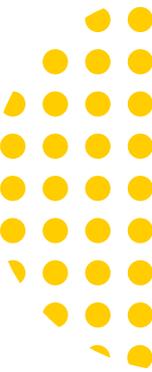


# European Solidarity Corps Projects in Neighbouring SouthMed Countries

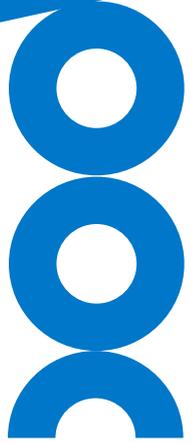


**A Narrative Shift from EVS  
with Potential Implications**



NEO-COLONIALISM • SOUTHMED COUNTRIES •  
UNSKILLED VOLUNTEERISM • HOST COMMUNITIES  
• SOLIDARITY • GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT



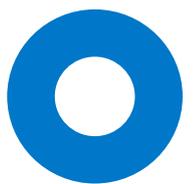
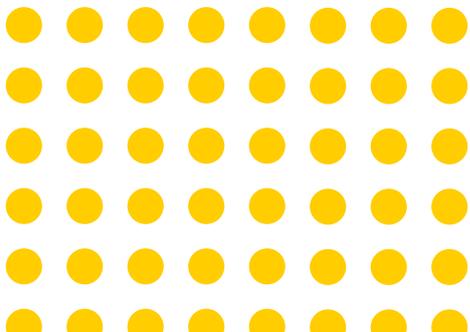


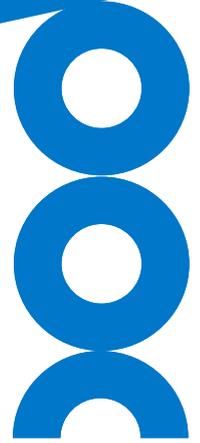
## Amr Arafa

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... is a freelance consultant, trainer and researcher based in Cairo, Egypt. Amr believes in the impact of youth work and the efficiency of non-formal learning thus he turned these into his main areas of speciality. He works with several local and international institutions in MENA and Europe on designing and delivering educational programs for young people 15 - 30 years old. Amr has a master in Education and Youth studies from the University of Hong Kong, and a certified practitioner in Adult Learning by Calgary University in Canada and recipient of Community Leadership Certificate from George Mason University in Washington D.C. in US. He supports the autonomy of young people and transformative powers in them, and the importance of youth work to activate that.

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## ABSTRACT

In EVS, there was a focus on learning in an exchange process between volunteers and host communities. European Solidarity Corps now focuses more on service and less on learning. This new narrative suggests that European young people are offering service by performing solidarity acts to communities who are in need. That community-focussed narrative shift has implications. This paper discusses the European Solidarity Corps in the context of the EU SouthMed neighbouring countries and this new narrative. The paper highlights some possible implications of the narrative shift from a learning focus to solidarity-focused mobility programmes with SouthMed neighbouring countries.

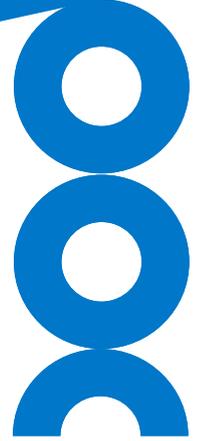
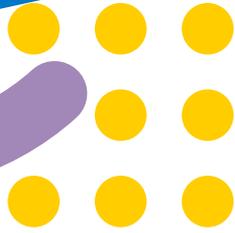
### 1. Introduction

European youth programmes have long been promoting values in cross-regional projects. Values like universal equity, reciprocity and equal partnerships. European Solidarity Corps was launched in 2016 as part of an initiative to boost European solidarity and offer opportunities for young people to volunteer and work in solidarity-related projects. This came as a narrative shift from its predecessor, the European Voluntary Service (EVS). EVS ended in 2018, and the European Solidarity Corps is now the leading European volunteering mobility programme. However, could the emphasis on European Solidarity in the European Solidarity Corps programme undermine these values?

In Erasmus+ / European Solidarity Corps projects with SouthMed neighbouring countries, most of

the host communities are considered as developing countries or countries in-transition (Nielsen 2011, Guterres 2020). This opens numerous discourses on international development in European Solidarity Corps projects. International development is usually faced with some critical theories, some of those theories are based on empirical research. Critical theories include neo-colonialism, unskilled volunteerism, and dependency of host communities (Bandyopadhyay 2019, Bandyopadhyay and Patil 2017, Brown 2018). However, the context of the European Solidarity Corps is different enough from other transnational volunteering programmes which suggests that any specific insights related to these theories will appear in the coming years of the programme. But as a shared responsibility among the stakeholders of European Solidarity Corps, we need to know what to look for regarding these risks. Indeed, there is no





evidence that the European Solidarity Corps has in fact fallen into any of the risks mentioned above, however the aim of this paper is to raise awareness of these dimensions in order to avoid negative impact from regional volunteering.

