limits there still?

*I can't feel empathy for people that support populists. Can you feel solidarity with someone who has different values/beliefs than you? Most likely not. Values are the basis, what is under everything else... beliefs maybe not necessarily."*

Oksana Yuruk, Practitioner; interview



## a) Some are more equal than others

By definition, the group-boundedness of solidarity means that limits are drawn around the 'in-group' and the 'out-group'. The decision of where that limit is, who decides it, and what difference it makes gives a heavy responsibility to each and every one of us.

*"Solidarity, however, implies not only the positive effect of inclusion. It is a crucial mechanism of exclusion since it defines the boundaries between members and non-members of a community, such as a group, class, ethnicity, or nation".*

Giannakopoulos, (Editor) *Solidarity in the European Union, challenges and perspectives*, 2017

The Commission's publication 'Solidarity in Europe: Alive & Active' (2018), provides an analysis and summary of long-term H2020 research projects. It explains that attitudes to solidarity vary across Member States: **welfare solidarity** receives strong support, being the field where solidarity is most keenly felt but **solidarity for migrants** is more contested.

### Deservingness

It has been shown (Lahusen and Grasso, 2018) that people tend to differentiate between groups when they decide who they support. The elderly and the sick are seen as more deserving than the jobless and the jobless as more deserving than immigrants (Oorschot 2000, 2006).

The same research<sup>19</sup> has identified that the degree to which people feel solidarity with others is based on a '**deservingness criteria**':

- The extent to which they are seen to have control or responsibility for their situation;
- Their level of need;
- Social and spatial proximity;
- Their identity (shared and/or respected);
- Their attitude (i.e. gratefulness);
- Whether there is some reciprocity involved.

### Fortress Europe

Despite the (2007) Lisbon Treaty's reliance on the solidarity between Member States to frame a common policy on asylum, immigration and external border control - which should be fair towards third-country nationals - even in the latest call for the Europe for Citizens programme (2019), it is acknowledged that, "the unprecedented arrivals of migrants and refugees in recent years in particular have put Europe's solidarity to the test."

<sup>19</sup> Van Oorschot 2000, 2006; Alesina and Glaeser 2004; Luttmer 2001. Quoted in Lahusen and Grasso, 2018

There is a split between those that support refugees into the European Union and those that do not support them. This already creates a rupture in the unity of European solidarity. One analysis related to solidarity and the refugee crisis (Gerhards et al 2018), outlines the acceptance of refugees and the costs and burdens this incurs - which should be fairly distributed between European countries. Citizens of western and southern European countries support both these points, whereas the majority of people in eastern European countries do not. The disapproval of refugee solidarity is strongest in the Visegrád countries, particularly regarding the burden sharing.

The same research shows that there are also significant differences between the levels of acceptance regarding refugee's different hypothetical reasons for abandonment. Statistical research is plotted, and you can see that people who campaigned for human rights (89%) belong to a Christian minority (83%) or suffer from war (90%) are accepted as refugees more generously. The acceptance rate slightly decreases for Muslims (68%) and refugees persecuted because of their sexual orientation (76%).

At the same time, some of the very strong mechanisms of solidarity, for example, Trade Unions, were highlighted by some of our interviewees as not solidary enough with other (out)groups. Sometimes solidarity is lacking because one group is so focused on their own internal solidarity that they end up ignoring or don't see the others that are in need.

*“When I see the development of European Trade Unionism, I cannot agree to it - they are trying to block out refugees. They are protecting their members but they are not thinking about human beings. I'm very afraid about this mis-use of the concept of solidarity.”*

Manfred Zentner, Researcher; interview

These findings indicate that solidarity carries judgments about fairness, deservingness, reciprocity and justice.

### Polarisation

It could be that the polarisation of society that so many reflect on (see 'need for solidarity' in the previous chapter) leads to a division between those who can support others and those who are in need of support. One interviewee<sup>20</sup> expressed the fear that the term solidarity might be used in the future to keep those in need calm, telling them 'our thoughts/actions are with you', we are supporting you as well as we can because we are all one, suppressing reactions through tranquil messaging. The dream for some would be that if there is injustice somewhere in society, we would stand as one to fight and overcome it. That, for some, is solidarity.

20 Manfred Zentner, Researcher; interview

## b) Solidarity beyond the EU

The concept of solidarity has long been linked to **humanitarian aid**. The establishment of the European Solidarity Fund in 2002 was to enable the European Community (at that time) to respond in a rapid, efficient and flexible manner to emergency situations of Member States.<sup>21</sup>

Over the years, it seems the limits of this approach have broadened. According to the ex-ante evaluation for the Solidarity Corps programme, carried out by the European Commission in June 2018, “European solidarity knows **no borders**”. In several documents from the European Commission, potential to develop solidarity in non-EU countries is noted, especially with victims of crises and disasters. According to the European Parliament, the promotion of EU values and the protecting of rights in communities which are outside the Union and are in need of humanitarian aid (basing such activities on the fundamental principles of neutrality, humanity, independence and impartiality) is an important expression of solidarity.<sup>22</sup> The current proposal for the new generation of European Programmes (2021+) will include EU AID volunteers inside the European Solidarity Corps.

According to Michailidou and Trenz (2018), the EU has ‘occupied’ the entire field of solidarity politics in two different roles: the first through the imposition of an egalitarian society among EU citizens as a law enforcing actor; the second in promoting humanitarian solidarity by setting norms through its foreign policy with non-EU countries.

This view was also reflected by practitioners during this project’s interview process. As described by one interviewee working for the Red Cross in Lebanon, the EU has a significant impact as one of the main humanitarian responders to crises around the world.<sup>23</sup> They lobby for peacebuilding as a global player and are top supporters of the humanitarian agenda. However, with this position should also come **responsibility**.

*“The EU has a proactive role through its soft power. Its policies, practices and investment can mitigate tensions. Yes, you can focus on LGBT rights in EU countries but then also look towards the outer world. You cannot distance yourself from the globe.”*

Atta Durani, Practitioner; interview

21 Council Regulation (EC) No 1024/2002 of 11 November 2002 establishing the European Union Solidarity Fund: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2002:311:0003:0008:EN:PDF>

22 European Parliament legislative resolution of 12 March 2019

23 Atta Durani, Practitioner; interview

### Tribal solidarity

For many, in Europe today there is a tribalistic approach to solidarity.<sup>24</sup> This links to the in-group out-group discussion from above. **Social netting** and social protection are concepts that relate to 'I am in a tribe and I am suffering. My people come to the rescue.' According to one interviewee,<sup>25</sup> social netting has been hit in recent years and people are becoming more individualistic. "First I will think of my kids and only then of my neighbour." This can also be seen expressed in people's need for solidarity - one main theme within that was the move towards individualism and the impact that could have on societies and communities.

In many EU countries at the moment, this tribal version of 'us and them' is also reflected on 'foreigners', whether that be migrants, refugees or others. The current national realities was described in an interview with one of the practitioners:

*"We are good human beings because we take care of our own people... we are here for our people, our children, our poor homeless [of our country]... but to foreigners we don't have to show solidarity. If a child is dying in the sea because they are on the run from another country, that's not something 'we' are responsible for... some political parties don't show empathy for that. It's really putting people into groups - who is worth it and who is not."*

Nina Nentwich, Practitioner; interview

### EU relations to the rest of the world

The solidarity discussed at member state level or at EU level to support each member state, can have a very different framework than the solidarity shown to other non-EU countries. For Michailidou and Trenz (2018), they state that solidarity to strangers doesn't have to be so sustainable and restrained by legalities - it can be linked to flexible policies that are non-institutionalised, non-legally binding and exceptional.

*It's hard in this globalised world, to be trapped in this narrower context [of just the EU].*

Requested anonymity, interview

24 Manuel Goncalves Gil, Practitioner; interview  
25 Atta Durani, Practitioner; interview

The question of altruism is also raised here. How much do people act in solidarity for the good of others, and how much because there will be some impact or benefit for themselves?

Some of the interviewees and survey respondents stated that people are getting used to seeing the unforgettable truth on the news. So when it comes up, especially if it happened to those outside of the inner circles of solidarity, they just go on with their daily lives. It is as if the tolerance level to the suffering of others has been raised and this has a direct impact on whether people still stand in solidarity with those in need, or not.

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- How do you decide who to support, who to stand in solidarity with? What are your deservingness criteria?
- How do we deal with someone else's European solidarity being different to our own? What does that impact on?
- Have you been on polarising endless debates about solidarity in Europe towards certain outgroups? How did that feel?
- How is social media's immediacy of news and an overload of information, combined with crisis fatigue, affecting young people's global solidarity?
- How can we make Europe a synonym for open and inclusive solidarity? What needs to change?

## 8.4 — Solidarity and (International) Youth Work

*What is the place of solidarity in international youth work? Which one came first - solidarity in youth work or youth work for solidarity? Intrigued? Read on.*

Even if international youth work and civil society across Europe was already implementing activities that embodied solidarity for years, for many of those that took part in the interviews and surveys for this project, 2016 was seen as the year that the European institutions **'officially' launched solidarity** as a concept to be promoted. It was seen as being 'institutionalised' through the references in the State of the Union address by Jean-Claude Juncker and the subsequent creation of a European Solidarity Corps. However, for many involved in international youth work, **solidarity has always been part** of it but under different names. Solidarity between youth workers and young people or youth workers together, has always been there. Decades before, organisations would practice these values or have them as part of their raison d'être. As one respondent to the survey said: "I believe youth work values imply solidarity. When we aim to develop skills and knowledge for young people to act in multicultural communities, that involves solidarity actions."<sup>26</sup>

*"Youth work... does two things. It provides space for association, activity, dialogue and action. And it provides support, opportunity and experience for young people as they move from childhood to adulthood. In today's Europe, it is guided and governed by principles of participation and empowerment, values of human rights and democracy, and anti-discrimination and tolerance."*

First European Youth Work Convention, 2010

The political launching of the concept has yet to reach all other sectors and segments of society though. As one interviewee noted, "We are trying to make it [solidarity] our own and see how it fits into different situations, circumstances... We are still not 'over' with the process. We started to ask ourselves... as different stakeholders we are asking ourselves 'what does it mean' but we are not there yet. When we come to some conclusions, it will only be valid for this time and space... The concept always changes and needs to be adapted to reality."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Practitioner, Romania; survey  
<sup>27</sup> Anonymous; interview

*"[it was] talking like a duck, walking like a duck, so [Juncker] just called it a duck. Solidarity already existed as part of youth work."*

Ozgehan Senyuva, Researcher; interview

### a) Solidarity Corps put 'solidarity' in our language

As found through the interviews for this project, due to The Corps, solidarity has become a new name, a big name, a concept that people are more aware of and now a word that we are using more and more. It has been **brought into the centre**, into focus, it starts to be in front of us and for many that is a good thing.

*"Solidarity will have an effect on our language, it will give a voice to those actively promoting Human Rights. It is not another topic but a mainstream discussion, because of the wording in solidarity."*

Gulesin Nemutlu Unal, Practitioner; interview

There is still a certain **level of ambiguity and unclarity** in the European youth field, to try to figure out the meaning of solidarity, how to connect to it, and how to use it. It was expressed during the 4Thought project that solidarity should not only be owned by policy makers, it should be understood and shared by all stakeholders. The process of this discussion was underlined as an important one to figure out together, as a field.

Giving international volunteering a new name means, for some, that we can now focus on what solidarity really means and what we need. It's an **opportunity to start discussions**, to open up dialogue.

### b) Renewed focus in new European Programme

The opportunity of the European Solidarity Corps and the focus on the word and concept of solidarity, allows a different core purpose for the international youth field, a new direction. It is important to realise that a European Programme doesn't only provide grants and opportunities for individuals to develop, achieve something or make a difference, it also encourages and grows a new society under certain values and with a new awareness. As another interviewee hopes - the European Solidarity Corps will grow a new generation that will have an awareness of giving back, of solidarity. A larger number of young people will have an opportunity to think about the needs of others, which is enriching for them and for the society



that they impact with their activities. A suggestion was made by a third interviewee who is a researcher<sup>28</sup> that it's important to know who is joining the programmes, and why, who is assessing things and what is the result in the end for the communities. To measure the outreach of the programme, the difference it makes for participants for learning and development and the resulting impact on local communities would be an important step forward to link the practice field with the research field.

By giving the volunteering programme a new name and a new focus, one survey respondent notes that it gives an opportunity to focus on what solidarity really means and what we really need. A **new chance has been given**, with political impetus and funding behind it.

### c) Political dimension of youth work

Awareness of youth workers and trainers across Europe being civically and politically engaged<sup>29</sup> has been rising in recent years and for many youth workers this has been a welcome trend. For many, **youth work has always been political** to one extent or the other and youth workers have a responsibility to be civically aware and engaged and to transfer these attitudes onto young people. Solidarity fits right into that valley, as it is a **concept based on values** and it requires certain attitudes and inner-readiness for action. That said, not everyone is happy with the word 'political' and it is a dimension that needs to be further explored and mainstreamed.

*"In youth work, there is a growing consciousness that solidarity is part of us and our values. The consciousness is more. We are taking consciousness of our political dimension."*

Davide Tonon, Practitioner; interview

The previous focus of European programmes was mainly on individual commitment for 'good causes' that were individually chosen. This was done often for pure volunteerism, which is a concept that encompasses many similar aspects as solidarity. As one interviewee noted,<sup>30</sup> solidarity is seen as a bigger umbrella than volunteerism, it's more needed and it's not just about actions but also about ethical understandings.

