

An Analysis of European Solidarity Corps' National Networking Activities (NET) 2024

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce this analysis of the 2024 European Solidarity Corps' Networking Activities (NET), which offers insights into how we, as a National Agency network, strengthen youth programmes.

The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) brings volunteering organisations and young people together to act in solidarity and shape a more inclusive Europe. While the ESC has bold ambitions, **its success depends on the structures created by National Agencies and SALTO Resource Centres to support those implementing this programme** on the ground.

This analysis also proves that Networking activities (NET) -similar to Training and Cooperation activities (TCA) - are not just complementary—they are essential. They represent the **only structured capacity-building format** tailored specifically to the **needs of the volunteering and civil society field**, distinct from and parallel to the broader youth work sector. Through NET offerings, we enable learning, exchange, and professional growth—**ensuring that quality and European values remain** at the heart of volunteering and youth engagement activities.

NET activities support the building of skills & competences that strengthen the preparedness and competitiveness of both organisations and individuals. NET activities also enhance the volunteering and civil society sector's ability to respond to change, whether in inclusion, sustainability, or digital transformation, while organically contributing to **policy strategies of the European Union** such as the **European Youth Strategy**.

The analysis results also **acknowledge the SALTO European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre**, whose **strategic support** has been instrumental in the development of NET activities. From tools like the NET Matrix to knowledge exchange, SALTO ESC has helped to develop standard training formats and ensured that these activities are coherent, impactful, and aligned with programme priorities.

This report highlights the progress we have made, the relevance of NET as a strategic instrument, and the shared momentum for improving cooperation, evaluation, and impact measurement. It also reminds us of our responsibility to keep investing in spaces that empower volunteering organisations and inspire young people to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

I warmly thank all National Agency colleagues, the SALTO Resource Centres, and the European Commission for their support with this analysis.

Let us continue to invest in what matters: people, quality, connection—**and a future built on solidarity**.

Gerhard Moßhammer

Head Of Youth and Sport Unit - OeAD-GmbH Austrian National Agency Erasmus+ Youth, Sport & European Solidarity Corps





Executive Summary

This analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the **European Solidarity Corps' Networking (NET) activities** implemented by National Agencies and SALTO Resource Centres in **2024**.

Through a combination of quantitative data and qualitative interviews with National Agency officers, this analysis explores the role of NET activities. It **highlights both achievements and challenges in NET activities**, including the practical **appearance of EU values and solidarity**, the **role of horizontal programme priorities**, and the ongoing development of practices regarding **evaluation and tracking results**.

Data confirms that international NET activities continue to be a cornerstone of the European Solidarity Corps. They provide **platforms for networking, peer learning, and capacity building** that **cannot be replicated by national activities** alone. The **strategic value** of these activities is widely recognised by National Agency colleagues, both in terms of **supporting programme implementation** and in **fostering quality improvements** across solidarity and volunteering projects. Many activities continue to address the **fundamental elements of the programme**, such as **skill and competence development**, organisational **capacity building**, and the European Solidarity Corps programme in general.

The 2024 data shows that the **number of NET activities has slightly increased** compared to previous years. Training remains the most common activity type, but more practical and concrete formats, such as study visits, are now also well represented. **Hybrid approaches** have **become a standard feature** in the post-COVID context, combining digital accessibility with the benefits of face-to-face engagement. While **most activities** are implemented as **single activities**, **Long-Term Activities and SNACs** increasingly **influence the strategic direction** of National Agencies' work.

The **concepts of solidarity and EU values** were also examined. EU values appear to be embedded throughout the programme, which may explain why they are not always addressed as a separate topic in NET activities. **Solidarity**, by contrast, **remains central**: the focus has shifted from defining the concept to exploring how it can be applied in practice within projects and organisations.

The analysis also showed the role of **SALTO European Solidarity Corps** in **influencing the foundational thinking** and tools developed in relation to solidarity within the context of the European Solidarity Corps. Early resources, such as the *Solidarity Cake*¹ developed by SALTO ESC, played a key role in shaping a common understanding, but there is now a call for **second-generation tools** and more advanced trainer support.

¹ Snezana Baclija Knoch, Susie Nicodemi: 4Thought for Solidarity Study. P. 13 <https://www.talkingsolidarity.eu/publications/4thought-for-solidarity/>





Horizontal programme priorities have become an **increasingly important** aspect of the strategy, planning, and implementation of NET activities. These priorities are clearly visible in work plans and appear to **guide the planning process** significantly.

Evaluation and results tracking are considered essential, but current **practices remain fragmented**. Most National Agencies collect post-activity feedback, often through surveys, and some conduct follow-up after several months. Yet the **use of collected data is limited**, mainly only used for reporting and planning. The relatively low number of activities per NA also makes comprehensive follow-up challenging. Interviewees expressed strong interest in harmonised, network-wide practices, supported by common tools and additional analytical capacity. There seems to be real momentum to **invest in shared data collection and analysis** in order to better record the results of NET activities.

