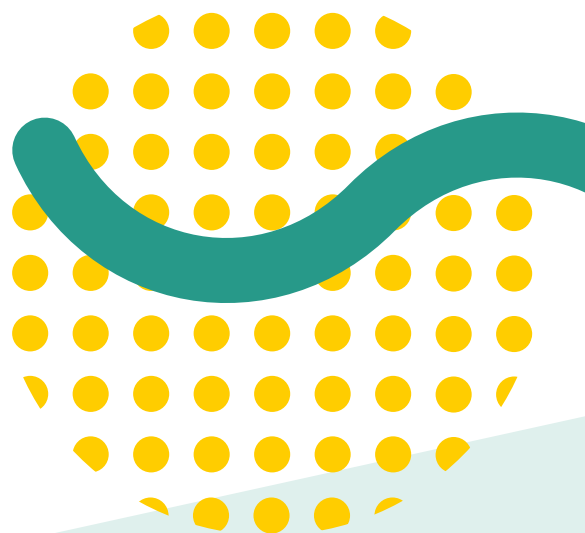# Achieving Solidarity Through Peace Education?

SOLIDARITY • PEACE • PEACE EDUCATION • EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS
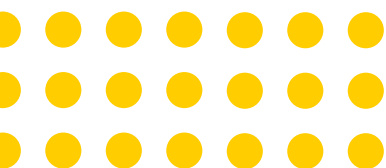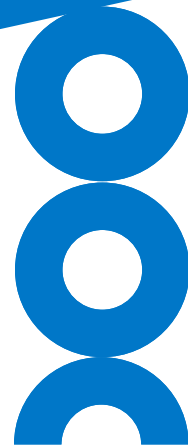
Rebecca Petz

My name is Rebecca Petz and the three words coming into my mind, when talking about the European Union are: Opportunity, responsibility, and peace: Opportunity to broaden your field of experiences to get to know new people and perspectives, responsibility to stand up for solidarity, for democracy and common values. And peace the main achievement of the European Union and positive peace the main objective of it. Peace on the one side and conflict on the other are the phenomena I am normally studying during my Master of Peace and Conflicts Studies in Magdeburg. Hereby, I am mostly interested in the transition phases from conflicts to less conflictual conflicts. As I studied Social Work in my bachelors, I am also always concerned about the question how individuals and the society reflect these processes and impact them.

People impacting society is also a relevant topic on the European level for me. As trainer of the European Solidarity Corps I see many times how the opportunity to gain new experiences somewhere else is enjoyed by many young people and how they are also motivated through their european international experience to take up responsibility. It only stays the question, how the European Solidarity Corps is then connected to peace. That is what I want to look at.
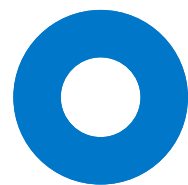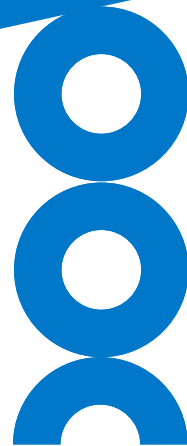
ABSTRACT

Solidarity is set as one of the main goals of the European Solidarity Corps in order to enable young people to contribute to a solidary Europe. This paper looks at the question; can this be done through peace education as well? An analysis of the theoretical background of peace education and its relation to the understanding of solidarity within Europe, based on the results of the research 4Thought (Baclija Knoch and Nicodemi 2020), reveals that the main topics and cornerstones overlap and or, are the same. This paper exemplifies how these interlinkages and possible synergies could be put into practice during the short training courses that participants of the European Solidarity Corps are required to attend. This will be illustrated by two examples which show clearly the possibilities for the use of Peace Education in fostering solidarity.

1. Introduction

"Be the change you want to see in the world", this quote of Mahatma Gandhi, with its inherent demand for people to take action for a better world, fits perfectly to the concept of Peace Education. Also, the European Solidarity Corps, as a programme for young people, takes up the idea of getting active and gaining an input in the world, its main intention being to provide young people the space to enhance solidarity within Europe (European Commission 2018). But how could solidarity be strengthened? The close relation within Gandhi's quote allows the assumption that peace education could help to foster solidarity. The following paper will provide an analysis of the relation between peace and solidarity and provide answers to the question of whether peace education can help achieve solidarity in the context of the European Solidarity Corps within Europe.