28 Alexandra Severino, Researcher; interview

29 See the SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre ETS competence models

30 Tuba Ardic, Practitioner; interview

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- What has been the role of solidarity through the decades of youth work in Europe?
- Do you have examples of projects or actions where solidarity was at the core?
- Did the new programme bring solidarity into focus or is it just a new name for the same old thing?
- Do you feel that there is a genuine dedication to solidarity from different sectors and different levels, or is it just 'yet another priority' to be responded to?
- What new opportunities are being brought by European Solidarity Corps programme? For you and for your community? On the European level?
- Is it the role of youth work to nurture solidarity? Are youth workers equipped and empowered enough to do so?
- Could solidarity be a 'gift' that would bring solidarity on the agenda at all levels? Could it start influencing official policies and people's attitudes?

## 8.5 — A New Chance for Community Impact

*Can solidarity bring back the focus on community impact through young people's actions? Is this possible in the age of individualism and focus on personal gain? Let's find out.*

### a) Focus on learning

'Community' impact has been one of the pillars of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme and its predecessors and was the core purpose of European Voluntary Service. When EVS was first developed in 1996, it was the service part of the programme that was to ensure engagement of volunteers in the local community (both in sending and hosting countries) and to ensure their impact towards even the littlest of change. Probably due to the changing political direction and the focus on employability during the last decade or so, in many of the contexts, the emphasis on learning during EVS took over and the development of young people's competences and personal development became the main focus.

By introducing recognition systems for this (such as Youthpass) and developing systems to track learning outcomes and competence development, the focus shifted to the individual young person: what they would benefit from and what the organisations would provide them. As a consequence, many youth workers, as well as trainers working with the volunteers, reported that volunteers did not invest as much energy in working with the local community or on ensuring impact.<sup>31</sup>

Coming from the research, there was a feeling that many young people were just focused on themselves. With the focus on their experience and the development of their competences, there is a risk that solidarity becomes just another thing to be done in order to complete their CV. Solidarity and community impact are not short term interests. They require **continuous, lifetime engagement**.

<sup>31</sup> SALTO Training & Cooperation research with trainers around the implementation of Training and Evaluation Cycle within European Voluntary Service, 2019

*“With the creation of the European Solidarity Corps in 2017, the European Commission made an important step in creating more opportunities for young people to engage in quality volunteering at local and European level and provide them with the necessary tools to make a positive impact in their communities.”*

European Youth Forum, Updated position on the European Solidarity Corps, October 2018

The European Solidarity Corps has brought back the focus on community and now the question is how to ensure this impact and still nurture young people's learning journeys?

## b) From EVS to European Solidarity Corps

Interviewees and survey respondents who claimed that solidarity has always existed in youth work recognised that EVS had an important role in young people's development of solidarity. By dedicating their time to volunteer in the community, based on the community needs and attempting to leave a footprint during their service, volunteers were arguably acting in solidarity with young people and the wider population in their hosting local community. At the same time when returning back home, volunteers used their gained experience and competencies for other projects and other needs, to create an impact, no matter how small, in their own communities too.

*“The core of European Voluntary Service I see as a solidarity programme in Europe. But then we shifted to learning. I don't know if solidarity was really the first focus. Service was missing. The community dimension was still there, but it depends on the value bases of the sending and hosting organisations...”*

Rita Bergstein, Policy Maker; interview

By putting solidarity in the spotlight, the European Solidarity Corps has brought back a focus on contributing to the community and the people in it. Moreover, solidarity projects, through their local character, brought back what was lost with youth initiatives - a more long term and **sustainable impact on the community**.



This shift of focus will need to be managed. Simply presuming that the new focus will automatically ensure engagement of young people in the local community and their desire to contribute to the positive impact is not enough. There is a risk that there will not be an investment of effort to change the mindset of both young people and the organisations involved to develop a more **community-oriented approach**. We must not forget that service was also in the core of EVS and that it was not just the focus on learning that changed young people's attitudes. There is, for example, an increase of individualism among young people and other layers of society, as well as many other influences and factors that have contributed to community impact being less of a priority.

At the same time, **learning** needs to remain an important pillar of the European Solidarity Corps, since its activities can provide an invaluable contribution to competence development of young people. How to maintain the balance - now, that's an important question to be tackled!

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- Can community impact and individual learning co-exist? How do we ensure the presence of both?
- How to ensure community impact in international projects? What's the role of solidarity in that?
- In a mobility project, can a sending community experience as much solidarity as a hosting community?
- What difference does mobility bring to solidarity activities? And what difference does solidarity bring to mobility activities?
- What support and long-term thinking is there to embed solidarity activities in a more sustainable framework?
- How to support solidarity of young people after their solidarity activities? How to ensure that it becomes part of young people's attitudes and overall stance?



## 8.6 — Employability and Solidarity

*Is Employability now a forgotten concept or can it feed into the new focus on Solidarity? Can solidarity ever exist in the workplace? Can solidarity economy be one of the impetuses for strengthening solidarity among young people? Many questions and even more interesting considerations ahead.*

Soon after the economic crisis hit Europe and unemployment rates, especially of young people, skyrocketed in different countries, employability became priority number one in the EU youth programmes. Youth work and youth workers were expected to respond and shift their focus to designing programmes that would develop young people's competences in this direction. While employability is an important layer of young people's development and youth work has a lot to offer in this sphere, there was a question: Why and how should youth work fix what the rest of the mechanisms in society failed to fix?

Therefore, when the changed political agenda came through with the delivery of the European Solidarity Corps, moving the focus away from employability and independent learning competences, there was almost a sense of relief in the field. At the same time, one of the actions that came with the European Solidarity Corps was titled 'Jobs and Traineeships', some people struggled to find the link with this to solidarity.

### a) Focus on Solidarity - a welcome change

A great number of interviewees and survey respondents to 4Thought said that they felt more comfortable with the **focus on solidarity** than on employability or violent extremism. They felt that it is a more natural concept for youth work to focus on and they were enthusiastic and excited to be working on solidarity. After all, many of them claimed that solidarity has always been present in youth work, as we saw in one of the previous sub-chapters.

Interestingly enough, when the shift to employability and competences happened, there was a strong reaction from the youth sector with many people being against it. However, when the Solidarity Corps was announced there was much less 'noise' from the youth sector.

For many that contributed to 4Thought, the differentiation to other previous European programmes is stark. The previous focus was about individual directions - access, opportunity, learning, skills and competence development for the individual. Solidarity could be found, in certain corners or under different disguises but not so strongly and not so visibly as a programme that has the concept in its title.

*"For such a long time in European programmes we were super-concerned with 'Access': access to the programme, access to new jobs, new skills, attitudes, access to opportunities. Solidarity was always part of the 'access thinking' - all the corners were there somehow - but not sufficiently accounted for. It's not that solidary experiences were not generated, I just never felt it was one of the key things. Maybe because it's a difficult concept to define!"*

Alexandra Severino, Researcher; interview

## b) Focus on employability - a new chance

As already mentioned, the European Solidarity Corps arrived also with **Jobs and Traineeships** as one of its actions, which was a novelty compared to all the other EU youth programmes. Practice showed different perceptions towards this new action and some discovery was needed regarding what is actually meant by this new opportunity.

This is fairly understandable and at the same time it was becoming clear that by linking solidarity and employability under one umbrella, jobs and traineeships could have a significant impact on young people. This has already been underlined in a number of documents and policy papers.

Combining work, or work experience, with the concepts of being active, owning a role that makes a difference in society and developing more citizenship competences, was supported by many policy makers at EU level. The concept of an accessible labour market, outlined in the 7th Youth Goal,<sup>32</sup> links several policy documents and the world of work to the concept of **active citizenship**. For young people participating in the jobs action of the European Solidarity Corps, the European Parliament noted that this should facilitate their "continuous engagement as active citizens, employability and transition into the labour market."<sup>33</sup> The Commission, 'Communication on Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture' (2017) outlines that it is: "in the shared interest of all Member States to harness the full potential of education and culture as drivers for jobs, social fairness, active citizenship."<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C 456/01), Appendix III

<sup>33</sup> European Parliament's first reading of the European Solidarity Corps, 12 March 2019

<sup>34</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-strengthening-european-identity-education-culture\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-strengthening-european-identity-education-culture_en.pdf)



Participating in solidarity activities should increase young people's **employability** and ease their transition to work - as mentioned in the Youth Guarantee (2013). The opportunities should lead to **quality jobs** for all young people.<sup>35</sup> On top of this, it should provide **personal and professional development and learning**<sup>36</sup> and facilitate their continuous engagement as **active citizens**.<sup>37</sup> Education and cultural opportunities, such as solidarity activities, have the potential<sup>38</sup> to support this increased citizenship and therefore to drive **social fairness**.

### c) Social & Solidarity Economy

As already mentioned, European Solidarity Corps includes Jobs and Traineeships. It would be remiss of a project such as this to ignore a connected sector of work where solidarity is a keystone of its values: **social enterprise**.

There are a broad range of organisations that comprise the social and solidarity economy, including cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations, foundations and social enterprises.

Many of the existing initiatives that fall within the Sustainable and Solidarity Economy framework are rooted in the community, strengthening the social capital at local level. This includes; fostering social innovation, adopting solidarity principles in their vision as well as in their operations, aiming at satisfying human needs, promoting ways of living that are more caring of the people and the environment, reducing sharp inequalities and fostering collective ownership and social innovation.<sup>39</sup>

As an example, according to the SSEDAS<sup>40</sup> research project run by SUSY (Sustainable and Solidarity Economy) there are many concepts central to this sector that show **evidence of solidarity in practice**:

- People and planet at the centre;
- Work, dignity and self-management;
- Democracy, human rights, participation;
- Gender equality;
- Inclusion;
- Enhancement of 'social capital';
- Local and community roots;
- Global vision;
- Resilience;
- Environmental and biodiversity protection;
- Positive relationship with nature throughout the production and distribution chain;
- Common goods sovereignty: water, air, landscape, energy, food, knowledge and culture heritage.

35 Youth Goal, as appendix III of the new European Youth Strategy

36 European Solidarity Corps Programme Guide 2019

37 European Parliament's first reading on a proposal for a regulation, 20th March 2019

38 European Council, Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council, November 2018

39 [http://www.solidarityeconomy.eu/fileadmin/Media/Global/PositionPaper/SUSY\\_research\\_Report\\_Full\\_310517.pdf](http://www.solidarityeconomy.eu/fileadmin/Media/Global/PositionPaper/SUSY_research_Report_Full_310517.pdf)

40 SSEDAS: Social and Solidarity Economy for Development Approach for Sustainability:  
[https://think-global.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/SUSY\\_research\\_310517.pdf](https://think-global.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/SUSY_research_310517.pdf)

The same project recommends that in reflecting solidarity in the civil society sector and indeed the legal and political framework on a European level, there is a need to improve the advocacy, communication, network, and legal and political frameworks of the social economy.

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- The link between jobs/internships and solidarity is being pushed at policy level. Is this recognised and owned also by other sectors?
- Where do you see the links between solidarity and employability? Do you think youth work could create those?
- How solidarity-minded are employers?
- How can we bring more solidarity into the workplace? How to make it more attractive?
- How to motivate beneficiaries to use the opportunities offered by Jobs and Traineeships?
- How can solidarity jobs or internships have stronger links to the community level?
- What work is needed on a cross-sectoral level to bridge the different stakeholders in the solidarity discussion?

## 8.7 — Sustainability and Solidarity for the Future

*Could the concept of solidarity itself - with its various interpretations - become the main focus of solidarity actions? Can it be a theme, and not just a result of an activity? Can this solidarity unite all people around the Globe against the emerging global threats? Should we be more focused on the future of young people than the current present? Big and important questions to be considered.*

*"I would add the word sustainability because for me, the ultimate aim, you do it because you believe in the cause, and if you support this cause then the final effect would be to achieve sustainable changes in society. Sustainability should be in there."*

Oksana Yuryk, Practitioner; interview



There is one word that was not part of the initial mapping of the concept but that came out quite strongly afterwards though the interviews and subsequent surveys and consultations - **sustainability**. It is very difficult to determine why it was not present to begin with but one possible answer is that it really requires thinking on the humanitarian level (level of all humankind) and possibly even beyond. 'Beyond' includes other living beings and the planet as a whole. 'Beyond' in looking towards the future and understanding what acts of solidarity we need to do now in order to influence the future. 'Beyond' in seeing solidarity not just with the people of today but with the people of the future.

*"We also need to feel solidarity for the future. Not solidarity with Greta [Thurnberg] now but with Greta when she is 65. If we feel solidarity towards them, we might get even further and be able even more to address this issue."*

Sanne Hogesteeger, Practitioner; interview

Some people even went as far as saying that it is sustainability and climate crisis that should be in the absolute **focus of global solidarity**. That nothing else even compares to the importance of acting in solidarity, all together, in addressing this issue.

### a) 'Butterfly effect'

One important step in developing the dimension of sustainability within solidarity is understanding the effects we have on others and our role in them needing the solidarity in the first place.

There are a number of examples from all around the world where consequences which were generated by others are felt by individuals, groups or even entire countries and continents. For example, countries that are facing the most severe effects of the climate crisis are not the biggest polluters themselves.