The **support** provided by **SALTO Training & Cooperation** for NET and TCA officers was frequently highlighted as integral, and expectations are high that the **Cooperation Platform**² will, next to the activity and participants management, develop to support **smarter planning, participant tracking, and evaluation**.

Looking ahead, the analysis points to several **areas for further development**. These include the establishment of a more coordinated **European-level approach** to **measure results & impact**, continuous support in making **horizontal priorities—especially Digital Transformation—more accessible** in practice for ESC beneficiaries.

In summary, NET activities remain vital instruments for sustaining the quality, visibility, and international dimension of the European Solidarity Corps. The evidence indicates strong momentum across the network to **improve cooperation, harmonise evaluation practices, and invest in shared tools** and resources that can **make results more meaningful** and visible at the European level.

² The Cooperation Platform is the successor of EPlusLink and the Planning board used by TCA and NET officers to manage participants, plan, design, implement and evaluate international TCA and NET activities. The Cooperation Platform is under development.





1. Introduction

This analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the National Agencies' Networking (NET) activities in 2024, with a focus on their contents, priorities, and monitoring practices. Through a combination of quantitative data and qualitative interviews with National Agency officers, this analysis explores the role of NET activities. It highlights both achievements and challenges in NET activities, including the practical appearance of EU values and solidarity, the role of horizontal priorities, and the ongoing development of practices regarding the evaluation and tracking of results.

The findings aim to provide a clear picture of NET activities and to support future planning of these activities across the network.

2. Data Collection

The analysis is based on the following quantitative and qualitative **data set**:

- National Agencies' 2024 NET work plans provided by the European Commission specifically the inputs of National Agencies' work plans for the year 2024
- TCA/NET Overview List 2024, an Excel list developed during the TCA/NET meeting held in 2023 by TCA and NET officers in order to support the transition phase between EPlusLink and the Cooperation Board containing events implemented in 2024
- Nine interviews with NET officers representing the National Agencies of Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Denmark, Czech Republic, Croatia, and Ireland and SALTO Euromed. This selection aimed to include a diverse sample of NAs, representing various sizes and geographical regions. In total, nine NA officers were interviewed during April 2025

The year under examination of this analysis is 2024 and, in this context, it means the year when the activity is happening and not the budgetary year.

The main data for quantitative analysis was the TCA/ NET Overview, which is a shared planning tool for NET officers to collect results of the planning process. It contains information about individual NET activities:

- Organising country
- Organisation (NA or SALTO)
- Activity name
- Short summary (max. 200 characters)
- Date - quarter of 2024
- Programme (Erasmus+/ESC)
- Activity type (Single/LTA/SNAC)





- Target group
- Main topic or priority
- Format
- Status of activity

This data was complemented with the data published via the SALTO-YOUTH Training Calendar, which shows the activities for which calls for participants have been opened.

For the quantitative summary, we analysed the data from the TCA/NET Overview 2024—supplemented with calls listed in the SALTO-YOUTH Training Calendar—using the NET Matrix.

The NET Matrix was developed by SALTO European Solidarity Corps in 2019 in order to support the strategic usage of NET activities as well as the work planning process of NA and SALTO colleagues. The NET Matrix supports the general monitoring of NET activities of SALTO ESC and ensures that there are NET formats for all stakeholders in the programme, covering all formats. It was also used in the first edition of a series of NET analyses as the foundation of quantitative analyses, as it helps to categorise the data. You can find the NET Matrix template at the end of this document (Annex 1).

It is important to note that the data is not always directly comparable: some entries may be missing or duplicated. Therefore, the quantitative analysis provides only a general overview and indicative trends of the NET activities planned for 2024.

The summaries from NA work plans, as well as activity descriptions were also reviewed to explore how NAs and SALTO RCs track the results of NET activities as well as which objectives they have identified for hosting or sending participants. The goal was to gain insight into the intended results of these activities.

To deepen our understanding, we conducted interviews with NA and SALTO officers. The selection aimed to include a diverse sample of NAs, representing various sizes and geographical regions. In total, nine officers were interviewed during April 2025. The NAs that participated in these interviews were: Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Denmark, Czech Republic, Croatia, Ireland, and SALTO Euromed.





3. Perceived Value of International NET Activities

This section of the analysis explores how NA officers perceive the value of international NET activities. This topic was previously discussed in the context of national NET activities in the previous year analysis (*An Analysis of European Solidarity Corps' National Networking Activities (NET) 2022-2023*, see pp. 26–28). Now, the focus has shifted to understanding the role and value of international activities.