Firstly peace education will be examined and defined. In the next step, the principles and goals of peace education will be analysed and will be compared with the 4Thought research report on the understanding of solidarity within Europe. After the comparison and an analysis of the diverging and similar points between peace education and solidarity, I will discuss how the relationship between them could be engaged with, in the European Solidarity Corps and concretise the possible benefits using specific examples.
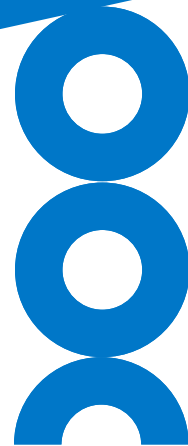
## 2. Peace Education – where to come from and where to go to

The origin of peace education can be traced back to popular pedagogues and activists such as Maria Montessori, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King (Bajaj 2015; Wood 2016).
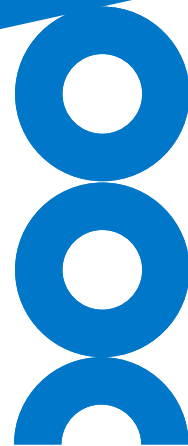
The theoretical framework for peace education of that time was researched by Betty Reardon, who is often referred to as the founder of the theory of peace education (Harris 2004; Ardizzone 2002). She defined peace education as; *"the transmission of knowledge about requirements of the obstacles to and possibilities for achieving and maintaining peace, training in skills for interpreting the knowledge, and the development of reflective and participatory capacities for applying the knowledge to overcoming problems and achieving possibilities"* (Reardon 1999 p7). This definition allows different paths of peace education to set diverging foci.

In 1970, Freire developed an approach of peace education which focuses mostly on its potential for transformation. He stated that there is a need for people to realise the existence of underlying structural violence and oppression in order to achieve freedom (Freire 1970). This led to scholars to call for the further integration of local contexts, methods of empowerment, power structures, and participation (Hantzopoulos 2011; Jenkins 2006).

The understanding of the term "peace" has always been central to the question of the definition of peace education. Originally, peace has been conceptualised as the absence of violence, whereby violence was mostly regarded as a physical threat. This definition has been broadened by Johan Galtung (1969), as he not only included the physical aspect (referred to as "personal violence") but also introduced structural violence. Structural violence is referred to as an unequal distribution of power which expresses itself through the application of societal regulation which does increase this inequality through unjust treatment. This broader definition of violence needs to be followed by an extension of the concept of peace. He introduced the concept of "Positive Peace" which exceeds the absence of personal violence and structural violence. Positive peace therefore describes a just society, characterised by the absence of any discrimination or inequality and one that is equipped with good equal participatory standards for everyone (Galtung 1969). Based on that definition peace research and peace education needed to include not only learning about direct violence but all kinds of discrimination into their activities (Lum 2013).

Over the years, the field of peace education has increased and evolved into a global network which still involves different definitions. However, scholars agree on certain similarities, which will be presented in the following.
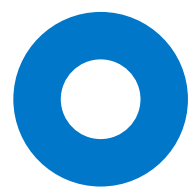
2.1 Positive Peace as the Aim

One important characteristic of peace education is that the main objective should be positive peace. Following Galtung's definition, this calls for an integration of an understanding of structural violence into peace educational programmes. Topics such as gender inequality, the misuse of resources or racism are as important for peace education as topics related to direct violence, such as conflict management or mediation. Often the potential of peace education to contribute to societal change for a just society is underlined, therefore this transformative aspect of peace education needs to find its realisation in the conceptualisation of peace programmes. If Positive Peace is regarded as the main goal, peace educators need to equip their students with the capacity to recognise, reflect and confront structural violence.
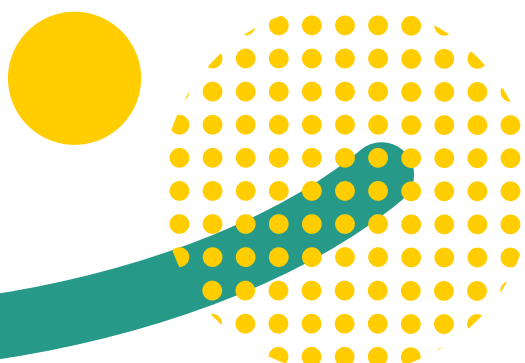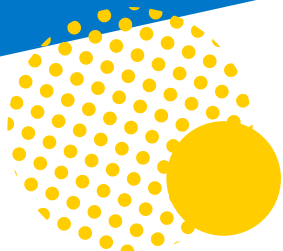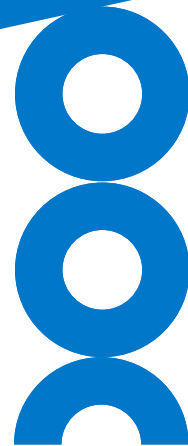
2.2 The Content of Peace Education

The concrete content of peace education therefore needs to imply various topics and aspects. Firstly, it can be differentiated into inner and outer topics. This means that peace education should include reflective and personality building aspects (inner aspects) as well as knowledge and tools (outer aspects) that refer to societal and global injustice (Jenkins 2006). In this sense the transmission of factual knowledge has to be differentiated by the teaching of behaviour and the enhancing of reflections.