With the emphasis on European solidarity, community-focused projects, and the retreating role of learning, European Solidarity Corps could be vulnerable to these criticisms like other transnational volunteering programmes in developing countries. Nevertheless, this paper stands for the idea that this is very preventable while retaining the solidarity emphasis in the programme. All parties involved in European Solidarity Corps are responsible for finding the critical points where intervention can take place to prevent that. Interventions could be in educational forms, quality assuring practices or development in programme structures.

## 2. Narrative Change

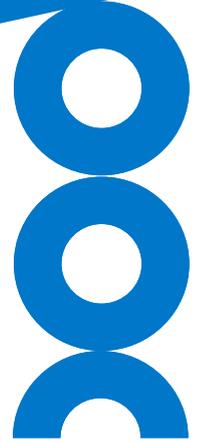
European discourse about solidarity has intensified through the past decade due to several crises such as the 2008 economic depression, 2015 immigration crisis, and the 2020 pandemic. European solidarity became a rising need in uncertain times. In a series of articles about European solidarity, Christian Lahusen raised concerns about the fragility of solidarity within the European block and suggested that European solidarity's future seems

to be uncertain (Lahusen 2020). Lahusen's argument pointed out that these crises might increase solidarity in short-term relief, but reduce solidarity in the long-term. Lahusen also argued that solidarity is conditional to political, social, and cultural dispositions.

The European Solidarity Corps programme "aims to foster solidarity in European society" and "offers young people opportunities to help resolve challenging situations across Europe" through "solidarity-related projects" (European Solidarity Corps brochure 2019). Here there is an emphasis on "solidarity", "Europe", and "European society". Although there is no evidence that there are contradictions between national, European, and global solidarities, labeling solidarity along with particular identities, has implicit connotations. What the 4Thoughts report called: "Uncomfortable aspects of solidarity" (Bacliija Knoch and Nicodemi 2020).

According to Lahusen (2020), European solidarity is built on notions of a) responsibility to offer solidarity, and b) rights to receive solidarity. These elements of responsibilities and rights might be challenged outside of European borders where European solidarity is a European right to receive. In the eyes of European citizens, SouthMed communities might not be entitled to receive European solidarity politically and economically because they are neither in the political borders of the union, nor do they contribute to the programme's budget.





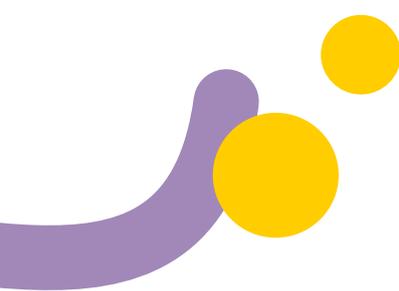
*“As a result, organised solidarity, out of necessity, builds on group identities that erect distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them’, heightening antagonism between both. In-group solidarity might thus imply out-group enmity.” (Lahusen 2020)*

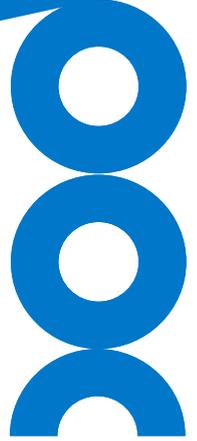
Moreover, the 4Thought report listed “Not getting trapped in the bubble of elite young people” and “the role of global solidarity” in its considerations (Bacliya Knoch and Nicodemi 2020). Accordingly, It is definitely needed to consider the SouthMed context and SouthMed’s young people’s needs who are generally not “elite” and not “european”. Neglecting such considerations might have implications on the context of European Solidarity Corps in SouthMed neighbouring countries. These implications are interconnected and interrelated. This paper raises awareness about these implications and the areas where they occur: *Impact of the programme, balancing learning and service, and partnerships*. I will discuss the implications of each of these areas before closing with some recommendations on how to mitigate the impact of these implications. But first, let’s have a look at some critical implications and the hot issues that affect the three areas.