*"In the Pacific, they receive a lot of solidarity with the fact that they are impacted already [by the climate crisis]. But we feel solidarity with them because what impacts them will also happen to us. And we also need to act, even before it happens to us."*

Sanne Hogesteeger, Practitioner; interview



The sustainability dimension of solidarity also involves empathy and **reaching out to the outgroups**. Especially for the big challenges that humanity is facing, like climate change, we need strong responses from those prepared to act, and also response from those who are not necessarily convinced (yet) that they need to act. Therefore, it is important to reach out and inspire them to see the cause, to feel the cause and to act on the cause. As one interviewee mentioned, we need those who feel they are not impacted by a particular issue or need to feel solidarity with their children. The focus on individual needs, and allowing the 'Us vs Them' to perpetuate, is very much contrary to what solidarity is about. Even if you don't fully understand the people, you can try to understand what they are fighting for. The 'Us vs Them' needs to be overcome in order to reach more people to make a change.<sup>41</sup>

### Examples of projects/initiatives

The following two examples (and several more throughout the rest of the publication) were highlighted by interviewees and survey respondents in the 4Thought process as initiatives, projects and or activities that had a strong solidarity component in them. They are quite diverse and, in that, also reflect the richness of practice that can support, promote and enhance solidarity.

*There are a lot of examples of good practice in what EVS used to do. I was active in an NGO "Minority in Europe", which was active in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. I was the manager of the EVS projects, where young people from a number of European countries went to Armenia. The focus was on rural development and inclusion and young people got to meet war victims and war veterans. That specific context meant nothing to those young people. They painted, cleaned, plastered. They would just arrive there and do hands on work. It was a good example of solidarity. Through work and volunteering, they developed a sense of solidarity, which was long lasting. They went home to volunteer more, in civil society organisations. This was both the result and the cause.*

Max Fräs, Researcher; interview

41 Sanne Hogesteege, Practitioner; interview

*The example is this project that has been accepted and is now being prepared. It's a European Solidarity Corps new internship project for 10 participants. They are going in pairs, each pair going to a different country. They will do an internship in structures helping migrants and asylum seekers. It's an interesting project, because it is solidarity towards beneficiaries, structures and migrants. And solidarity towards participants, since we recruit people coming from 'local missions' - structures helping young people with fewer opportunities.*

*We realised that the idea of internships is not just to help people abroad, but it also helps a lot the participants doing it. It's a win-win situation. It's helping them by providing them a frame. In our opinion, an internship and the mobility concept is the key for them for the future to get more motivation. So we try our best to be solidaire towards them. We could do a mobility project with MA students, but that's not the idea. We take people who have no idea what to do in their life and try to help them find what they could do.*

Matthieu Fortunier, Practitioner; interview

## **b) Solidarity with future generations**

Besides understanding how our actions impact others and the world around us, another important aspect to consider is how our actions are impacting the future world and future generations.

*"It is the issue of intergenerational solidarity. We have a responsibility to think how do we want to live together, how do we want to deal with resources for future generations."*

Rita Bergstein, Policy Maker; interview

This requires some forward thinking and not just immediate action and reaction and a great deal of **responsibility**. At the same time, it requires those acting in solidarity to understand what kind of support they need to show and give. It is not just about joining young people on the streets (if at all), but it is about making sure that they are prepared and empowered to face the future. Responsibility and solidarity are shown by offering a freedom of choice and possibilities, and making sure that there would be a chance to realise those possibilities in the future.

Solidarity with future generations or **forward-thinking solidarity** is also about acting before something happens and not just 'extinguishing fires' all around. This links to the point made earlier relating to changing the cause, not dealing with the effect. Whatever positive change has been provoked, it must also be maintained and preserved in the future.

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- When does a solidarity activity start? When do the effects of it finish?
- How big does a solidarity activity have to be to be effective?
- In your opinion, should sustainability and climate crisis become the main focus of solidarity in Europe (and globally)?
- How can European Solidarity Corps contribute to the moment generated by 'Fridays for Future' and similar movements of young people?
- How can we ensure solidarity with future generations?
- What are you doing personally to overcome the 'Us vs Them' mentality?

## 8.8 — Combined 4 Sectors of Practice, Policy, Research and Young People

*Is there a synergy between practice, policy, research and young people in the field of solidarity? Is there a need for more or are some efforts not visible enough? More questions ahead.*

The aim of this project is to cover the 4 angles, to make sure that the contributions, developments, needs and interests of all the sectors were included to show an in-depth mapping of the concept of solidarity. Originally the proposal was to provide 4 different angles of opinion from each of the sectors, to map the differences and then to find the common ground between them. However, the reality is that people often wear **more than one hat**. It is hard to find a policy maker or a young person that has no connection to practice. It is important to include the four angles in our thinking, but to separate people turned out to be too artificial.

During the research, some interesting points were found that were worth sharing about the differences and similarities between the four fields.



### How they have worked together in past

There was a strong feeling from all the interviews that the connection between practice, policy, research and young people has not been strong. For some practitioners that were interviewed for this project, even if very experienced in the field and connected to policy change and discussion, it was the **first time they had been involved in research.**

*"The more you go at community level, the less you see stakeholders working together."*

Survey response

Some people commented that the European level is starting to cooperate but it is different at the more local levels. One survey respondent commented, "they evolve together and with the help of each other, but there is no direct communication."

It seems there is definitely room for improvement.

### How to improve for the future

If the links and connections are not strong enough, then the push for solidarity on a European level is an opportunity to be taken.

Who is currently pushing for solidarity? Is it an equal common effort? For some people, the push is coming only from the side of policy makers. The youth work practice field and the young people don't understand it enough. However, in the previous subchapter we have seen that many respondents consider that solidarity has long been part of youth work. And perhaps, developing solidarity among the 4 angles can be seen as **strengthening this larger community of youth work.** So is it the lack of understanding or the lack of (feeling of) ownership that is at play here? Probably, the truth is somewhere in the middle.

### Some of the ideas on how to improve the links

*"Young people are still lacking clear understanding about [solidarity]. There should be more local actions done about the solidarity topic, more campaigning about solidarity as a separate topic, not part of some other themes."*

Survey response



*“Developing a charter and a toolkit for the Municipalities and their youth services can help build synergies and networks (of excellence) between different regions of the EU that work in the grassroots and the real needs of young people and bringing a bigger impact and solidarity.”*

Survey response

*“The possibilities need more outreach and dissemination. There is too little known about existing programmes. And the information is usually too complex for some of the target groups.”*

Survey response

*We need evidence-based practice and evidence-based policy. Research can help to produce this evidence. If we use research to assess the impact of the increase in scale, then this can link directly to improved practice and policy.*

Ozgehan Senyuva, Researcher; interview



## Other sectors

Several responses in this project expressed the need to realise the bubble that we create in international youth work. They recognised the need to break out of it and to link with other sectors and other efforts being made in the same direction.

*"You are not in a real bubble, you create your small bubble, you explode it when the project finishes. Companies, youth work, NGO cooperation brings a real-life feeling to solidarity work. It will be more accepted by the future employers and employees, not just been-there-done-it in your youth time."*

Tuba Ardic, Researcher; interview

There are many more NGOs and structures involved in solidarity actions (or who have solidarity as a core value/aim of their organisation) than those that are active in the international youth work field. How can we reach out to work with them? How can we ensure that the know-how of solidarity is being captured from as many different sides and perspectives as possible? How to include more stakeholders?

Linking to other sectors, outside international youth work, was suggested by several respondents. The complexity of solidarity as a concept, its links to society and community, the emphasis needed on inclusion and participation, all point towards the need for **wider engagement**. To do this, it was proposed that key stakeholders in the policy field open up and start making bridges to the wider world. Considered in this is also the solidarity economy - social entrepreneurship and the inclusion of solidarity values in the setup of businesses.

*"The business sector is often completely out of the picture which is a mistake considering the rise of social entrepreneurship."*

Survey response

## Integrity

The use of control and influence to change things, to increase awareness and commitment to solidarity, must be done in a solidary way.

There were strong feelings from interviews and survey respondents about the development of the Solidarity Corps being introduced from top-down, and not necessarily done in a coherent way with the values and meaning of solidarity as they understood it.

One of these examples, as pointed out by a respondent, was the decision whether to include the partner countries in the European Solidarity Corps or not. In the end, it was a success story but the process was challenging and it did not 'walk the talk' of solidarity.

However, the development process of the Youth Goals (now incorporated as part of the European Youth Strategy 2020 - 2027) was mentioned several times as a good example - not only in the inclusion and integrity of implementation but in the ability to connect different stakeholders.

### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- Depending on your role (practitioner, young person, researcher or policy maker), have you been connected to the other 3 groups in your work?
- How well are the 4 groups functioning together in the field of solidarity? Has that changed over the years?
- According to you, what can be done to strengthen the relationship between the 4 groups?
- How to ensure that the bottom-up approach is included in further work around solidarity within the EU youth programmes?
- Which other sectors/groups could join the magnificent 4?

# 9 — Solidarity Corps Considerations



4Thought for Solidarity was primarily focused on defining the common ground on solidarity as a concept in the youth work field in Europe. While the framework of the **European Solidarity Corps** was very present, being a prism through which different research outcomes were looked at, it was not perhaps in the main focus of the different chapters.

Nonetheless, throughout the process, many different insights and conclusions were leading towards **implications, recommendations, questions and dilemmas** to be addressed within the European Solidarity Corps. All these were collected and turned into considerations formulated by the authors and are now presented to you. We in turn invite you to think of more considerations and to help carry the mantle together to improve things in the future.

So here are a few considerations from our side. We hope they will be considered by decision makers but also practitioners, researchers and young people when using and implementing the European Solidarity Corps, but also when shaping its imminent future.

## 9.1 — Understanding the Future of Solidarity

Solidarity cannot be seen outside of the context in which it is set. The context for this 4Thought project was defined by **several major trends in Europe** (and worldwide). Those trends are shaping the direction for how solidarity is channelled today and in the future. As such, they also influence the focus of the solidarity activities within the European Solidarity Corps.

The list of trends is not exhaustive and those that were included were the main ones mentioned by the respondents in the surveys and in the interviews. Many of them link to the current needs for more and stronger solidarity, as expressed by respondents and as seen in Chapter 4.

*"[...] Solidarity connects societies. There is a tendency towards individualism on many levels which leads to isolation, extremism, populism and to societal lack of community feelings. Apart from the emotional aspect, many societal problems (e.g. climate change) can be solved only with a common approach and in solidary societies."*

Survey response

## a) Individualism

Individualism is a trend that has been seen among young people for some years now. And while it is not new, it is affecting how people relate to each other and to the society as a whole. As mentioned in chapter 4, the rise of technology and the loss of community connection and values is having an effect on people.

When more and more people live in isolation, solidarity is not so easy to put into motion. When people are blind to the needs of others, they cannot feel and act in solidarity with them. The empathy is not there and neither is responsibility or action.

Therefore, individualism is one of the challenges that needs to be tackled by the European Solidarity Corps when thinking about future strategies for developing solidarity among young people.

*“The one time we have access to the whole of society is when young people are of school age. There it has to be civic education, service learning about solidarity, about volunteering. Explaining about democracy, active participation, freedom of association. It has to be strengthened at an early age, then there will be many more people aware of the potential.”*

Gabriella Civico, Practitioner; interview

Following Gabriella’s words, the Solidarity Corps could reach out to **young people in schools** and connect to **civic education** as well. At the same time, **community building** should be highlighted through all the Solidarity Corps actions and solidarity be promoted as a need and as an inherently human concept. This was clearly stated by respondents and underlined as the main motivator of solidarity.

Young people should be encouraged to not just join the Solidarity Corps to do their one solidarity project for 6 months but rather to understand it as a stepping stone to their **solidary approach to society** and to the people around them.

At the same time, the focus on the community impact and not just on the individual learning has already become one of the greatest assets for the Solidarity Corps in shifting the focus from individualism.

## b) Climate Crisis

Acting in solidarity to tackle the climate crisis has been identified as one of the most important causes that should unite everyone around the world. Sustainability was brought in as an additional concept that relates even more strongly to solidarity, see chapter 8. In fact, there were some respondents who were wondering whether we should abandon all the other causes and **focus exclusively on fighting the climate crisis** and attitudes that brought it in, in the first place. The response to the climate crisis has the potential to really bring solidarity to life among young people, which can already be seen in the 'Fridays for Future' actions across the world. Young people have been mobilising for today and for the future. Climate crisis also puts the question of sustainability higher on the agenda and brings a new dimension to being in solidarity with the future.

*"Climate change has characteristics to engage young people more, not only towards solidarity but in society, more willing to take political stances and therefore participate."*

Alexandra Severino, Researcher; interview

At the same time, solidarity is needed to reach out-groups in order to **mobilise those who are not feeling the need for the cause yet**, people who feel that they have not (yet) been affected and that they bear no responsibility for those that have. It can help in breaking the individualistic outlook, since climate crisis will spare no one.

The European Solidarity Corps could, therefore, include solidarity for tackling the climate crisis as one of the focus for young people and organisations. It could be one of the **vehicles to mobilise young people**, give them the tools to join the fight, and to spread the action to those as yet uninvolved.

### Understanding movements - new ways in which young people organise

Connected to young people and their actions to tackle the climate crisis, perhaps it is worth considering new ways in which young people organise themselves. Instead of belonging to a certain civil society organisation, young people seem to be more willing to join movements and to form multiple allegiances.<sup>1</sup> There is a lot of **fluidity and individual approaches** that are being brought into the way solidarity is being expressed.

This is neither good nor bad per se but it is something to be considered when designing future solidarity activities and projects.