Concrete content could aim to deal with current social political economic and ethical challenges and try to facilitate non-violent strategies of behaviour (Kester 2012). It could promote knowledge about mediation, non-violent communication and help the participants to train their skills in these fields. Further, peace education must be considered as a process, which promotes critical thinking, reflection and controversial discussions. This must be empowered in order to achieve democratic dynamics towards a peaceful society. This would include confrontation with other opinions and worldviews and promote dialogue with them (Reardon 1999).

These aspects train the participants in the development of their attitudes and values and helps them to reflect on their own assumptions of the world. The learning process should empower the participants to share their ideas, discuss and come up with solutions in a non-violent way (Cabezudo and Haavelsrud 2009). This separation also illustrates that knowledge, tools and personal development are included in peace educational concepts.

2.3 Related Topics and Co-Disciplines

Peace education cannot be regarded as a unique and independent field of research. On the contrary, it is highly interconnected to related topics. Bajaj and Chiu (2009) for instance refer to the "Co-disciplines" of peace education mentioning development, environment, disarmament, Human Rights and conflict resolution. Human rights builds a base for peace education as it promotes a concept and standards towards peaceful societies. It has the capacity to equip citizens with tools useful for working towards peace (Reardon 2002).

Additionally, scholars have stressed the need to start from the grassroots, dealing with the socio-cultural context of the participants. Therefore, gender, ethnicity, and the socioeconomic aspects of a person can be relevant in the context of peace education. The learning process should empower the participants to share their ideas, discuss and come up with solutions (Cabezudo and Haavelsrud 2009).

The following figure illustrates the different aspects of a definition of peace education and summarises the definition visually.
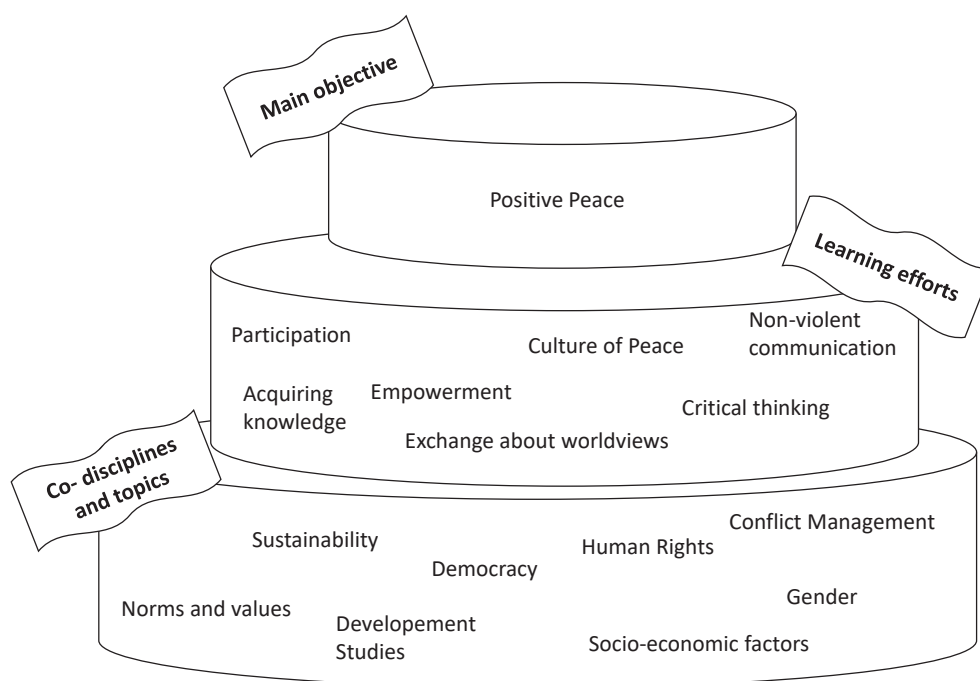
Figure 1. Concept of Peace Education (illustrated by the author)
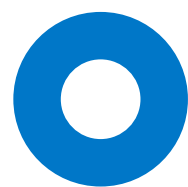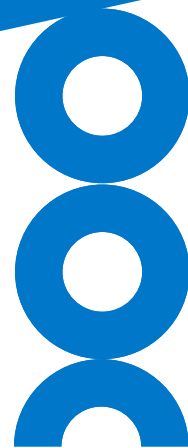
3. Peace Education and Europe