### 3. Critical Implications

Neo-colonialism, unskilled volunteerism, and dependency of host communities are all terms that can be used to reasonably criticise International Volunteering Services (IVS) all over the globe. IVS has solidarity at its core, however, these dangers can infiltrate transnational projects silently, especially in the context of developing countries. The Centre for European Volunteering (CEV) raised awareness about such dangers through their publication, “Voluntourism: A critical evaluation and recommendations for the future” (Ferraguto 2018). It provided recommendations on how to steer away from these traps. In addition, the Lonely Planet guide to volunteering, highlighted critical points to organisations and volunteers to avoid such dangers (Lonely Planet 2013). These potential dangers almost certainly exist in every volunteering context but, could they endanger European Solidarity Corps in SouthMed as well?

The European Solidarity Corps has a different foundation than most IVS schemes, but it is not immune from potential risks. European voluntary programmes in neighbouring countries often have an international development component. They serve a huge geographical scope that is divided into three regions: South East Europe, Eastern Europe and Caucasus, and South Mediterranean. Most of the hosting communities of these programmes are in developing countries where international development has a long complicated history. With





a focus on solidarity more than learning, one can argue that a narrative shift in European Solidarity Corps may be critical in neighbouring country projects because of power relations and geopolitical contexts. The idea of young Europeans going out of Europe to serve communities that are in difficult situations and who have limited resources is susceptible to the academic discourses of similar programmes; International Voluntary Services and International Service-Learning. Learning and intercultural learning, in particular, was fostered throughout the 22 years of EVS in these countries which might have protected EVS from such susceptibility. But, what could protect European Solidarity Corps in its new solidarity-focused narrative?

In order to protect European Solidarity Corps from these potential pitfalls it is necessary to understand them. European Solidarity Corps will need to introduce new counter elements and or reinstate the EVS approach of having a learning focus running alongside the solidarity aspect.

• **Neo-colonialisms:**

This is a term that describes relations of continued or renewed domination of a nation or region by another in the period after formal decolonisation. It most commonly refers to, but is not limited to former colonies, unequal relations of power between formally decolonised nation-states and their former colonisers (Juergensmeyer 2012).

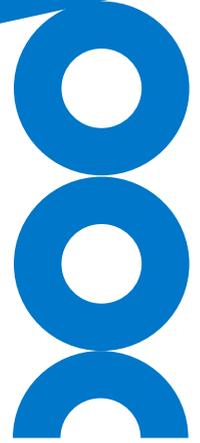
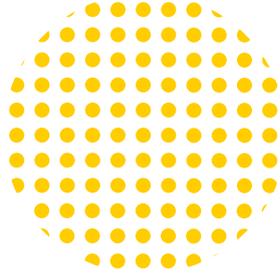
• **Unskilled volunteerism:**

This is the approach of sending unqualified volunteers or poor matching suitable volunteers, who lack proper training and mission preparation. The more vulnerable host communities are, the more devastating this impact can be on them (Dumélie et al 2006).

• **The dependency of host communities:**

This is about the continued reliance of the host community on volunteers to perform services or the reliance on sending organisations to finance services and programmes to establish services. This is the result of short-term stress-relief without the development of local resources and human capital (Sherraden 2008; Hernandez-Maskivker 2018).





## 4. Hot Issues

There are a number of issues that might contribute to the vulnerability of the European Solidarity Corps programme to such dangers. These issues are the author's observations and opinions and do not prove the existence of the implied dangers mentioned above. They are warning signs that such dangers are more likely to happen if not systematically avoided.

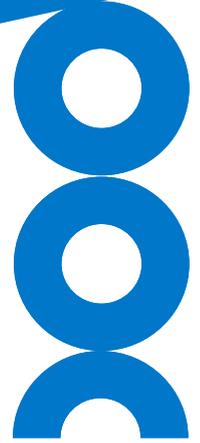
First, the confusion over the concept of solidarity. Despite efforts done in the past years to understand it, forming a concept for solidarity in the context of the European Solidarity Corps is still in progress. Due to its very specific objectives and vast scope of operations, solidarity in European Solidarity Corps is more than solidarity as a defined term. It is holistic and comprehensive. Studies suggest that solidarity is fragile and dynamic (Grasso and Lahusen 2020; Lahusen 2020; Maggini 2018; Wallaschek 2019), which means that it will continue to be complicated. For each European Solidarity Corps project, solidarity might be seen in one way or another. Such comprehensiveness is a great characteristic of solidarity, but also it is a risk for confusion and misinterpretation.