1 Manuel Gonçalves Gil, Practitioner; interview

### c) Tackling right wing populism

Policy research mapping has given similar findings to the interviews conducted for this report, right wing populism was seen among interviewees and survey respondents as one of the main threats to solidarity, it is also seen as one of the main foci of solidarity for the future and at the same time, one of the main reasons for the increased need for solidarity (see chapter 4). Right wing populist parties and movements are undermining the openness and inclusiveness of solidarity in societies across Europe and are calling for insulation in various boxes - national, religious, ideological, etc. They are even calling for stronger solidarity within those ingroups, as opposed to openness towards 'others'.

*"Solidarity is the antidote for fascism, populism, extremism, violence in all meanings and hate. If we erase solidarity as a European value, we will contribute to the future which might result in Gilead from Handmaids Tale. If you do not know what that means, please watch the show, I'm watching it with my young people."*<sup>2</sup>

Survey response

With the rise of right wing populism over recent years, which has led for some to a sense of detachment from the common European project, as shown by the Brexit vote, there is a political wish coming from European institutions to increase the positive image and rebuild **trust** in the European Union. Solidarity as a joint **sense of belonging** to the European Project is echoed in many policy documents. The first Youth Goal, adopted as an annex to the EU Youth strategy 2019-2027 is exactly that:

"Goal 1: Foster the sense of youth belonging to the European project and build a **bridge** between the EU and young people to regain **trust** and increase **participation**."

Indeed, the European Solidarity Corps has a big potential to strengthen the sense of belonging to Europe among young people. This is not a new insight, as this potential can also be ascribed to other European youth programmes. However, with the focus on solidarity, the Solidarity Corps could link these two concepts and highlight the importance of mobility and interaction among young Europeans and those outside of Europe on the basis of solidarity. Furthermore, the European Solidarity Corps can and should continue the long tradition of EU youth programmes in reaching beyond the EU and therefore also crossing the possible limits of solidarity (as introduced in chapter 8).

2 The Handmaid's Tale, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5834204/>: "Set in a dystopian future, a woman is forced to live as a concubine under a fundamentalist theocratic dictatorship."

## d) Information and education

### Online solidarity

We live in times when a lot of solidarity is done (or has the potential to be done) online. It is a way to raise attention towards a cause, it externalises solidarity and it initiates feelings and encourages people to question their values. As noted in an interview for 4Thought, “even explaining to someone what is the situation” is solidarity. At the same time, online solidarity has a potentially to **reach large numbers of people and mobilise them in a relatively short time** - it is a tool that solidarity has never had in its corner before.

The 2019 online digital activism, supporting the Youth Department of the Council of Europe (threatened with extreme budget cuts and even rumours of closing the entire Youth Department) is an example of online solidarity. People actively engaged because they wanted what they have had to be available for future generations.

However, there was also some criticism and negative feeling about it. Just sending ‘positive thoughts and prayers’ doesn’t really make a difference. Is that enough support? Is digital activism and digital commitment a valid way to ‘do’ solidarity? Or can it be seen as ‘slacktivism’ - slacking away from real-world activism, taking the easy option and scrolling on to the next meme...?

*“Virtual communities may feel powerful but may be ultimately creating a culture of solitary and lonely activists, participating through devices and apps alone.”*

Grace J and Grace P Logbook Issue 4, Professional Open Youth Work in Europe

At the same time, other groups in society have recognised the potential of the online tools and have been harnessing them for their benefit for a while now. As an example, right wing populist and far-right movements have utilised new technologies and social media for their cause. At the moment, they are much better at using it than anyone else.<sup>3</sup>

3 Manuel Gonçalves Gil, Practitioner; interview

### Against 'fake news'

One of the very relevant aspects for online solidarity but also for solidarity in all aspects of human life, is how to make sure that feelings and actions leading to solidarity are **based on true information**. We can be overwhelmed with information and calls for solidarity and it is very easy to just act upon what is being offered without critical reflection. Critical reflection takes time and effort, as well as competences, which need to be and should be developed from an early age.

*"You have to know about problems/challenges in the first place. Get the correct information. You have to have information that affects you, that calls to your emotional intelligence that you have to do something. It has to be reliable, it's not fake news. It's real. When I think of some things, the ice-bucket challenge. Nobody knew about it, it was a good advertising strategy for ALS. Many people having fun and putting ice on their heads. If that changed something, I don't know. [There is a] tokenism of solidarity that we are facing - [It's a] problem of the information society that we are living in. [...] We are channelling solidarity very strongly with the information that we are given."*

Manfred Zentner, Researcher; interview

### Potential in the European Solidarity Corps

One thing is for sure, there is potential in new technologies and online activism but it needs to be developed and **utilised for genuine solidarity**. Perhaps this is where more attention should be paid by the European Solidarity Corps as a programme. Education and training for organisations implementing the Corps on how to use online solidarity could be a good starting point - developing competences for effectively utilising online solidarity. This might help those implementing volunteering, jobs and traineeships to include digital tools to express and promote solidarity. If online solidarity is to be taken seriously and utilised by young people, it also needs to be recognised by the Solidarity Corps as a viable option and one that could contribute to the cause.



Therefore, the European Solidarity Corps should take that into consideration and **integrate media literacy and critical thinking** into its aims and intentions. The Council of Europe's Competences for Democratic Culture project could help support that, with its analytical and critical thinking skills being one of the 20 competences put forward to enable citizens to participate effectively in a culture of democracy.<sup>4</sup>

*"We call on you [leaders of Europe] to uphold our core values and invest in employment and education based on critical thinking in order to defend our open, democratic societies and to address the sense of insecurity felt by many."*

European Youth Forum, Joint Statement: The Europe We Want, 2017

#### Example of a project/initiative in the field of solidarity

*"At the Red Cross, Red Climate, Climate Centre in the Netherlands, we have created a youth curriculum: y-adapt (<https://www.weadapt.org/knowledge-base/y-adapt>). It is trying to motivate young people in their community to learn what is climate change, what does it mean for my community, country, region, and then motivate them to take action. We are seeing a lot of interest growing and it links to solidarity because it is the young people feeling that they need to act on this issue. But then the example they come up with is not just about helping themselves and their peers but they continue motivating others to join. Requests keep coming from other countries that want to engage and then to start the global movement: what did they do in their communities that then other people can get inspired by? It is not so much focusing on mitigation, but more on: what can we do for our community?"*

Sanne Hogesteeger, Practitioner; interview

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/competences-for-democratic-culture>

## 9.2 — Using the European Context Wisely

Solidarity is considered to be one of the inherently **European values**. At the same time, Europe is perhaps the single biggest humanitarian donor and has the only international court for Human Rights. Solidarity could have a good home here. Nonetheless, Europe is also home to 'Fortress Europe', to many right wing populist movements, as well as problematic policies and practices when it comes to migration. And, the EU is still an exclusive club.

This was seen in the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps in the countries outside of the EU in the partner regions. It has been perceived as troubling that the programme that has solidarity at its core, has still not been implemented in the same open and inclusive way all around the continent, in non-EU countries. According to interviewees and survey respondents from the partner regions, information is not reaching the target audience as much it could and should. This has a consequence which is that while solidarity is still not fully incorporated in the programme countries it has hardly scratched the surface in the partner countries.

Given that we have established throughout this report that solidarity needs to be an open and inclusive concept, putting borders and limits to solidarity, even if they are with good intentions of strengthening Europe, is slightly problematic. As such, the highlighted European context can be a double-edged sword, which needs to be treated with caution.

The European Solidarity Corps could open up in its branding, discourse and practical implementation. While utilising the European context it could also promote **global solidarity** with all people. In particular, groups with whom solidarity is not so easily shown (e.g. refugees or transgender people) because "everything where society seeks to actively create conflict, solidarity work is difficult but necessary."<sup>5</sup>

One of the ways to do this is to provide extra support for countries and regions where the implementation of the Solidarity Corps is not smooth, such as Norway,<sup>6</sup> for example - because that is part of walking the talk as well.

*"It can be a project that can go beyond and include more stakeholders. One of the aims of Juncker was to achieve a greater coherence between EU member states. In this way, it should go beyond, not just to EU member states - Europe, the World. It's hard in this globalised world, only to be trapped in this narrower context."*

Anonymous

<sup>5</sup> Anonymous; survey

<sup>6</sup> Norway is not an EU country, and is not currently a programme country of the European Solidarity Corps, despite previously being very active in EVS and having a strong international volunteering base. When EVS was moved to the Solidarity Corps programme, programme country delineation was changed with automatic inclusion only for EU countries, and other countries have the option to join bilaterally.. Many people in the international volunteering sector in Norway feel strongly about this and are continuing to lobby politicians for Norway to join the European Solidarity Corps 2021-2027 (as described by Tuba Ardic, Practitioner; interview).

## a) Strengthening the European dimension of the community impact

Within the European context, more awareness is needed in order to show the positive interaction of all the different levels of community impact in strengthening solidarity among citizens. The **transversal connection** from the local level and local communities (where solidarity is needed and felt) to the international, should be an important focus for solidarity activities funded at the European level. It is vital to ensure that this link is seen and felt. The emphasis in the European Solidarity Corps on the community impact and European dimension in it already exists but it could be additionally highlighted and filtered down to each participating organisation and young person - for them to see the clear link between their impact and the effects this can make on the European level.

For some, a **'vertical' approach for solidarity** is important to consider and it is the EU values and principles that bind together the international, national and local levels<sup>7</sup> to provide this. More should be done to be explicit on how each solidarity activity in each community helps to build a Europe that is solidary in its approach. More recognition should be built around the European funds that positively influence communities through inclusive and active participation based on those communities' needs. The European Solidarity Corps has a good potential to achieve this.

### Example of a project/initiative in the field of solidarity

*A very good example of solidarity actions, from Erasmus+Youth in Action, can be found in the Florina region, a disadvantaged border area in Greece. For 2 years, European Voluntary Service volunteers spent 6-12 months in the 'Active Youths of Florina' association and they have been working towards the empowerment of the local community and the development of the local economy through extroversion. So far, they have created a useful illustrated handbook for tourists (and not only) available in Greek and English which highlights the different aspects and the history of Florina and the nearby region. It includes, the must visit places and the different customs in order to upgrade the cultural branding of the small city and to make the local economy a bit more resilient.*

*More about this solidarity action can be found at:*  
<https://tinyurl.com/y5rvnzrz>

*A survey response*

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7 Manuel Gonçalves Gil, Practitioner; interview

## 9.3 — ‘Organised’ and State Solidarity

*“I’m not sure it’s going to be possible to organise solidarity - you cannot force someone to be solidaire.”*

Matthieu Fortunier, Practitioner; interview

Setting up the European Solidarity Corps has put solidarity on the agenda. As we have seen in the 4Thought research, people have agreed with this and found it a very positive outcome. It also brings hope and inspiration for future and present challenges. Some people even said that it should be obligatory, through, for example, National Community Service Programmes. While with altruism it is your choice to be nice to people (or not), obligatory or prescribed solidarity would take away the choice of acting on your own personally held values. This is something that has the potential to have an impact on a great community of people.<sup>8</sup>

Among some respondents, there was a feeling that this sort of organised solidarity, which is channelled top-down through a large EU youth programme, might not sit well to at least some audiences. As it was mentioned before, solidarity does not come without a legacy and this legacy is different in different contexts. “In the Communist dictatorships of the Eastern Bloc, solidarity was regarded as a civic duty and moral imperative in the context of anti-imperialist struggle.”<sup>9</sup>

*“In the Soviet Union (I’m a product of the Soviet Union) I was 16, we had organised patriotism. My euphemistic answer is that I’m against organised boxed solidarity. We were organised volunteers. On special Saturdays we had clean-ups of territories. We were all volunteers, and we hated it. It was organised and a forced way of volunteering. That’s why I’m against forced, organised, institutionalised forms of solidarity. We had it for more than 70 years. During one of our school times, we were 3000 pupils, all gathered together in a hall, one teacher of English would read out a special letter that would demonstrate our solidarity in the USA to one particular person, and we didn’t have a clue what that was about.”*

Oksana Yuruk, Practitioner; interview

8 Valerija Bulatskaya, Young Person; interview

9 Schmale, Wolfgang (2017) European solidarity: a semantic history.

Connected to that, several interviewees reacted fairly strongly to the inclusion of the concept of 'state responsibility' for the definition of solidarity which had found its way into the original model of concentric circles. The question was raised **whether you could legislate to cultivate solidarity**?<sup>10</sup> Instead of enforcing it, it should be built as a principle in society. People need to develop a feeling for it and this feeling cannot be requested or ordered by others.

The European Solidarity Corps and its implementing institutions should have this in mind when further promoting and implementing the programme. It needs to make sure that solidarity enters people's values and worldviews as something that is natural and something that is a **part of their everyday lives**. It should not be seen as something that we have to do because someone said so, it should be because we feel it as a need and an imperative for ourselves.

## 9.4 — Reaching Out to Young People With Fewer Opportunities

### a) Widening participation in programmes

Starting with the strong base that Europe has "the most equal and inclusive societies in the world"<sup>11</sup> and building on the (2007) Lisbon Treaty's push for mutual respect among peoples, the development of the European Solidarity Corps, as described in the 2019 Programme Guide, aims to respond positively to **diversity** and to **support vulnerable people**.

The need to invest in young people was well-stated in the legal basis for the Solidarity Corps. The regulation for a legal framework (2018) states that the activities within the programme support personal, educational, social, civic and professional development of young people.