The provided overview on the topics and essentials of peace education also applies to the European context. The European Union, founded as a response to the war and conflict on the continent, built on the vision of a peaceful society. Several European programmes have the aim of reinforcing peace, for instance the "Youth Employment Initiative" or "Creative Europe". Both of these underline the importance of peace for Europe (Juncker 2016; Ascenso 2014; Rompuy and Barroso 2012). One of the programmes that includes peace as a central element is the European Solidarity Corps. As Juncker mentions in his initial speech at the launch of the project: "Above all Europe means peace". He then proposed the programme "European Solidarity Corps" as a means to foster solidarity, which he named as a condition for peace (Juncker 2016). This interlinkage between the two terms is coherent with the concept of positive peace. Positive peace refers to socially just societies and solidarity is needed in order for this to happen (Galtung 1969). Accordingly, international institutions, such as the UN, also mention solidarity as an essential element for the establishment of peace (Belousa 2016; UN General Assembly A/RES/53/243 1999). The relationship between 'Peace' and 'Solidarity' and the question of whether peace education can help to achieve solidarity within Europe will be analysed in the following chapters in the context of the European Solidarity Corps.

4. Peace Education and Solidarity

Before exploring solidarities relationship with peace education, we will have a look at the definition of solidarity in Europe. I am basing my explanations on the research project 4Thought for Solidarity (Baclija Knoch and Nicodemi 2020). This report provides us with an overview of the understanding young people and youth work practitioners have about the term solidarity. It therefore does not include an academic definition but represents the meaning it carries in daily practice. The conducted research in 4Thought is not entirely representative due to there being only a small sample of people involved. However, it does indicate tendencies in the understanding of solidarity and the qualitative data provides an insight into various opinions.
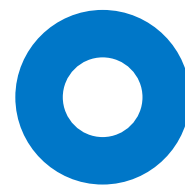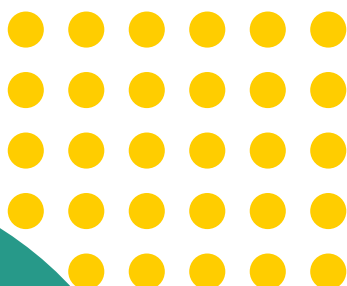
The conducted interviews revealed that solidarity is a rather vague concept with people having different understandings and interpretations. The agreed upon cornerstones and supporting ideas do however represent a common ground.
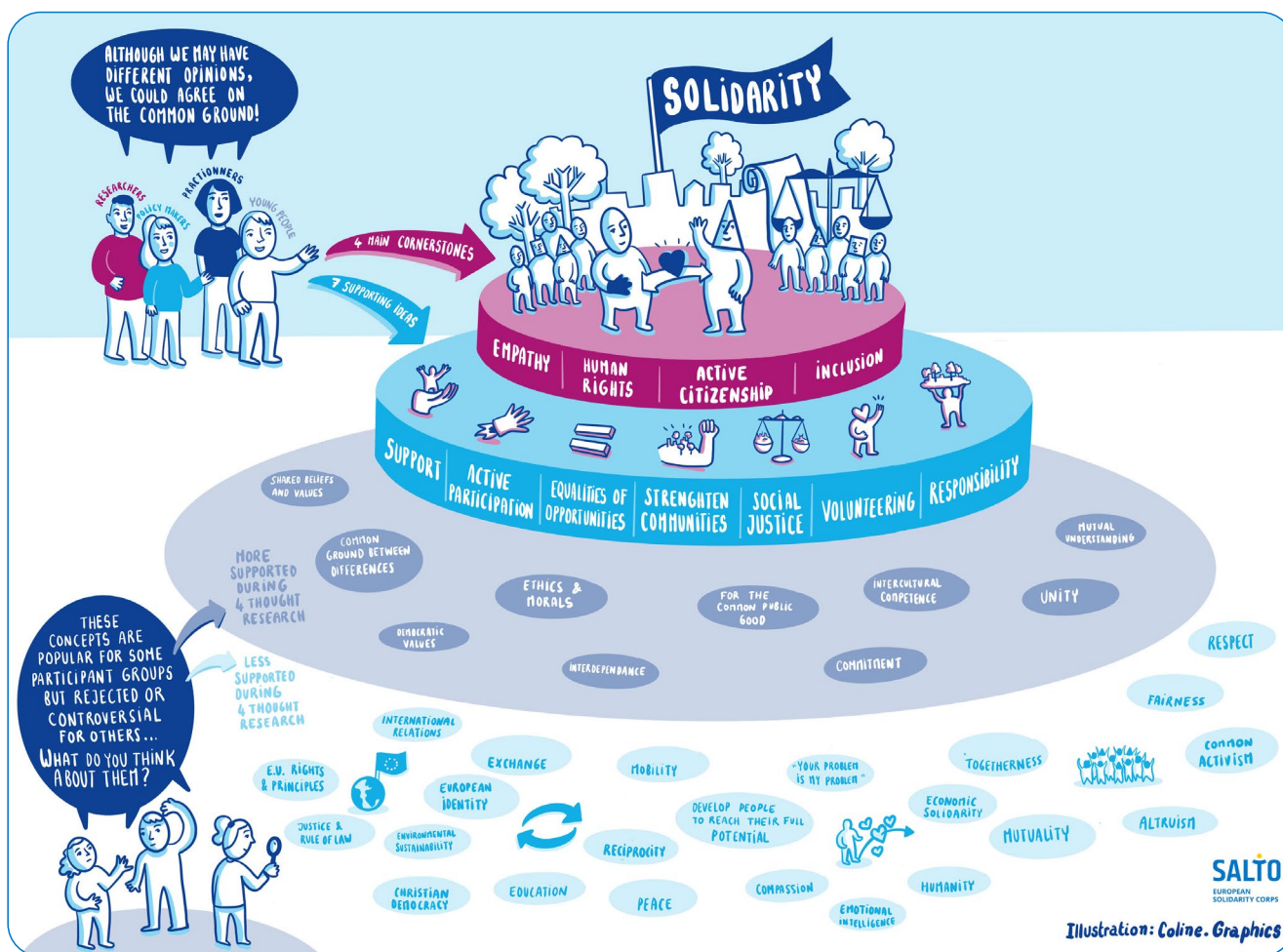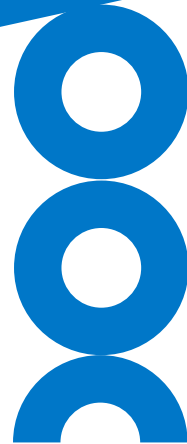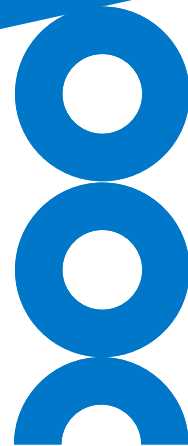
Figure 2. Cornerstones of Solidarity
(Baclija Knoch and Nicodemi 2020)