Second, incorporating EU aid into the programme. Starting from 2021, this is another sign that reinforces solidarity as aid and helping communities in stress which is only a partial understanding of solidarity, but one that is widely received. For the

period 2021-2027, the commission has proposed to incorporate the EU Aid Volunteers scheme into the European Solidarity Corps which would introduce an aspect of humanitarian aid operations to the programme. We still do not know exactly how this merger will take place, but concerns over misinterpreting solidarity as merely aid are becoming more likely with this merger. The transformative learning experience was a core value of EVS, which led to accepting diversity and showing solidarity (Brandenburg et al 2017). It is not clear if aid volunteering could lead to the same understanding, especially in developing countries. For example, voluntourism aid-based approaches to developing communities in need have been proven to focus on short-term solidarity acts with the least sustainable changes (Brown 2018; Palacios 2010). That does not necessarily mean that the European Solidarity Corps will face the same challenges, but it does call for all actors involved to be attentive.

Third, the solidarity concept overshadows intercultural learning. This was explored in the 4Thought for solidarity research (Bacliija Knoch and Nicodemi 2020) and is alarming. Solidarity grew from mutual understanding and empathy, especially in the context of neighbouring developing countries. EVS is proof that volunteers can develop intercultural competences without compromising service to host communities (Brandenburg et al 2017). Fostering intercultural learning in the voluntary service process led to cross-cultural competences among volunteers and consequently, solidarity with host





communities (Palacios 2010; Sherraden et al 2008). With that fostering reduced and overshadowed, solidarity in European Solidarity Corps might lose some potential.

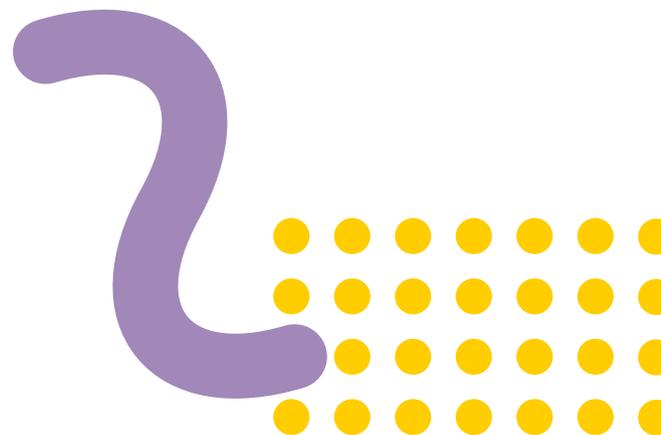
All three issues this paper is exploring suggest a cloud looming over European Solidarity Corps based projects in the SouthMed neighbouring countries. One that requires intervention and measures to mitigate, disrupt, and eventually eliminate these threats.

## 5. Impacts of Programme

There is empirical data on the positive impact of transnational solidarity in the framework of youth mobility to communities in need. The impacts on volunteers and on host communities are overwhelmingly positive and encouraging, especially in terms of developing solidarity (Meyers et al 2017; Hernandez-Maskivker et al 2018; Brandenburg et al 2017). European voluntary programmes have a long-proven legacy with SouthMed neighbouring countries. EVS demonstrated the relationship and the progress that transnational volunteering contributed to solidarity, mutual understanding and international cooperation. With the shift in narrative of the new programme, European Solidarity Corps in SouthMed neighbouring countries could be affected by these critical points (e.g. neocolonialism, unskilled volunteers, and dependency of host communities) and need mindful actions to continue the positive legacy of European voluntary

programmes. Worth mentioning is the effort to guide European Solidarity Corps away from any negative implications such as highlighted in various solidarity researches and papers. These efforts help organisations, professionals, and volunteers to understand solidarity in its comprehensive form - which takes into consideration both the power relations and geopolitical context.

Researches in the area of International Voluntary Service and voluntourism suggest that impact on host communities and volunteers are variant and delicate because they are conditioned to different variables (Hernandez-Maskivker et al 2018; Palacios 2010; Brown 2018; Sherraden et al 2008). It can swing rapidly from a solid positive impact to an unsustainable, undesired one. There is also empirical research that suggest that altruistic, individual





solidarity acts are built on a flawed global system and hence have far more negative impact and reinforce neo-colonialism in hosting communities (Sherraden et al 2008; Bandyopadhyay 2019; Bandyopadhyay and Patil 2017). Although the European Solidarity Corps is a quality programme and is based on many of the achievements of EVS, we cannot neglect the possible existence of adverse connotations in the context of SouthMed neighbouring countries in light of such a solidarity-based narrative. These researches give examples of local workers becoming unemployed due to the arrival of volunteers and of services stopping after the departure of volunteers. There is little to no evidence that this has been the case in EVS or European Solidarity Corps, but if left unmonitored the situation could change rapidly. That could very much harm the legacy of European volunteering programmes in the region, basically there is too much at risk here.