However, either because of the accessibility or design of European programmes, it can often be the more elite that participate.<sup>12</sup> As noted in one interview for 4Thought: 'For working class kids who cannot find employment, volunteering is taking the piss' - it's an unreachable ambition, they cannot access it and it's just not an option for them.

It is vital, if the programmes are to **reach a wider audience**, if Europe is to become closer and be a more tangible value to more communities, that they should reach out of the mainstream and as one interviewee commented "stop preaching to the converted."<sup>13</sup> To expect that there will be a pool of shared values and beliefs across all young people in Europe was not seen as possible - "It would never happen! It is more about trying to understand where those people are coming from - how things unfolded in their lives."<sup>14</sup>

This could be a possible antidote to the rise of the far-right and right wing populism in Europe, albeit not an easy one to create and administer.

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10 Howard Williamson, Researcher; interview

11 European Parliament Committee on culture and education, opinion 15th Feb 2019

12 Şenyuva, Ö., Nicodemi, S. (2017).

13 Max Fräs, Researcher; interview

14 Howard Williamson, Researcher; interview

*"[we should be reaching] people who don't like Europe and don't think solidarity is great."*

Max Fras, Researcher; interview

This all comes back to the **necessity of dialogue** and trying to involve as many young people, who are not so easily reached, as possible. The European Solidarity Corps might not be perceived as a perfect solution but the first steps towards a more inclusive programme have been made, with for example, having the option of in country jobs and traineeships for solidarity projects. Mobility is an amazing learning opportunity but sometimes closer to home opportunities are needed as a first step. And hopefully, specific action provided by the Solidarity Corps will be a step in the right direction.

## **b) Diversity of young people's voices are not being heard**

Even if inclusion is a fundamental concept that should be a cornerstone for (international) youth work projects, the experience with this project shows that despite intentions to be inclusive, there is still a lot of work to achieve it. The authors of 4Thought wanted to make sure young people were a specific audience for this project and process and their voice had equal weight to policy makers, researchers and practitioners. Nevertheless, it was still only a small select group that managed to channel their opinions into these results.

### **The 4Thought project as an example**

Many of the people interviewed expressed a view that they are not used to being asked these questions for research. For many it was their first time to be involved in a project like this and for their opinions to be directly channelled into a European-wide project.

However, the **voices of a diverse spectrum of young people aren't included in this research**. The communication systems used were (necessarily, due to resources) restrictive, within existing networks and still kept within an international bubble. We did not allow for a control group either - young people that had not travelled or had not done projects funded by European programmes. This is automatically excluding a large proportion of the population which most probably would have very different viewpoints and contributions to the concept of (European) solidarity.

The systems and approaches for their voices to be heard are not inclusive, requiring a certain level of English (for many it is a second or third language) and a level of language competence to talk about theoretical and demanding topics with a demanding vocabulary. A level of technology is also required and an interest to contribute - to see and understand why their opinions are important and where it would lead.

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

- What about the millions of other young people whose opinions are not yet included? Where are their voices? How are they reached?
- If there is any proof to show that solidarity is self-selecting, why don't we see a wider diversity of participation?
- What are the mechanisms for a wider group of young people's opinions to be turned into policy?

### c) Not getting trapped in the bubble of elite young people

One element connected to this is to change the approach of consultation and the evidence-base on which decisions are made. How are young people represented in the creation of policy? How does the voice of practice also carry the voice and needs of young people with it? In the past, it was perhaps felt that decisions were made by policy-maker bureaucrats without any consultation or inclusion of needs or opinions of the field. Now there are many working groups, consultations, survey processes that exist but who are the people that respond to those? If they are written in English, there is a question of language competence, digital competence, resources available, the support given to translate or express needs in the 'policy' language that's needed, etc. How is the research defined and the target audience sample reached? How much outside of the 'normal' bubble do we reach?

*"Still I have the feeling that we have the well-educated white middle class left wing knowing the answers and knowing what's good for the other young people... We do not really get the population insights."*

Manfred Zentner, Researcher; interview

For one interviewee, their main concern was that the **diversity of young people is not really taken into account** - especially by the young people representing young people. He went on to say "we have to accept that 20-25% of young people are fed up with what's happening at the moment."<sup>15</sup> This dissatisfaction is seeing a large number of young people joining right wing movements to try and change things. Even if we (in the youth world) don't agree with that direction of energy, we should respect the fact that a lot of people are fed up with things. Their opinion should be heard, even if it doesn't fit with our values.

There is a desire to find new ways of getting the message across, one that includes the feelings and challenges that young people and youth workers are facing. There need to be new approaches that speak to people with other perspectives.

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<sup>15</sup> Manfred Zentner, Researcher; interview

*"I sit in circles of phenomenally privileged people talking about social inclusion and young people with fewer opportunities. And at that very moment, those young people are strengthening their social capital - leaving those young people behind. Most of the [more disadvantaged] young people are left out of the discussions."*

Howard Williamson, Researcher; interview

European Solidarity Corps has, as a relatively new programme, has an opportunity to **break some of these bubbles** and to use new forms and actions to attract young people whose voices and faces are not usually portrayed. Hopefully, in the next generations of this programme, wide consultations will reach out beyond the usual suspects and big organisations and build up on the diversity of opinions of young people.

#### Examples of a project/initiative in the field of solidarity

*In 2012, I approached an LGBT group in Istanbul. I came with the attitude of: you are in danger, in direct danger, and I would like to stand with you. Although I am not an LGBT myself, I would like to show my solidarity with you. Being gay doesn't necessarily come with a package of facilitation skills. And I had those skills/competences of facilitation. I was not welcomed with fully open arms and it took a while to find a common ground. But things got so much better with acting together. I did not need to be an LGBT myself, I needed to reach out and offer my support and my solidarity. And I needed to understand how to offer this solidarity, so it is not perceived as an external intrusion.*

Gulesin Nemutlu Unal, Practitioner; interview

*We had an event in the youth centre in Romania, we prepared dances and puppets, we mixed kids with disabilities from the centre and kids from a school near the centre. It was a great sensation because they were all having fun, all together, no one felt excluded. It took them a while, at the very beginning but then they realised that they can all have fun together. We did not keep the kids separated or asked the kids from school to be the ones doing something with the kids with the disability. We broke the bubbles by bringing all the kids together.*

Gabriel Arredondo, Young Person; interview

*We will start to implement a project through Solidarity Corps volunteering. It is for young people from foster care to create a space for themselves to become independent. In Romania the system works like this: when you are 18, you have 6 months to leave the foster care system and set up your own life. Those young 18 year olds who were depending on something are now let free with the message: 'ok you can go and live independently'. Most of them are desperate when they hear this - it's a very big step for them. Our organisation combines local volunteers (young people from the foster care system) with international volunteers (young people with experience of working with disadvantaged groups, or who had contact before with similar young people). Through non-formal activities, they will be given support to learn how to become independent. The aim is that they move from a feeling of desperation, when the institution says 'you are free to leave/you need to leave', to a position of 'ok, I'm ready to start my life'.*

Daniel Grebeldinger, Practitioner; interview



## 9.5 — Solidarity in Jobs and Traineeships

### Links need to be created

It is uplifting to see youth workers and other stakeholders involved in the youth work field in Europe excited about the focus on solidarity and ready to invest themselves to advance it and put it in practice. At the same time, the same enthusiasm is lacking for discovering what 'Jobs and Traineeships' have to offer and making an effort to create links between solidarity and employability.

It seems that investment needs to be made to have these voices heard and understood, emphasising the **benefits of bringing solidarity in the workplace** and employment market.

This could be done by sharing practice examples or amplifying the voices of young people that took part in similar kinds of initiatives, in this way the uncertainty and lack of trust will be tackled with concrete information and personal stories. A **sense of ownership** should be developed so that it's not only policy makers that support the idea but that other stakeholders believe in it too.

It could also be done by promoting a unique opportunity to integrate solidarity into the workplace, an environment where solidarity might not be the main concept felt and shared. It could also be done by investigating what are the inhibitors to beneficiaries exploring the action and understanding the barriers to involvement.

No matter the size of the budget for this particular action or how popular it is compared to volunteering and solidarity projects, the existence of jobs and traineeship as a whole ringfenced action marks an important statement about solidarity and employability. It is saying, that they can coexist and empower young people in this union.

*Example 1:*

*We have one project, which is called **KISS - Sustainability is the key**. We organise study visits, where people learn more about bees. For example, they have a chance to see bees in pollination. We put together young people from 4 different countries, which are in contact with the social-solidarity economy and they were visiting other experiences in other countries. And those experiences in other countries include, for example, young Africans making a cooperative collecting old washing machines and opening their own business. Or people opening a cafe in the centre of Athens, with fair-trade products. Or young people with disabilities producing wine. Social business, solidarity business, which are improving on ideas and inspiration for the economy but strongly based on values!*

*Example 2:*

*We work a lot on social and solidarity economy. To put an emphasis, not on the help, but on possibilities for development of persons and on the community. Projects 'Initiative for Social and Solidarity Economy' is where we were basically creating tools. There was a research, a portfolio of competences, there was a training module and finally a game. It's a computer game about how to manage a cooperative or an organisation by undertaking projects to develop and managing a team with competences. Plus, making choices for increasing your value in the enterprise or an organisation. And it has all these solidarity aspects that are connecting more with mutual help for creating a better quality of life and a better society.*

Davide Tonon, Practitioner; interview

## 9.6 — Lifelong Solidarity

### a) The role of mobility

Mobility projects, although relatively short in nature, are a very good impetus and a ‘bug’ that, with some nurturing, can keep growing. By developing yourself while living and contributing positively to another community in another country over several months, you can build something together with other people, and also include cultural exchange and understanding.<sup>16</sup>

This is why opportunities offered by the European Solidarity Corps (as well as other youth programmes) are so important for young people and the development of solidarity. It is often by taking a step away from the everyday reality and in **‘leaving for learning’**, that young people have a fresh look at their own local community and the importance of building links with people in it. Therefore solidarity with their own local community can be increased by participating in a mobility project somewhere else.

At the same time, it has been shown through research and through anecdotal evidence connected to ingroup mentality, that most people do solidarity actions on a local level. The list of possible activities that constitute a solidarity action are very often confined to a limited audience or ‘in group’. Therefore, it is essential to consciously ensure a link between mobility projects and small local actions in order to contribute to long term **solidarity that goes beyond individual and one-off actions**.

The Quality Mobility App (Q! App),<sup>17</sup> a web-based application for supporting quality in learning mobility, has an extensive list of ideas and suggestions to get you thinking about how to link mobility projects to the local hosting community.<sup>18</sup>

### b) Taking a step further

*“We make a mistake if we give an impression that solidarity is something that we do full time and at one period in our lives. Something that you choose to do for 6 months when you are 23: “I have done my solidarity and I can be at peace with the world.” Through youth work people need to see that solidarity needs to become a normal part of our lives.”*

Gabriella Civico, Practitioner; interview

<sup>16</sup> Tuba Ardic, Practitioner; interview

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.qualitymobility.app/>

<sup>18</sup> Making links to the hosting environment, Resource from the EPLM Quality app:  
<https://www.qualitymobility.app/resources/search/144>

The aim of the European Solidarity Corps should be for **lifelong solidarity engagement**. It's not something you do just once or for a fortnight during your holidays. Mobility activities, although a very good start, as one-off international short-term projects, are not the only way that solidarity is enacted or built. As shown by the granted-types of project now possible through the European Solidarity Corps, in-country projects that don't involve mobility have equal validity. It is a connection and involvement, a building of values, that can happen from the corner of your street and upwards. This connection, this potentially long term impact on **changing the attitudes towards solidarity**, should be emphasised on and further advanced within the Solidarity Corps.

According to the interviews for this project, it is important to support youth work and civil society for them to give a frame for the continuation and evolution of solidarity actions, and the competences and commitment gained by individuals that take part in them. This also brings **community impact and personal learning together**. Youth work is important in ensuring this, as the values behind it are consistent with the positive development of solidarity, but it cannot be the only space for this large endeavour. Solidarity is a process of community-building, the link to a rights-based approach is important to support and it is also important to keep the emphasis of policy development in that direction as well. With community building being in the focus of the European Solidarity Corps, solidarity as a value and life commitment should come through as well.

## Final Consideration - Solidarity as a Gift

Because it is! And it should be seen and promoted this way.

It was mentioned and highlighted several times throughout this report that the European Solidarity Corps is putting solidarity on the agenda and showing it to everyone in the open and yet it almost feels like it cannot be highlighted enough. While writing this report and presenting its outcomes on various occasions, the authors have become convinced more and more that this is a special opportunity and a rare chance to promote something that is really needed both in Europe and globally. The good thing is that it is being promoted and supported through policy with money and resources on an international level. Even more than that, it is being integrated diametrically into the environment that has the best access to young people - youth work.

**It should be seen as a gift, treated  
as a gift and promoted as a gift.  
The momentum should be used to make sure that we act  
in solidarity now and with the future.**



# 10 — Summary



## Background of the 4Thought project and the meaning of solidarity

In September 2016, the former president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker delivered his annual State of the European Union speech, in which he said:

“The European Solidarity Corps will create opportunities for young people willing to make a meaningful contribution to society and help show solidarity - something the world and our European Union needs more of. For me, this has always been the very essence of what the European Union is about. It is not the Treaties or industrial or economic interests that bind us together, but our values. And those who work as volunteers are living European values each and every day.”