The results of the Report show that the four most important cornerstones of solidarity are *Human Rights, Active Citizenship, Inclusion and Empathy*.

Interestingly, peace was also mentioned by some actors. However, it was not referred to by all the interviewees and is therefore one of the contested concepts. Nevertheless, the authors later on referred to peace as one of the concepts whose relation to solidarity should be researched (Baclija Knoch and Nicodemi 2020).

In the following chapter I will look at the defined cornerstones and their relationship to the goals and contents of peace education. From this I will explore whether peace education could contribute to an increase in solidarity.

The first cornerstone refers to the framework of Human Rights. Human Rights are in this context understood as a benchmark to identify necessary fields of actions and also to set objectives for initiatives. For instance, activities are undertaken in order to realise the implementation of a particular Right, for example the Right to Freedom of Speech or Education, etc. These activities are also based on a reflection of their own privilege which increases the inner motivation to stand up for the realisation of Human Rights for everyone.

In peace education, Human Rights are referred to as a "Co-Discipline". Bajaj and Chiu (2009) for instance argue that peace education, as it aims towards positive peace and just societies, also sets the realisation of Human Rights as a goal. Hence, it can be stated that Human Rights seem to lay the foundation for both, peace education and solidarity. If solidarity, as stated by the interviewees, relies on the norms of Human Rights, the teaching of Human Rights principles and values, which are included in peace education, may increase the solidarity of participants in these programmes. Peace education through Human Rights Education could therefore enforce solidarity in society.

The core principle of Active Citizenship does not appear directly in peace education. However, the definition of active citizenship inherits characteristics, such as the will to participate in society. It is these which are based on the capacity of an individual to think critically and to feel empowered to raise their own voice. These competencies are transmitted within peace education training. The Council of Europe defines active citizenship as "The capacity for thoughtful and responsible participation in political, economic, social and cultural life" (Council of Europe, Glossary). Participatory approaches and education that encourages critical reflection are the methods and aims of peace education. In this sense, peace education does lead towards active citizenship in a pro-peace way.
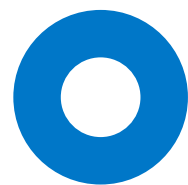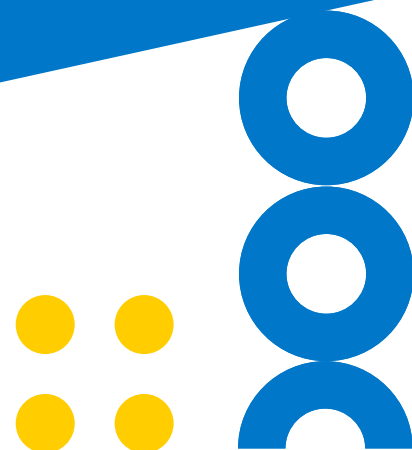
Solidarity, as it builds on the principles of active citizenship, is strengthened by peace education because the participants gain knowledge, ability and the attitude to act.