After exploring both the positive and negative impacts of volunteering, it is essential that volunteering programmes continue to be developed. The positive impacts are countless which fuels organisations, communities and volunteers to continue implementing projects. But also, the negative impacts can be severe which does not mean volunteering in developing countries should be stopped, on the contrary, it should inspire all stakeholders to work more and learn more, to be vigilant, and to be critical in their approach at improving their programmes.

In relation to the focus shift in European Solidarity Corps, this volatility of impacts, raises concerns in the SouthMed neighbouring countries. Transnational volunteering, when focusing mainly on the volunteers and their learning, tends to portray the host community as a product where privileged young people can advance their careers and employment profiles. EVS avoided this scenario by emphasising the learning exchange between the volunteers and the communities. If transnational volunteering focuses on aiding and supporting the host community, it could lead to the dependency of host communities on external help and prevent local development ecosystems from advancing. Now is the time to think about how the European Solidarity Corps could avoid this scenario. As a starting point, researchers (Sherraden et al 2008; Bandyopadhyay 2019; Bandyopadhyay and Patil 2017) identified two elements that lead to undesired impacts of transnational volunteering, which are relevant to the purpose of improving the European Solidarity Corps's impacts in SouthMed countries.



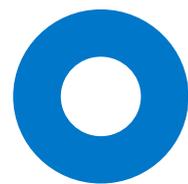
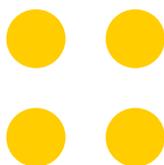


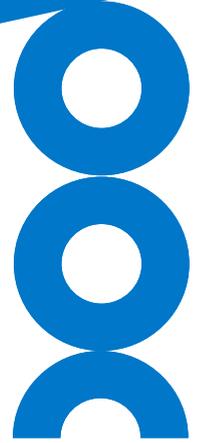
## 5.1 Unilateral flow of volunteers

EVS projects with SouthMed neighbouring countries were not exactly bilateral. The numbers of young people from SouthMed neighbouring countries in Europe is usually less than the flow of volunteers in the other direction (SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus records, and youth in action statistics). But still the numbers of SouthMed volunteers in Europe were on a rising trend between 2014 and 2017. With the new narrative of solidarity-focused projects, we still do not know the extent of the impact on the flow of volunteers. According to research on the first-year of the European Solidarity Corps (Akarçeşme et al 2019), there is difficulty in finding partners and developing projects within Europe, let alone outside of it. It wouldn't be a surprise if the disruption in the rising trend was due to the introduction of the European Solidarity Corps. This disruption might widen the gap between the numbers hosting and sending volunteers in the SouthMed neighbouring countries and increase the risk of creating dependency in host communities. Therefore, a formal encouragement of the bilateral exchange of volunteers is beneficial in the European Solidarity Corps in SouthMed countries, such a move could protect the programme from potential risks of creating dependency in the host communities. This will require more investment in capacity building for SouthMed organisations to manage quality sending and receiving mobilities simultaneously.

## 5.2 Decontextualised volunteerism

Volunteering projects do not happen in a vacuum. They happen in political, social, cultural, and historical contexts. Volunteering mobilities need to be put in context. Researchers suggest that decontextualised volunteerism might promote stereotypes and reinforce global social injustice as they isolate disasters, poverty and health crises from the historical power relations (Bandyopadhyay and Patil 2017). The European Solidarity Corps with SouthMed neighbouring countries is part of the global development context. SouthMed development could be overlooked with a focus on giving "help" without a prior introduction to the context of the solidarity service. Volunteers must understand the development sector in their host communities outside of Europe. SouthMed development has many complexities that being part of solidarity acts merely scratch the surface of. EVS did not formally cover a SouthMed development perspective, but it was not needed, as it focused on learning more than helping. For example, EVS volunteers in one country had a chance for insightful experiences about development in that country as part of their learning focus. Now with the European Solidarity Corps's solidarity concept, the same volunteers might miss this chance as they are guided directly by their host organisations to focus on providing services to the communities under stress. Understanding the development context in the SouthMed is needed to comprehensively understand solidarity in development scenarios and not just in aid or stress relief scenarios.