By the end of 2016, building on the success and quality developments of the European Voluntary Service, a new programme, the ‘European Solidarity Corps’, was launched. In November 2018, the European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre was established. One of the first tasks of the Resource Centre was to commission a project, a study on the meaning of the concept of solidarity. This project was called **‘4Thought: Finding a Common Narrative on the Concept of Solidarity from Research, Practice, Policy and Young people’**. Its main aim was to create a vision of what the concept of solidarity means to different people, all the while assisting in the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps by making clearer what is meant by a ‘solidarity activity’.

## The need for solidarity

Through surveys, interviews and consultations, 4Thought reached out to several hundred practitioners, young people, researchers and policy makers. They all agreed that there is a **very strong need for solidarity in Europe today**.

One of the main reasons for this is integral to human nature - needing other people around and supporting others. Many people said the need for solidarity is existential and it is the key for the survival of humankind. Finally, it is part of the human sense of belonging, to feel in solidarity with those who are in our circles. In the narrowest sense, these are the closest people around us. And in the widest, all human beings.

The current need for solidarity comes from **identified challenges faced by society**. The main ones being:

- a focus on individual needs without caring for the needs, rights and challenges of others;
- the rise of right wing populism and turning inwards within national borders and in closed groups of solidarity;
- the climate crisis and lack of action for a sustainable future.

## (No) common definition

While everyone agreed that there is a need for solidarity, through the study, it became very clear that there is no common definition and no common understanding of this concept at the European level. Not in the official documents, not in the research, not in practical manuals and publications and not in direct conversations with young people, practitioners, researchers and policy makers.

The understanding of solidarity very much **depends on a persons' personal and professional background**, as well as the context(s) in which they have been living. Any concept that relates to personal experiences and views makes it very difficult to have a common understanding and to find common ground with others. It is culture-specific and each culture can shape a different understanding of solidarity - and that's not just 'national culture' related to countries, nations and languages but also to subcultures and cultures of communities of people and their values.

What solidarity does is highlight the diversity there is in 'European culture'. You can see the different walks of life that are drawn together for shared values and a shared approach. **Unity in diversity** seems to underpin the concept of solidarity.

## Solidarity has always been present in youth work

For many of those that took part in the interviews and survey for this project, 2016 was seen as the year that the European institutions 'officially' launched solidarity as a concept to be promoted - even perhaps 'institutionalising' it through policy and programmes. However, for many involved in international youth work, the concept has always been there but under different names. Organisations would practice solidarity values or have them as part of their code of practice. To start with, solidarity between youth workers and young people or amongst youth workers themselves has always been there. But, even more than that, **solidarity as a value** has been nurtured as part of civic awareness and engagement. As one respondent to the survey said: "I believe youth work values imply solidarity. When we aim to develop skills and knowledge for young people to act in multicultural communities, that involves solidarity actions."

Although the European Solidarity Corps and the focus on solidarity that arrived with it, seems to shift the focus, the good news is that the experience, the practice and competence is already there in the field. It is ready to channel solidarity to the furthest communities in our continent through youth work.

## Concepts that relate to solidarity

Since solidarity was present, but somehow never uniquely defined, it made sense to look for concepts that would somehow relate to it and would help (potential) beneficiaries of the European Solidarity Corps orientate themselves and find the solid ground to utilise the programme.



Based on the surveys, interviews and consultations, and taking into account the number of responses and the levels of disagreement between different views, there are four cornerstone concepts which are the most supported by all four sectors (policy, research, practice and young people):

- **Human Rights**

Acting to promote and protect other people's rights. Standing and acting in solidarity with people who are not able to claim their rights and using privileges less for oneself and more for someone else;

- **Empathy**

Understanding and feeling with others, recognising when someone is in need, sharing the sense of injustice and being motivated to act. Not empathising only with close ones and those with shared values and beliefs, but feeling empathy with every living being, including the environment as a whole;

- **Active Citizenship**

Action is the core element of solidarity. Being a responsible citizen, part of the society and ensuring greater good for everyone. The willingness to engage, to contribute to society and the eagerness to show solidarity towards people and places in need;

- **Inclusion**

Reaching out and including **all** young people. Going beyond the usual circles and in-groups. Including even those young people who do not necessarily feel or agree with what solidarity implies because they are probably the ones that might be needing it the most.

## 4Thoughts that came up from the process

One of the reasons why it was not easy to agree on a common definition or even common ground, was that many dilemmas, controversies and open questions came out of the process. Even though none of them could be seen as common ground, they generated a lot of perspectives and food for thought and they represent a fruitful soil for further discussions:

- **Motivation for solidarity**

What is behind the motivation of people to feel and act in solidarity? Can solidarity be based on pure altruism, without implication of any type of reward? Or does solidarity go beyond altruism and is about the common good and other different types of personal reward/gain? Where is the balance between altruism and reciprocity?

- **Group boundedness**

If group boundedness is one of the main reasons for solidarity and solidarity is mainly shown to those with whom we feel a strong bond, how to ensure that bonds are created with people that are very different to ourselves? Does the solidarity activity help form a group or does the group feeling increase the solidarity between its members?

- **Uncomfortable aspects of solidarity**

With group boundedness creating the feeling of 'Us and Them', can solidarity be a truly inclusive concept? How to ensure solidarity with those who are the most 'out-grouped' and yet who probably need solidarity the most?



- **Solidarity and (international) youth work**

Did the new programme bring solidarity into focus or is it just a new name for the same old things? Where is the place of solidarity in youth work principles, values and practical approaches? Should youth work bear the pressure of unlocking solidarity for young people?

- **Combining practice, policy, research and young people**

To what extent are the 4 groups of practitioners, policy makers, researchers and young people working, thinking and dreaming together in the field of solidarity? Do policy makers have more ownership for solidarity than others? How familiar are the 4 groups with each other and how much are bottom-up approaches 'allowed' in the solidarity field? How to ensure the balance of power when the 4 groups are put together in one place?

- **Community Impact and Life Long Solidarity**

With the European Solidarity Corps bringing back the focus on solidarity in the community, will it be possible to keep the balance between community impact and personal learning? How will individualism among young people interconnect with the needs of the community? How can the European Solidarity Corps go beyond individual and short-term (mobility) acts and ensure the development of lifelong solidarity among young people?

- **Employability and Jobs and Traineeships**

With the majority of the international youth work community excited about solidarity replacing employability as the main focus, how do we recognise the potential of jobs and traineeships? Where are the links between solidarity and employability? How to bring more solidarity into the workplace?

- **Sustainability and solidarity for the future**

Should sustainability and the climate crisis become the main focus of solidarity in Europe (and globally)? Does it make sense to talk about any other form of solidarity when the planet is in danger? How can we ensure solidarity with future generations?

## What does 4Thought mean for the European Solidarity Corps?

Looking at the need for solidarity, as well as challenges that lead to it and those that pose the threat to solidarity in Europe and beyond, the 4Thought process has led to some key considerations for the European Solidarity Corps and all those involved in it:

- **Understanding the future of solidarity**

Solidarity cannot be seen outside of the context in which it is set. Individualism, Education and Information, Right Wing Populism, Climate Crisis, etc. are among the main elements that are influencing it. Solidarity needs to be a link between the generations and the enabling ground for acting against emerging threats. It is essential for all involved to be compassionate, have empathy and feel and act together. Information and education, including online digital tools, need to equip and empower young people for whatever the future has to bring;

- **Using the European context wisely**

The European context is an important home for solidarity. Solidarity needs to be present from local to European level. Existing limits to solidarity within countries and closed groups should be brought down. The focus should be on strengthening European solidarity and going beyond it. Global solidarity has an important role to play;



- **Organised and State Solidarity**

Among many, it was considered that solidarity was brought in with a top down approach from the EU level. Promoting solidarity among young people and other generations is welcome news. However, there is a risk of institutionalising it and making it 'too' organised. Solidarity is an action based on feeling and not an iron rule and it should be promoted as such;

- **Reaching out to young people with fewer opportunities - Solidarity with ALL**

Tackling discrimination and 'ingroup' mentality. Developing solidarity with wider circles and groups and acting in solidarity with those who don't necessarily share the same values and beliefs.

Strengthening European solidarity and going beyond it;

- **Solidarity in Jobs and Traineeships**

Links between solidarity and employability should be explored and utilised. Jobs and Traineeships are enabling opportunities to bring solidarity into the workplace. Social and solidarity economy initiatives are already present in the practice and need to be mapped and promoted;

- **Solidarity as a gift**

Putting solidarity on the agenda on the European level is a special opportunity and a rare chance. Youth work is able to contribute to solidarity with its values, experience and enthusiasm. Everyone involved in international youth work should use this momentum and make sure that we act in solidarity now and in the future.



# 11 — Appendices



# A — Results of the 4Thought Project



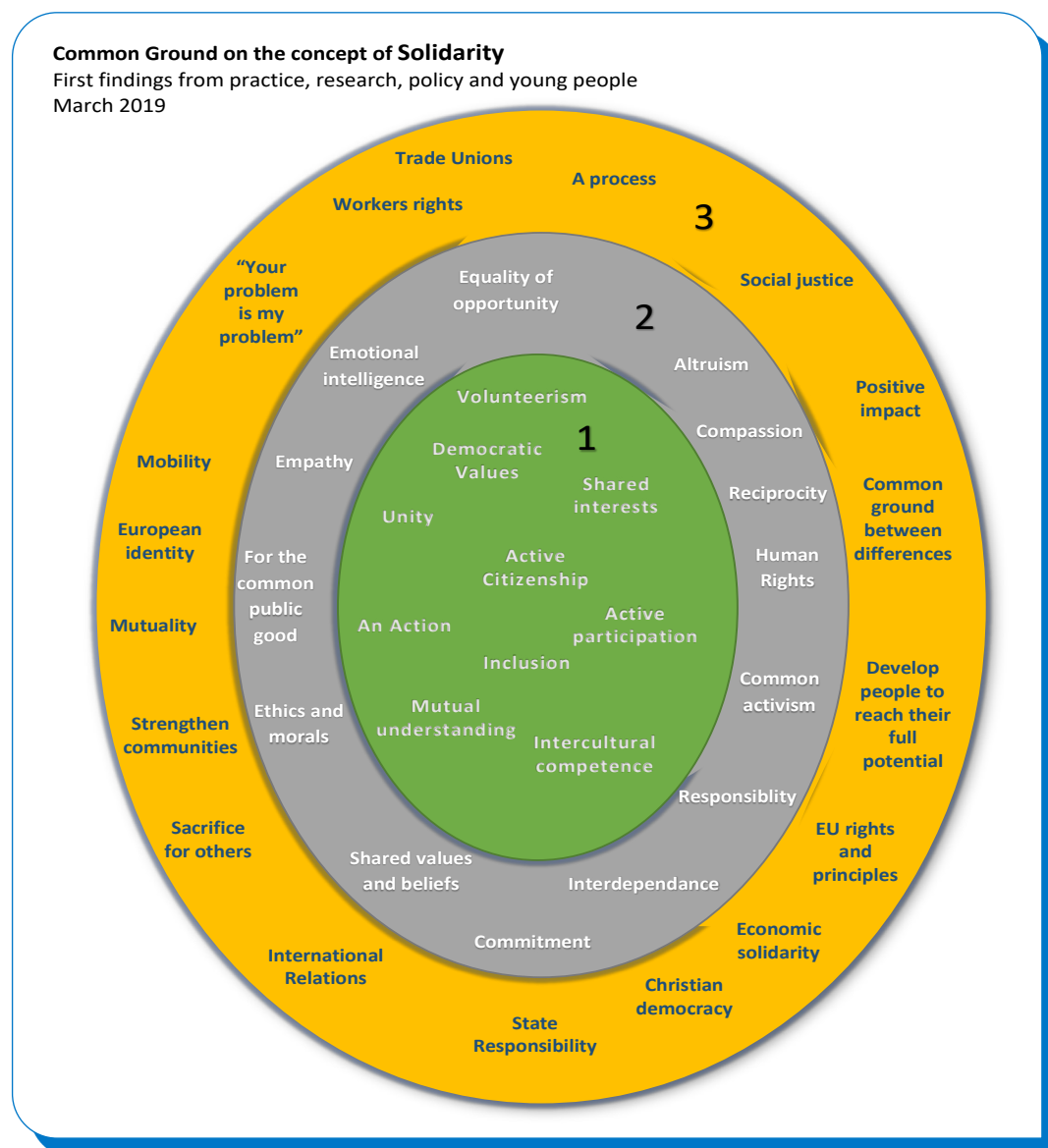
## Concentric Circles Model of Solidarity

In March 2019, the **initial survey** was sent out to a representative sample of stakeholders from the four groups. 34 people responded, from more than 17 countries, of which 4 defined themselves as researchers, 13 as practitioners, 12 as policy makers, 4 as young participants, and 4 without definition.

Their responses were gathered in the **Concentric Circles Model**, which includes iterative data that came from the concepts given during the first phase of the 4Thought process.

As concepts were mentioned, they were mapped and kept a tally of the frequency they were mentioned was kept. Then they were grouped according to **three areas**:

- 1 = concepts are common in all 4 sectors or are mentioned several times;
- 2 = concepts are mentioned a few times or by more than one sector;
- 3 = concepts are mentioned by only one sector/only once or twice.



Source: Nicodemi/Baclija Knoch

## The sample

We had 104 responses to the **online survey** 'Creating common ground on the meaning of solidarity for the European Solidarity Corps Programme'. This survey was open from 12th June to 13th August 2019 and promoted through newsletters, Facebook and twitter. 25 online interviews were carried out between June and August 2019.