Inclusion is seen as the opportunity to participate in offered activities as well as having the chance to contribute in one's own way to the development of society. Inclusion in this sense is aiming at the establishment of positive peace (Baclija Knoch and Nicodemi 2020). Interviewees from the 4Thought report reflected on the difficulty to grant less privileged young people the possibility to become active citizens and therefore mentioned that solidarity cannot be realised if inclusion is not happening. However, the researchers reflected that some interviewees seemed to take inclusion as a standard attitude and therefore did not mention it in their elaborations (Baclija Knoch and Nicodemi 2020). Another aspect of inclusion, was the fact that interviewees called for inclusion to prevent further exclusion from being reproduced. The 4Thought report highlights the positiveness of diverse exchanges and different opinions (Baclija Knoch and Nicodemi 2020).

Inclusion in the theory of peace education exists in two ways. Firstly, the inclusion of opinions, marginalised opinions and different informative perspectives are important for peace education, because of the confrontation with diverging world views. This helps to develop peaceful discussion and cultural exchange (Reardon 1999). This is closely linked to the inclusion of different understandings of solidarity into the European Solidarity Corps. The development of law-threshold oriented programmes is therefore important for both the European Solidarity Corps and peace education, this is an element where both can learn from one another. The "Culture of Peace" is one of the ideological bases of peace education and includes the premise that each and every one has to be included in an equal manner (Kester 2008). It can be assumed that peace education does acknowledge the need of inclusion and does also look into it as an essential pillar of methodological and ideological approaches.

The last of the four core elements of solidarity is Empathy. Empathy was mentioned as an important characteristic to be able to act in solidarity. It enables people to act adequately in social situations, to respond to the needs of others and enables them to understand their perspectives. Empathy is not only needed towards other individuals but also to other generations or social groups (Baclija Knoch and Nicodemi 2020). The skill of empathy is not explicitly described as an important element for peace education. However, empathy is included into the concepts related to communication. The process of a peaceful exchange of opinions and non-violent communication are therefore closely
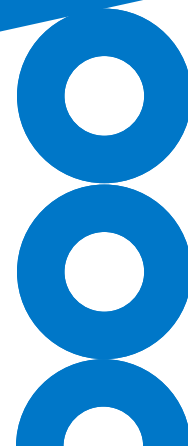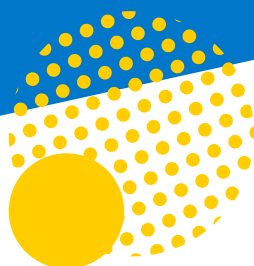
linked to empathy. The theory of nonviolent communication even states that vice-versa empathetic behavior is needed for non-violent communication (Rosenberg 2003). In this sense empathy is highly relevant for being taught in order to establish the needed culture of peace. Hence, empathy will be strengthened through peace education and therefore solidarity.

It can be concluded that all four cornerstones of the European narrative on solidarity also exist as pillars of peace education which therefore, shows there is a close link between solidarity and peace education. Solidarity through the single elements of its definition may be improved and strengthened by peace education. Human Rights, Active Citizenship, Inclusion and Empathy, are the four cornerstones of solidarity and at the same time are also in one way or another part of peace education. Peace education, through the teaching of all four core elements, contributes to solidarity. Participants of peace education seminars are consequently also training in solidarity. This automatic interlinkage leads to the fact that training courses that aim at the increasing understanding of solidarity, can use peace education as a pedagogical approach to reach their aim. Training courses within the European Union do not need to invent new pedagogical approaches but can profit from debates around peace education. The concrete possible synergies are illustrated in the following figure:
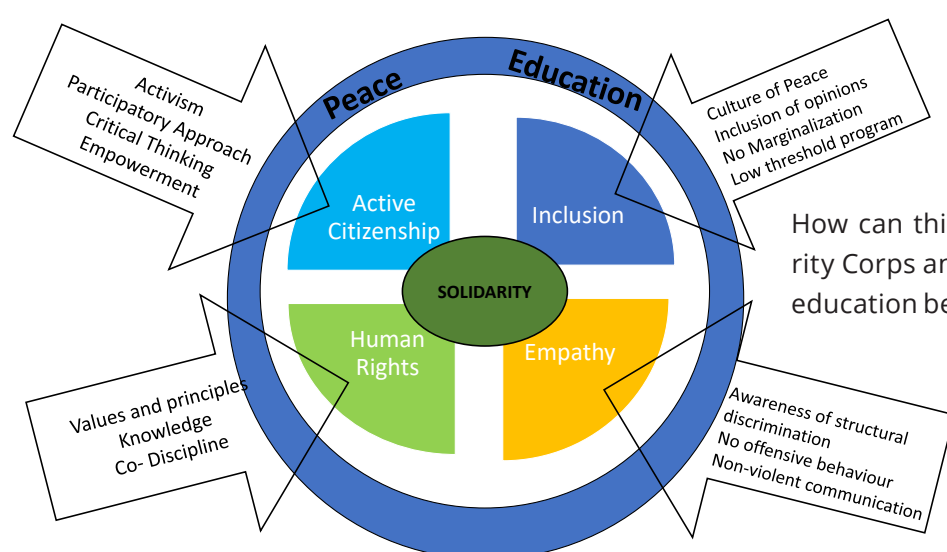
How can this happen within the European Solidarity Corps and where in the programme can peace education be used as a tool for achieving solidarity?