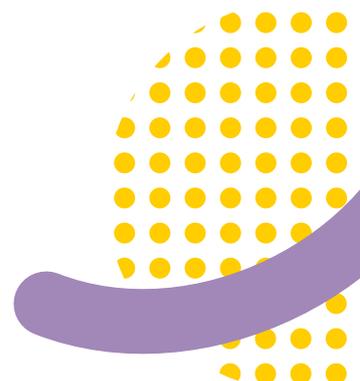


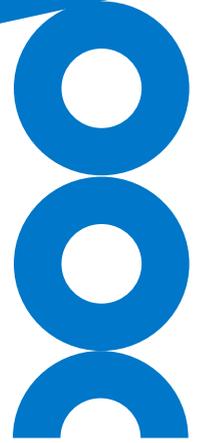


## 6. Balance Learning and Service

EVS was successful in promoting solidarity, it contributed to the learning experience of volunteers (Brandenburg et al 2017). In addition to solidarity, EVS's learning aspect was predominant and prompted the development of tools such as Youthpass. A compromise on learning in European Solidarity Corps is indeed not embedded, nor is it systematic, however, it is present. The narrative now has an emphasis on solidarity, whereas learning has taken a back seat. Shifting towards solidarity and away from learning could be problematic if left unchecked. Solidarity's definition originates from a deficiency or the lack of something in communities that require solidarity. In contrast, learning and service in EVS did not require any deficiency in the host communities. Learning and service describe an exchange between the volunteers and the host communities. The exchange process creates a learning environment and provides a service for both. That balance could be compromised in the new community-focused European Solidarity Corps. The research on the first-year of the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps (Akarçeşme et al 2019) stated that learning is a pressing need for the improvement of the European Solidarity Corps. The research concluded that learning and tools for reflection are required in order to maintain a high quality "learning by doing" experience. This paper firmly stands with this conclusion. In the context of projects in communities in need, this learning has to be framed and designed properly to avoid negative implications.

In regard to learning, research into IVS suggests that integrating development education into the cycle of voluntary service is beneficial for such programmes (Sherraden et al 2008; Brown 2018; Palacios 2010). Development Education helps in maintaining the balance between creating an original, authentic experience for young people, but at the same time, prevents the IVS programmes from propagating new forms of colonialism. It is important to challenge the roots of global injustice and critically redefine international development. Such an example of incorporating development education in IVS is relevant to the European Solidarity Corps's new narrative of community-focus and a solidarity-centered approach because European Solidarity Corps already has elements of embedded learning which the programme inherited from its predecessor, EVS. European Solidarity Corps already has a training and education cycle which could be the access point to introduce development education to volunteers. It will help to contextualise the solidarity act (as mentioned in the previous section dedicated to the programme's impacts) and foster a sense of universal solidarity.





## 7. Partnerships

The 12th principle for Quality in Learning Mobility in the Youth Field, directly characterises partnerships as equal and transparent with shared responsibilities. However, the dynamics of some partnerships in European volunteering programmes are subject to certain risks: **Neo-colonialism behavior from sending organisations and fostering dependency of host organisations.** We explore three dimensions of partnerships that could mitigate these risks and eventually eliminate them.

### 7.1 Power shift in the European Solidarity Corps

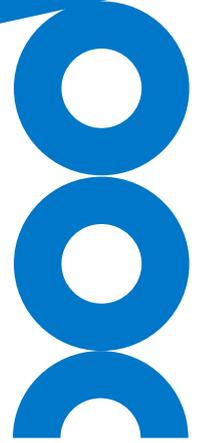
European organisations have power over a project in most cases due to their accessibility to the funding and control over the budget. European organisations also had power over projects under EVS and continue to have it in European Solidarity Corps. SouthMed organisations called for more autonomous access to the programmes which they lost after the EuroMed Programme ended. It was needed then, and now it is needed even more with the European Solidarity Corps. EVS was a learning exchange, volunteers learning along with their host organisations and communities. In European Solidarity Corps, volunteers provide service to organisations and communities (although learning still exists, service is the main priority). Power dynamics shifted in partnerships in favor of the European organisations more than it was in EVS. It added difficulty to a situation that was

already challenging for SouthMed organisations. Thus, programmes should actively foster equal partnerships and fair power relations within projects either by delegating some powers to partner organisations from SouthMed or providing direct access to organisations to develop European Solidarity Corps projects.