Here is a breakdown of the 129 people that responded to the survey and interviews, by sector:

Number of interviewees: 25	
4	Policy makers
8	Practitioners
6	Young people
6	Researchers

Survey respondents: 104	
12	Policy makers
53	Practitioners
28	Young people
8	Researchers

Total number of respondents (interview + survey): 129	
16	Policy makers
61	Practitioners
34	Young people
14	Researchers

It is worth noting that the **majority of respondents were practitioners**. This is to be expected, both as the promotion/communication channels that we used had mostly practitioners as the first main audience and that the results and outcomes of the project will be mostly applicable for the practice field. Practitioners have a direct stake in the content of this project, they have a need and motivation for responding. Any outcome from this project that can be translated into practice will be taken up by the practice field.

About one third of respondents were **young people**, and we are very happy to have their voices and opinions involved in the project. For the **policy makers** and **researcher** sectors, it was necessary to use the connections of the relevant networks and to directly invite their involvement.



## Solidarity Interviews

It was agreed that we would do interviews to cover a variety of opinions and backgrounds. but we would also have an open online survey to ensure a participative/open approach to the whole field for the project.

Requests for interviews were brainstormed together with the staff from the Solidarity Corps Resource Centre. The approach was to make sure the following **criteria** were covered in as balanced a way as possible, within the resources that were available:

- Representation from policy, practice, young people and research;
- Geographical balance, including regions/countries that have specific links to solidarity through history or politics (eg Poland due to the Solidarnosc movement; Lebanon and Ukraine due to recent political changes and non-EU status; East/West/North/South EU countries etc);
- Gender balance;
- Specific expertise, if applicable.

Practitioner	11	44%
Young Person	5	20%
Researcher	5	20%
Policy Maker	4	16%

**Practitioners:** were by far the most numerous among the interviewees, 11 of them or 44% of the overall number. There was a great diversity among them, from being active on the local level, to working for large global organisations. Such organisations included, the Red Cross/Red Crescent and European organisations, like the European Volunteer Centre and the European Youth Forum. They included, trainers/educators, directors of organisations, policy officers, and youth workers. They had all been active for quite a number of years - long before the European Solidarity Corps. Quite a few practitioners said that they are also influencing policy or being a bridge between practice and policy, as well as conducting research of sorts.

Atta Durrani	Personal practitioner in fragile contexts (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, Tanzania). Currently based in Lebanon, working for the Red Cross/Red Crescent, but offers his personal perspective rather than the organisational one.
Daniel Grebeldinger	Founder of 15 NGOs, practitioner and policy expert on Roma inclusion.
Davide Tonon	Educator.
Gabriella Civico	Director of the European Volunteer Center.
Gulesin Nemutlu Enal	Freelance or self-employed trainer, youth worker and author.
Manuel Gonçalves Gil	Policy Officer of the European Youth Forum.
Matthieu Fortunier	Practitioner active in Eurocircle. Developing internships department, in European Solidarity Corps focusing on internships.
Nina Nentwich	Actively involved in projects in the international youth field, with young people. Part of Eurocircle.
Sanne Hogesteeger	Project coordinator at Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre, coordinating policy and practice.
Oksana Yuryk	Trainer for SALTO EECA EVS training cycle.
Tuba Ardic	Practitioner, currently writing a PhD about youth mobility.

**Young people:** 5 of them or 20% of all interviewees took part in the interviews, all were beneficiaries of the European Solidarity Corps at the time of the interviews. 3 of them identified as practitioners as well and 4 of them were active in the field in different projects and youth work activities.

Gabriel Arredondo	Volunteering in Romanian for 2 months - peers for Solidarity.
Franco Perra	Solidarity project in Romania in the centre for people with disabilities.
Katherina Keinprecht	In a project in Slovakia.
Lore Egle	European Solidarity Corps volunteer near Innsbruck.
Valerija Bulatskaya	Volunteer in Austria.



**Researchers:** 5 in total or 20% of all the interviewees were mostly youth researchers. 4 of them either former or still active practitioners and 2 of them strongly involved in policy.

Howard Williamson	Professor of European Youth Policy, University of South Wales.
Justina Garbauskaitė Jakimovska	Practitioner and researcher. Thesis: Development in NFE field in Lithuania.
Manfred Zentner	Youth researcher.
Max Fras	Researcher, with many hats.
Ozgehan Senyuva	Researcher, who is involved in reading, analysing and comparing information.
Alexandra Severino	Researcher, Human rights, EU law and youth participation.

Policy makers: 4 in total or 16% of all the interviewees were all former practitioners and some even identified as having a double role: practitioner and policy maker. 2 out of 4 are working for the institutions that are involved in shaping and implementing EU programmes.

Jonas Agdur	Chairman of the InterCity Youth
Rita Bergstain	Educational manager in the German National Agency
Michele Corsini	World Net Exchange
Andrej Troha	Programme Officer at SALTO South East Europe in charge of the European Solidarity Corps

## The 'Meaning of Solidarity' online survey

Practitioner	53	55%
Young Person	28	29%
Policy Maker	12	12.5%
Researcher	8	8.3%
Unidentified	3	3.1%

### Respondents' countries (32 countries in total):

Italy	13	Romania	6	Serbia	2	Latvia	1
Austria	10	Hungary	4	Turkey	2	Netherlands	1
UK	8	Poland	4	Azerbaijan	1	N. Macedonia	1
Belgium	7	Estonia	3	Belarus	1	Norway	1
Germany	6	Lithuania	3	Bulgaria	1	Russia	1
Spain	6	Croatia	2	Egypt	1	Slovakia	1
Czechia	5	Cyprus	2	Greece	1	Slovenia	1
Portugal	5	France	2	Jordan	1	Switzerland	1

## Outcomes of the Interviews/Surveys

Included in the questionnaire was the image of the original concentric circles, resulting from the first phase of the project, with a diversity of concepts that people had said were connected to solidarity, divided into the three levels.

The survey asked to rank the **top 5 concepts that supports people's definitions of solidarity**, and if they had to exclude a concept which ones would you exclude (maximum 5). Interviewees were also asked which concepts support their definitions and which ones they would exclude.



In total, there were 954 comments for which concepts were the priority ones and which ones to exclude: 619 supportive ones that positively supported concepts that were connected to solidarity, and 335 times for concepts that would be excluded.

## Number of contributions to shape concept of solidarity

Main concept that support solidarity (in my top 5) - requests for different concepts to be included in the egg	619
If I had to exclude a concept, I would exclude this one (max 5) - requests for concepts not to be included in the egg	335
<b>Total comments on concept</b>	<b>954</b>

These statistics were then tabled and calculated. A percentage approach was used. Although the relatively small numbers involved for policy and research would test the validity of the percentage approach, it allows a fairer comparison between sectors.

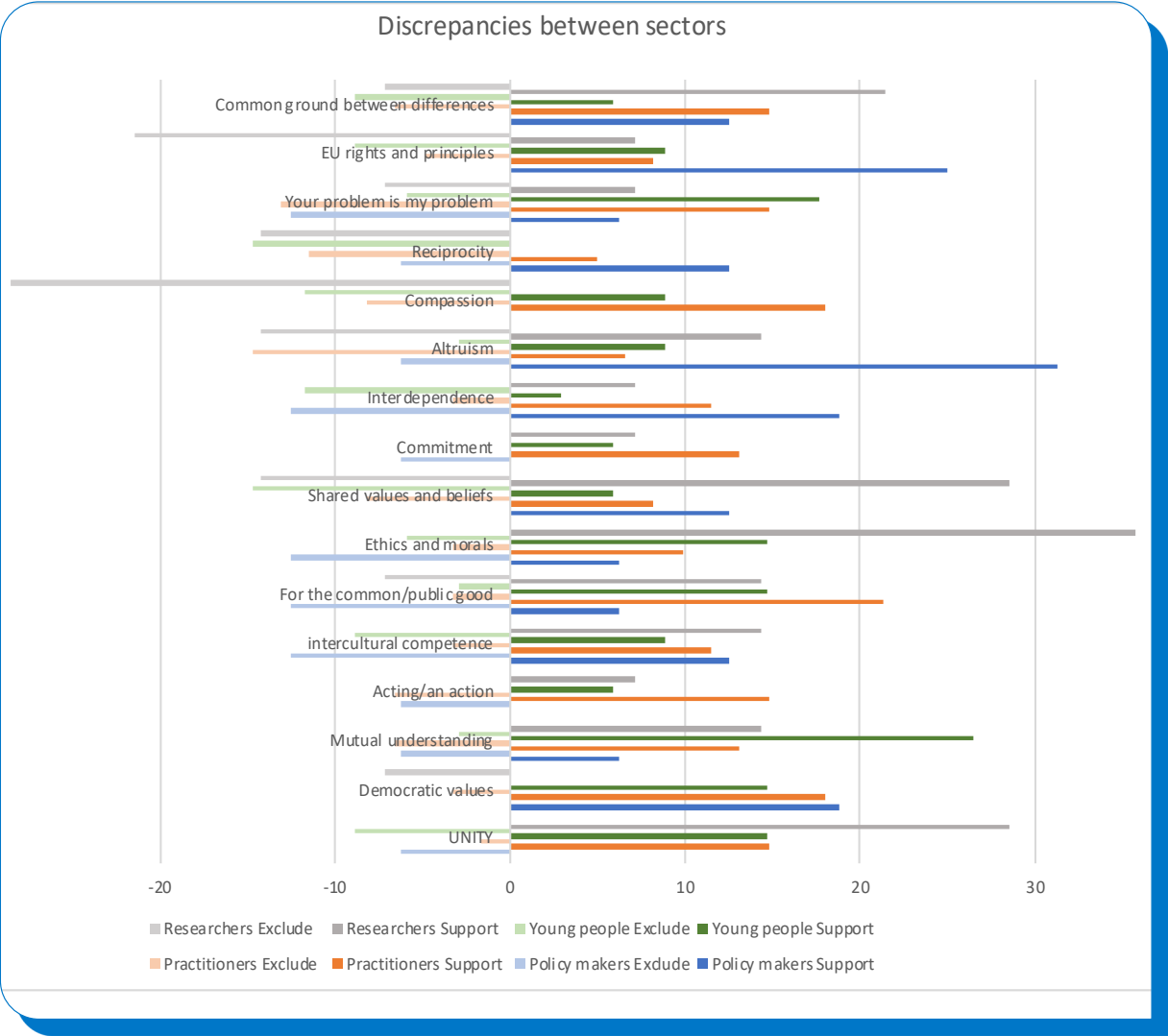
The next step was to note the balance between a concept that was both supported and excluded by different respondents in the same sector. For example, 31% of Policy Maker respondents would support Active Citizenship as a concept that helps define solidarity. 6% of Policy Makers said they would exclude it, so the balance of support for Policy Makers to include Active Citizenship as a concept that helps define solidarity is  $31\% - 6\% = 25\%$ .

A scale was set to show for which concepts there was support, which should be excluded or about which respondents were ambivalent. This phrase was chosen as sometimes responses from the same sector would be mixed and cancel each other out (e.g. 15% of practitioners would include 'your problem is my problem' as a concept, but 13% would exclude it, leaving a balance of 2%. This is a contradictory response, that is inconclusive - it is ambivalent.).

Category	Derived from statistical response
strong support	> 20% on balance
support	10 - 20% on balance
ambivalent	-10 to +10 on balance
exclude	10-20% on balance
strong exclude	> 20% on balance



The following table shows a list of all the concepts that we surveyed and how the support for them varied between sectors. You can see that there are two groups of responses - one group where the sectors would mostly agree with each other (either to include the concept or to exclude it) and one group where there were discrepancies between the sectors in their responses. Where a cell is blank, it means there was nil return from that sector relating to that concept (no-one voted to either support or exclude it).