Figure 3. The Synergies of Peace Education and Solidarity (designed by the author)
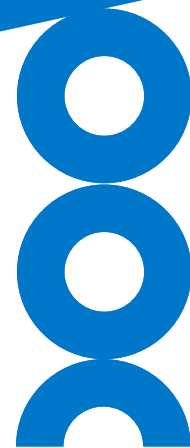
5. The European Solidarity Corps – A Place for Peace Education?

The European Solidarity Corps includes three different possibilities to get engaged in the local and international levels: The Voluntary Service, Traineeships and Jobs, and Solidarity Projects. All three of them aim at the realisation of solidarity (European Commission 2018). As shown in this paper, peace education and the aim of solidarity are highly interlinked. The European Solidarity Corps can profit from the pedagogical approaches, concepts and debates from the context of peace education. These can be learned from and used for the realisation of increasing solidarity. In the following part of this chapter I will focus on the "Training and Evaluation Cycle" for participants engaged in the European Solidarity Corps and the possibilities of the inclusion of peace education within it.

The Training and Evaluation Cycle explores different topics and takes place in the non-formal education setting. The non-formal setting of the sessions reflects the pedagogical concept promoting participatory methods, aiming to start from the participants' reality and providing a possibility for exchange between the participants (Europe 2012, 2011; Buldioski 2002). Peace education 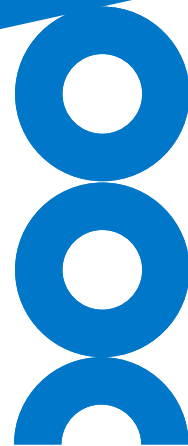also starts from the grassroots of the participants and provides a non-formal learning setting (Cabezudo and Haavelsrud 2009). Additionally, the groups in the European Solidarity Corps seminars are international. The participants group offers many possibilities regarding discussions about worldviews, assumptions of truth and different narratives on current political and social situations. This confrontation with various opinions forms the basis for strong debates which is an essential part of peace education (Jenkins and Reardon 2009). This description shows that the Training and Evaluation Cycle could be a place for peace education. The question to ask is, how would these training courses within the European Solidarity Corps profit from that?

5.1 Peace education during the voluntary service – A tool for Solidarity?

In the following I want to point out two concrete possibilities where peace education within the Training and Evaluation Cycle of the European Solidarity Corps can be used. These are only examples there are many more benefits from peace education approaches:

1. Peace Education as important perspective for trainers
2. Peace Education as tool box for methodological approaches
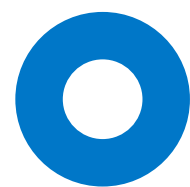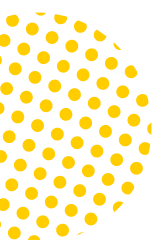
### 5.1.1 Peace Education as important perspective for the trainer

As shown in the figure about the synergies of peace education and the topic of solidarity it is evident that certain skills of trainers and certain perspectives on the world are emphasised. For instance the awareness of structural discrimination and the attempt to include non-violent communication into all sessions characterises peace education approaches. Through the long history of peace education the positive and negative aspects of, for instance, the inclusion of non-violent communication have been discussed extensively (Kester 2012). The outcomes of these discussions provide trainers knowing about them with a huge level of self reflection. Therefore, the methods applied and the seminars implemented are backed up by a theoretical framework, which is important for the concept of peace education. The Training and Evaluation Cycle could profit from this special perspective, as it would add new ways for reaching the aim of solidarity. As solidarity is important for the European Solidarity Corps and can be called the main purpose of the programme, the perspective from the peace education background can help to find new ways of looking at solidarity. Concretely, sessions about positive peace or Human Rights can address the issue of solidarity from a broader perspective which otherwise may not have been taken into consideration.