### 7.2 Transition from a learning to solidarity focus in hosting projects

Local organisations certainly understand the benefits of hosting volunteers in their local communities. Based on the legacy of EVS, organisations that were active in EVS will aspire to match the numbers of volunteers they used to receive in the EVS programme. But they might have no specific focus on solidarity-related projects. For the European Solidarity Corps new narrative, they need to alter their mission in the local community and their approach toward selecting volunteers. That alteration, if not inspired by a community's needs, could compromise the integrity of the service provided to local communities. Organisations could launch unneeded solidarity-related projects in local communities hoping to attract partnerships with European organisations. Or they would accept volunteers without proper preparation. Research into IVS and the EU Aid programmes suggest that the service of unskilled volunteers in places in need does more harm than good (Hernandez-Maskivker 2018; Sherraden 2008; Dumélie et al 2006). Indeed, European Solidarity Corps, and EVS before it, have quality measures to ensure that this





doesn't happen. But, projects in SouthMed countries are harder to monitor and assess constantly. To overcome this, a proper transition process from learning-focused projects to solidarity-focused projects is needed. This transition process could be done through a series of seminars and partnership building events with SouthMed organisations.

### 7.3 Shared accountability

European partners, in most cases, are held accountable for the partnerships and take the lead over project development. Partners in SouthMed neighbouring countries could become complacent and stay dependent on their European partners to develop, finance, and evaluate the solidarity projects in their communities. That was a risk in EVS as well, but in European Solidarity Corps, the consequences of such risks become even more severe. Local organisations, and consequently, local communities, could become dependent on the foreign aid that is provided to them continuously without developing any sustainable assets, including human capacities. Host organisations need to be held accountable by an equal-footed partnership in order to ensure the sustainability of solidarity-related projects in local communities. Accountability will sharpen their capacities and fuel their motivation to learn and develop more quality projects.

## 8. Recommendations

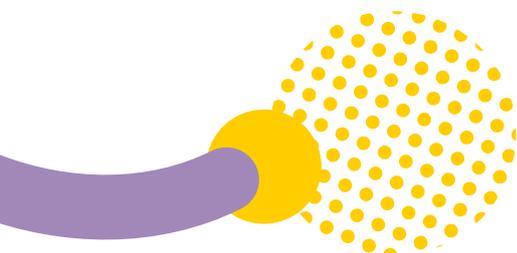
Based on what has been discussed in this paper, the following are a series of suggestions for practical actions that can be incorporated into European Solidarity Corps in SouthMed neighbouring countries. This can be done by organisations, national agencies and SALTO Centres to promote real, contextualised and universal solidarity.

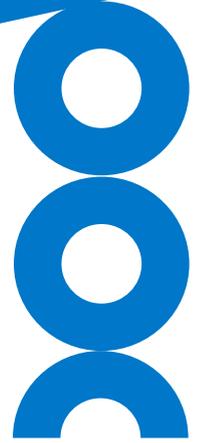
- **Introducing the universality of solidarity:**

This is about highlighting the inclusive concept of solidarity outside of European borders. Solidarity in the European Solidarity Corps should not be limited to European Union societies. This concept can be introduced to training and pre-departure volunteer packages to promote solidarity outside of European borders. The vocabulary of European solidarity could be misleading in the context of neighbouring countries. Responsibility and Rights elements of solidarity should be expanded beyond the European Union context.

- **Implement training courses and seminars on solidarity-focused projects:**

As part of a transition phase from EVS to European Solidarity Corps projects, more seminars and training courses are needed to guide the creation of projects in the European Solidarity Corps. Local organisations need guidance to transform their community intervention to fit in with the European Solidarity Corps scope and to base solidarity based projects on actual community needs. Such





a transition phase could be a step forward to providing access for SouthMed organisations in the form of a window to lead applications of European Solidarity Corps projects.

- **Introducing global development education:**

Since solidarity has a political, social, cultural, and historical context, it needs to be discussed in projects with SouthMed neighbouring countries. Pre-departure training could deliver some fundamentals on global development with the focus on the neighbouring region where volunteers are to be hosted. In addition, providing development education to sending and hosting organisations could enhance their strategies towards local community development in terms of sustainability and reliability.