Source: Nicodemi/Baclija Knoch

## Support and exclusion per concept

Sector table showing support and exclusion per concept:

Out of 104 survey + 25 interview responses - do these concepts support your interpretation of solidarity? If you had to exclude some concepts, which ones would you exclude?		Policy makers	Practitioners	Young people	Researchers
Concepts in common (not more than 10% variance)	Active citizenship	strong support	strong support	support	strong support
	Active participation	strong support	support	strong support	support
	Inclusion	support	strong support	strong support	support
	Volunteering	ambivalent	strong support	strong support	strong support
	Shared interest	exclude	ambivalent	exclude	ambivalent
	Support	ambivalent	support	strong support	strong support
	Equality of opportunity	support	strong support	strong support	support
	Human rights	strong support	strong support	strong support	strong support
	Responsibility	support	strong support	strong support	support
	Common activism	ambivalent	ambivalent	ambivalent	ambivalent
	Empathy	strong support	support	strong support	strong support
	Trade Unions	ambivalent	strong exclude	strong exclude	strong exclude
	Workers rights	exclude	exclude	ambivalent	exclude
	A process	exclude	exclude	ambivalent	
	Social justice	support	support	support	strong support
	European identity	ambivalent	ambivalent	ambivalent	
	Mutuality		ambivalent	ambivalent	ambivalent
	Strengthening communities	strong support	support	ambivalent	support
	Sacrifice for others	exclude	strong exclude	exclude	strong exclude
	State responsibility	exclude	strong exclude	ambivalent	ambivalent

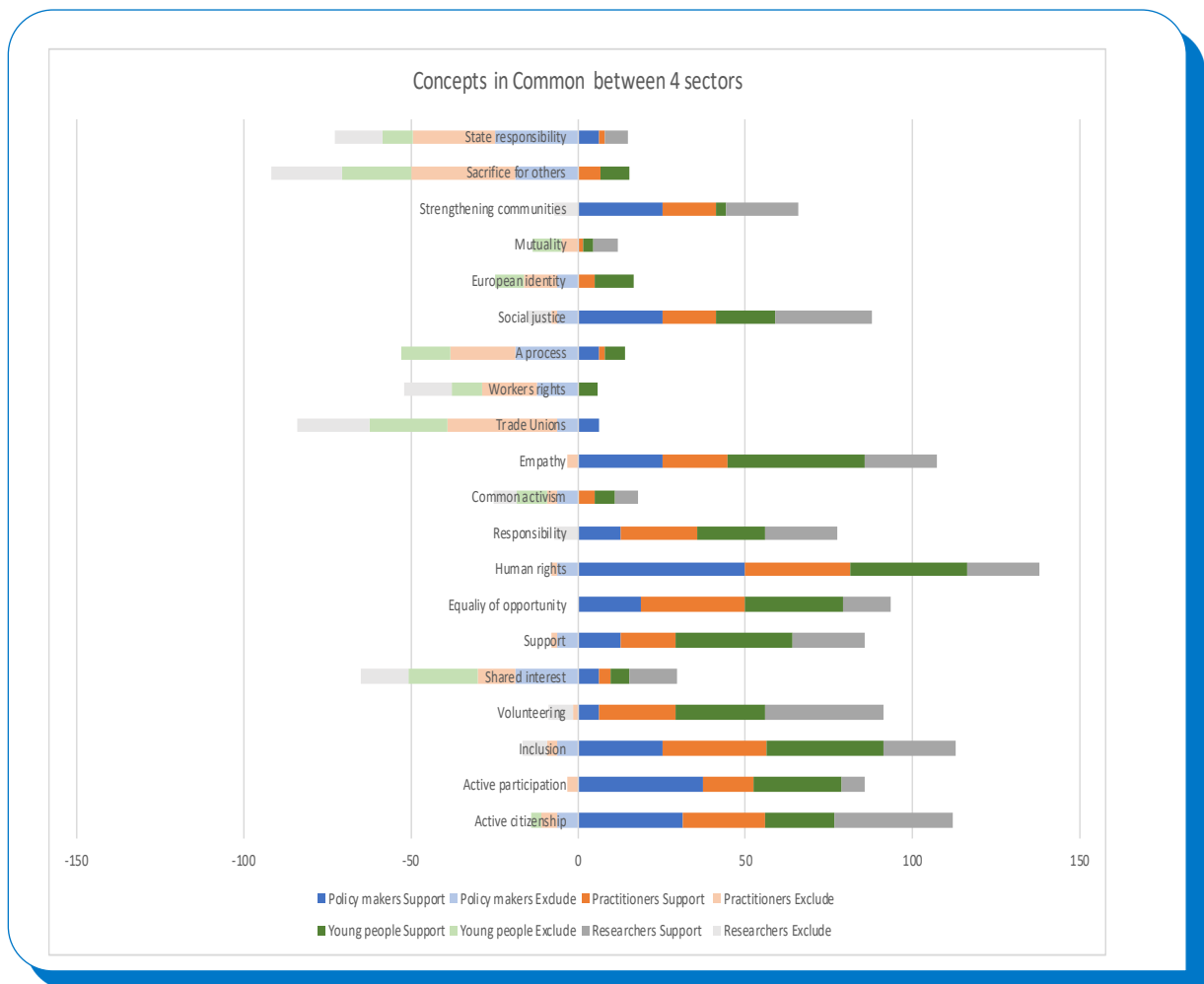


Out of 104 survey + 25 interview responses - do these concepts support your interpretation of solidarity? If you had to exclude some concepts, which ones would you exclude?		Policy makers	Practitioners	Young people	Researchers
Discrepancies (more than 10% variance)	Unity	ambivalent	support	ambivalent	strong support
	Democratic values	support	support	support	ambivalent
	Mutual understanding	ambivalent	ambivalent	strong support	support
	Intercultural competence	ambivalent	ambivalent	ambivalent	support
	For the common/public good	ambivalent	support	support	ambivalent
	Ethics and morals	ambivalent	ambivalent	ambivalent	strong support
	Shared values and beliefs	support	ambivalent	ambivalent	support
	Commitment	ambivalent	support	ambivalent	ambivalent
	Interdependence	ambivalent	ambivalent	ambivalent	ambivalent
	Altruism	support	ambivalent	ambivalent	ambivalent
	Compassion		support	ambivalent	exclude
	Reciprocity	ambivalent	ambivalent	exclude	exclude
	Your problem is my problem	ambivalent	ambivalent	support	ambivalent
	EU rights and principles	support	ambivalent	ambivalent	exclude
	Common ground between differences	support	ambivalent	ambivalent	support
	Acting/an action	ambivalent	ambivalent	ambivalent	ambivalent



## Concepts in common between the 4 sectors

The following graph shows the **concepts that the four sectors had in common** (either all support, all exclude, or not more than 10% variance if some supported/some excluded). You can see, for example, that empathy is supported as part of the concept of solidarity by all four sectors, with only 3% of practitioners excluding it. Trade Unions should be excluded as part of the definition of solidarity concept, with only 6% of policy makers supporting it.



Source: Nicodemi/Baclija Knoch

## Concepts that **MUST** be included

Taking into account the size of the responses and the levels of contentiousness, there are **four concepts** which are the most supported by all four sectors. You can see on the graph above, there are 4 bars which are the furthest to the right that pass the 100 line. The following concepts are the top four which are the least contentious to include:

- **Human Rights** - this had the highest support. All sectors strongly support it and it was the most referred to in interviews when going more in-depth into questions and reasoning;
- **Active Citizenship** - support or strong support from all 4 sectors;
- **Inclusion** - all four sectors support or strongly support. It was mentioned several times in interviews, also related to equal opportunities;
- **Empathy** - support or strong support from all sectors, with 41% of young people supporting it.

This means that practice, policy, young people and research all agree that these four concepts **MUST be a part of any definition** for the concept of solidarity. Please see chapter 7 for further elaboration on these.

## Concepts that **SHOULD** be excluded

Seeing the results and taking the concepts that are most strongly felt to be excluded, which can be seen on the graph above as the longest lines to the left - the following concepts are the least contentious to exclude:

- **Sacrifice for others** - all exclude or strongly exclude;
- **Trade Unions** - strong excluded by practice, young people and research. Policy is equally ambivalent (6% support, 6% exclude);
- **State Responsibility** - all exclude or strongly exclude;
- **Shared interest** - exclude by policy, practice and young people, researchers are ambivalent;
- **Process** - excluded or no comment;
- **Workers rights** - all four sectors excluded.

This means that practice, policy, young people and research all agree that these concepts **SHOULD NOT be part of any definition** of the concept of solidarity. Please see Chapter 4 for more elaboration on why and the reasoning behind.

## Some interpretations of the other findings in common

Concept	Findings
Active participation	This had support from everyone. 38% of policy makers supported it (with none against). Young people also strongly supported (at 26%). Surprisingly, the only sector to suggest to exclude it was policy (at 3%)
Volunteering	Strong support from Practice, Research and Young People. Some support from Policy
Support	Researchers (21%) and young people (35%) strongly supported it, policy and practice still support on balance, but with some incongruity (some respondents from those sectors would exclude)
Responsibility	Support or strong support to include from all four sectors, with only 7% of researchers suggesting to exclude
Social Justice	Support or strong support from all 4 sectors
Strengthening communities	While no sectors would exclude it, only 3% of young people support it vs 25% support from policy
Common activism	There is no support from anyone - either ambivalent or would exclude
European identity	Either exclude or ambivalent

## Discrepancies between sectors

As we expected, there are still quite some differences between the sectors of practice, policy, research and young people. A few points that we have noted about the findings here:

Concept	Findings
Acting/an action	Policy makers would exclude it, the other 3 sectors would support including it
For the common/public good	Policy would exclude, the other 3 sectors would support including it
Unity	6% of policy makers would actively exclude. 29% of researchers would support including it
Ethics and morals	Researchers gave strong support, practice and young people slight support, policy excluded
Commitment	Policy and research would exclude, practice and young people supported it
Intercultural competence	Support from practice and research, ambivalence from policy and young people
Democratic values	Policy, practice and young people would support it. Researchers would exclude it (7% exclude with none supporting)
Shared values & beliefs.	Policy yes, young people quite against (-14%), researchers feel strongly about this area with 29% supporting its inclusion and 14% excluding
Mutual understanding	Young people and researchers support/strong support, policy makers ambivalent
EU rights and principles	25% policy support. -14% researchers, so they would exclude it. Practice and young people ambivalent
Interdependence	Young people feel more strongly it should be excluded. Researchers would include it
Altruism	Strongly supported by policy (25% on balance), researchers equally ambivalent (14% support, 14% exclude)
Compassion	Researchers strongly exclude (29%), policy makers not mentioned once
Reciprocity	Policy and practitioners some ambivalence, research and young people - exclude
Your problem is my problem	young people support, others ambivalent or exclude



As part of the project we did try to map the sectors against each other, to see if there were natural 'allies' (and therefore natural 'opponents') but we **couldn't find enough of a pattern** in the results to be able to make any conclusions along those lines. We started with mapping 'young people' against policy and then researchers, but there was no pattern. It seems the presumptions and assumptions that decisions made by policy makers are far away from the needs and interest of young people (for our respondent group at least) cannot be evidenced, and cannot be proven!

## Most contentious concepts related to solidarity

Looking at the disparity between the sectors (those concepts which are strongly supported by some but would be definitely excluded by another) here are the main concepts that are contentious:

- Compassion
- Reciprocity
- Your problem is my problem
- Altruism
- Shared values and beliefs
- EU rights and principles

We believe it's important to include these concepts in any discussion about the concept of solidarity, as there are such varied opinions for them. In fact, they are catalysts for the most important step in solidarity definition - a **dialogue about difference**.

## Concepts that were missing/could also be added

The following concepts were also contributed during the process of the project's research, as concepts that contribute to the definition of solidarity, either through interviews or survey responses:

- **(Environmental) sustainability** - for the greater good of humankind and the shared space and mutual need for resources to be able to survive;
- **Respect** - showing regard and consideration for the differences of 'the other';
- **Humanity** - compassion, understanding and sympathy for others;
- **Help(ing)** - an action providing assistance or aid, as opposed to 'support' (which as a verb is a 'complement or supplement that keep things from not failing');
- **Exchange** - related to reciprocity, but more about the act of exchanging/trading, compared to the mutually dependent relationship between people;
- **Education**, 'right' information - adequate provision of fact, information and learning spaces to allow critical thinking and decision making, in a world of fake news and social media bubbles, especially related to the definition of 'Them and Us';

- **Fairness** - being treated impartially, without discrimination, related to deservingness, reciprocity and justice;
- **Justice, rule of law** - a restriction of power, a base framework of 'right and wrong' that can provide equality for all;
- **Togetherness** - related to the concept of unity and brotherhood;
- **Peace** - as broad concept within society, not necessarily in regard to armed conflict: a reciprocal relationship (peace brings solidarity, solidarity brings peace).

## Concepts that were only there in the first model

- **Develop people to reach their full potential** - related to assistance and support, usually within the civil society sector, providing participative space and support for others to contribute to society, increasing their competences while they do; related to active participation
- **Positive impact** - making a difference to society with a measurable and/or visible outcome; related to action
- **Emotional intelligence** - Awareness and control of own emotions and empathetic management of interpersonal relationships. In relation to the diversity of needs, cultural expression, and most explicitly to empathy, to be able to understand and share the feelings of others; Related to empathy.
- **Economic solidarity** - Related to welfare and social justice
- **Mobility** - learning mobility as a way to make young people more solidary; Related to international/European solidarity
- **International relations** - Two or more nations interacting politically, economically or culturally. Governmental decisions on that country's position and relations with others can have an impact on the levels of solidarity felt (on different sides).

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# Editorial



## The European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre

The European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre supports National Agencies and organisations in the youth field and beyond with the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps programme.

The Resource Centre's mission is to:

- Explore the potential of solidarity as a core value in European society;
- Promote the use of the European Solidarity Corps as a tool for understanding and living solidarity;
- Co-ordinate networking activities (e.g. trainings, seminars and events) that will support the quality implementation of the programme and maximise its impact;
- Contribute to building a European Solidarity Corps community of organisations

The Resource Centre is based at IZ, the Austrian National Agency for Erasmus+ : Youth in Action and the European Solidarity Corps, in Vienna, Austria.

"IZ – Vielfalt, Dialog, Bildung" is an independent NGO. It has been founded in 1987 and currently engages in three working fields: International Initiatives – civil society projects in regions bordering the EU – Caucasus and Western Balkan in particular, IZ Academy - Trainings in Diversity and Intercultural Competences & Communal Integration and Austrian National Agency for the European Union Youth Programmes - administration of the two EU programmes Erasmus+ Youth in Action, European Solidarity Corps as well as offering training and support for youth workers and youth organisations .

The Solidarity Corps RC is part of the European SALTO-YOUTH network. SALTO stands for Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities. The Resource Centres provides resources, information and training for National Agencies and European youth workers. The network cooperates with other actors in the European youth field, among them the Council of Europe, the European Youth Forum, trainers and training organisers.

More information:

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

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

<https://www.iz.or.at/rc>

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