5.1.2 Peace Education as Tool Box for Methodological Approaches

As shown, methods of peace education can contribute to the teaching of solidarity. Peace education guidelines include for instance sessions and methods about Human Rights, Active Citizenship and Non-Violent Communication. Trainers within the Training and Evaluation Cycle could therefore benefit from these already existing programmes and include them partly in the concept for their seminars. However, the question must be raised, to what extent can peace education become a part of the Training and Evaluation Cycle. All the participants find themselves in intercultural situations which confront them with many challenges. Although the competences, such as communication skills, intercultural sensitivity, etc. which they acquire during their stay abroad, are related to peace, peace as such is not a daily topic for them. This could lead to missing interest in peace as a general topic. The question which must be asked is whether peace education can be peace education without talking about peace - only about the relevant subtopics of it. Regardless, established methods by peace educators can be useful for the strengthening of solidarity and do therefore also have their space within the syllabus of Training and Evaluation Cycle.

In summary, it can be stated that the further integration of peace education into the European Solidarity Corps Training and Evaluation cycle and the raising of awareness for the existence of peace education would be possible and would have a positive impact.
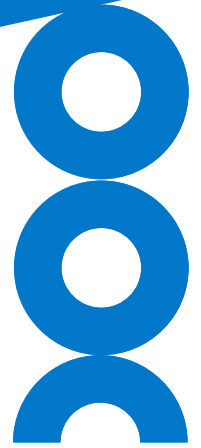
6. Conclusion

The analysis has shown that the European Solidarity Corps and especially the Training and Evaluation Cycle for participants during the European Solidarity Corps do have the potential to increase the promotion of solidarity through the introduction of aspects of peace education.

This is especially the case for the subtopics of peace education which are already a part of the Training and Evaluation Cycle. Therefore, it can be assumed that an unconscious implementation of peace education within the European Solidarity Corps training cycle already exists, while the awareness for the concrete topic of "peace" is missing. The set objective of the European Solidarity Corps is to increase solidarity and could therefore profit from an explicit statement for peace education within it. The shown examples illustrate the possible benefits the Training and Evaluation Cycle can have from the explicit use of peace education. This paper and the indication of possible synergies may inspire organisations and trainers to look into peace education and to use it even more as a resource for the Training and Evaluation Cycle.
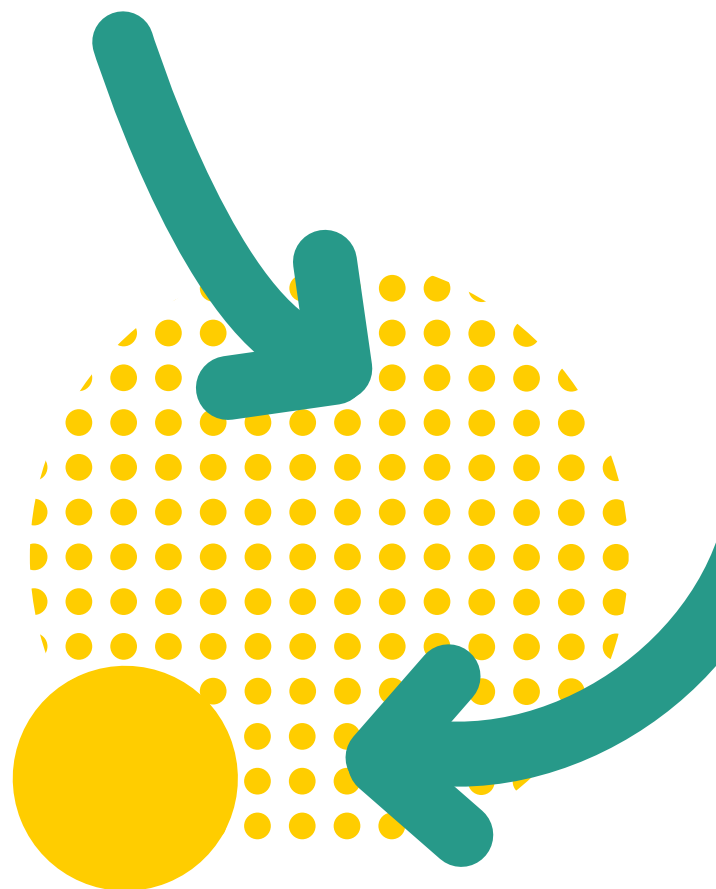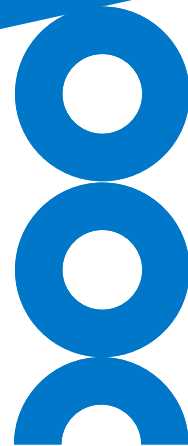
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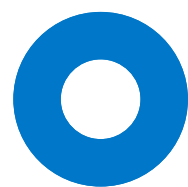
EUROPE TALKS SOLIDARITY

This article is part of "Europe talks Solidarity" – a series of events and publications that offers a platform for the exploration of the concept of Solidarity, initiated by the European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre (www.salto-youth.net/rc/solidarity). The discussion on Solidarity benefits from inputs from a wide range of experiences and backgrounds. However, the opinions and views expressed in the articles in this series do not necessarily reflect those of the Resource Centre.

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