- **Incorporate project-based learning:**

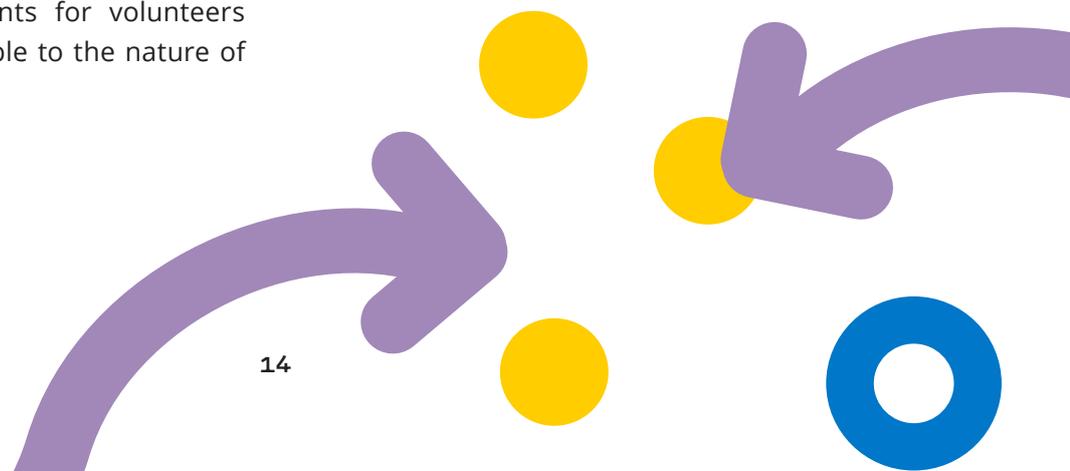
In the call for volunteers, it is important to systematically differentiate between projects for skilled and unskilled volunteers, which depends on the needs and the nature of the required tasks. Accordingly, proper prior training must be conducted in case of volunteering in highly vulnerable host communities. In addition, hosting organisations are encouraged to formulate learning objectives and implement learning instruments for volunteers that are suitable and reasonable to the nature of the mission.

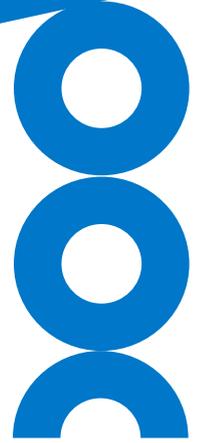
- **Embedded training for host communities:**

Provide embedded training in volunteering projects for host communities to ensure the sustainability of the service that was provided by the volunteers after their departure. In order to prevent dependency, local human capital development must be embedded in the projects. Recognition of the things learnt and efforts of the local assets, including but not limited to hosting organisations, is also necessary to promote the growth of local assets. For example, local employees could be awarded certificates of experiences based on their contribution in the European Solidarity Corps project.

- **Call for bilateral European Solidarity Corps exchange projects:**

National Agencies should encourage the bilateral exchange of volunteers with SouthMed neighbouring countries in order to reduce the gap between sending and hosting. That will contribute to a more equal-footed partnership and a reciprocal relationship with SouthMed neighbouring countries. Organisations in the SouthMed neighbouring countries need to be empowered to take an active role in projects and sending volunteers is a closer step to that.





- **Conduct impact studies in SouthMed neighbouring countries:**

More research is needed on host communities in neighbouring countries after the narrative shift introduced in the European Solidarity Corps. The fields of IVS and international development offer many insights about host communities. However, the context of the European Solidarity Corps is different enough to suggest specific insights need to be unfolded. Host communities might be affected in a different way than in the previous volunteering programmes.

## Conclusion

This paper looked at the European Solidarity Corps in its new narrative of solidarity and community focus. There is a cloud looming over the implications of the new narrative despite the promising results of the first few years of the programme. This paper used multiple resources and researches in international voluntary service fields to detect possible implications and identify areas where they are expected to happen. Despite European Solidarity Corps' different context to that of IVS, the new narrative could have critical issues to deal with in the form of **neo-colonialism, unskilled volunteerism, and dependency of the host community**. These dangers can be expected to affect the **impact of the programme, balancing learning and service within projects, and trans-regional partnerships**. A few actions could be implemented to mitigate and eliminate these dangers. Building on the success of EVS and similar experiences in IVS, this paper listed some recommendations that could be adopted by the European Solidarity Corps.

The fragility of solidarity and the importance of having successful European youth mobility with SouthMed neighbouring countries dictates that all parties have to stay vigilant to any rising concerns in the new narrative. With collective efforts and continuous development, the looming dark cloud will disperse eventually.

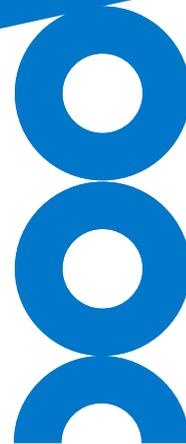




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## EUROPE TALKS SOLIDARITY

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