The interviews clearly showed that **international NET activities** are **highly valued in multiple ways**. Many respondents emphasized that, as the ESC programme is international, supporting cross-border cooperation is essential. NET activities were seen as a **core element that enables and sustains this international dimension**—something that cannot be replaced by national activities alone.

“It’s the best tool that the NAs have for international cooperation. It’s an awesome tool for organisations to network and build competencies. If we didn’t have this, what else would there be? Just emails or platforms—with no face-to-face meetings.”

**

“If we don’t have these support measures, we don’t have any tools to implement this programme. Then cooperation between organisations becomes very random.”

**

“It’s an international European programme, so it needs a common, solid ground—and NET is part of that: building a shared European foundation.”

While the value of international NET activities was widely recognised, some respondents drew comparisons with national NET activities, which were sometimes seen as having a greater impact—especially in terms of addressing local needs.

“We focus more on national NET activities. But international ones make sense—this is an international programme after all. They’re great for exchanging practices, partnership building, and offering opportunities to beneficiaries. Still, national activities have more impact for us, because they reach more people and can be tailored to national needs.”

Beyond their general purpose, international NET activities were seen as serving specific strategic goals. Many NAs described how they use these activities to promote the programme, reach new organisations, and help newcomers find partners and purpose within the programme.





"It helps us to reach and promote the programme."

**

"Sometimes, it's hard to get people involved, but if you bring them in through a NET activity, it's a much easier path—they get engaged more quickly."

Another recurring theme was the important role of international NET activities as a capacity-building tool. These activities offer opportunities for peer learning, sharing practices, and building competencies—leading to higher quality projects within the programme.

"They are invaluable. I encourage beneficiaries to use NET activities to build capacity and better understand the programme. NET bridges the gap between the programme and their daily work."

**

"It's extremely important that the programme has its own networking activities. Our organisations work with the same partners over and over—this gives them new perspectives, new contacts, and new priorities. It directly supports quality improvement."

**

"Great projects are built through NET activities. This is something we cannot provide nationally. Bringing people into international settings has been very successful."

The element of "connection" came up frequently during the interviews. NET activities were seen as building bridges: between NAs with beneficiaries, between countries and neighbouring partner regions with the European Union.

"For the NA, it's the only real way to stay connected to the field."

**

"Since we are a bit removed from Central Europe, NET activities make European values and connections more accessible to us."

**

"They are very important for the regions. These programmes are only accessible to partner countries if they find partners. NET provides ways to meet people with similar values and interests. Without these activities, there would be fewer—and lower-quality—projects. For me, this is essential."





Conclusion: Based on the interviews, it is evident that international **NET activities are seen as a crucial tool to the success and impact of the programme**. They bring organisations together, foster cooperation, enable peer learning, and offer a platform for showcasing good practices. Ultimately, these aspects contribute to **higher quality projects and stronger engagement** with the programme.

International NET activities are widely perceived as a cornerstone of the ESC programme's international dimension. They are valued not only as tools for networking and partnership building, but also as strategic instruments for capacity building, quality improvement, and engaging new organisations. While national activities may offer a stronger local impact, international NET actions are irreplaceable in fostering European cooperation, shared values, and peer learning. Their role in strengthening connections—between countries, regions, and individuals—is seen as essential.

4. Results of NET Activities

The results are an important part of NET activities. To understand what we mean when we talk about impact and results in the context of European youth programmes, including the European Solidarity Corps, we first need to **define these terms in this analysis**. For this purpose, we refer to the Erasmus+ Impact Handbook (see pp. 3–5). Results come in three types: **outputs, outcomes, and impact**:

Outputs = What we make or deliver

These are the direct, tangible things produced by a NET activity, such as training tools, new knowledge, workshops, apps, guides, and awareness-raising materials.

Outcomes = What people do with it

This is how outputs change behaviour or practices—how people use the outputs. Did volunteering organisations apply new methods? Did participants change their mindset?

Impact = Long-term ripple effects

Measuring impact is more complex and refers to the wider change to which NET activities contribute—not the cause alone. Impact refers to the big picture that changes over time, e.g., more engaged citizens, better job opportunities, stronger communities, and policy changes.

NET officers mainly track outputs and outcomes. This **analysis shows a need for impact measurement**. This requires long-term research and a broader European perspective, and **goes beyond the work tasks of national NET officers** or regional SALTO officers.





In work plans, NAs define the expected results of NET activities, more specifically the expected results of their sending activities. Based on the NA's work plans, the expected results can be broadly grouped into two main categories:

- **Improved project quality and implementation**, including new partnerships and engaging new organisations.
- **Professional development** of participants, leading to better quality in local or national youth work.

The chart below (Chart 1) differentiates in more detail the expected results picked out from NA work plans.

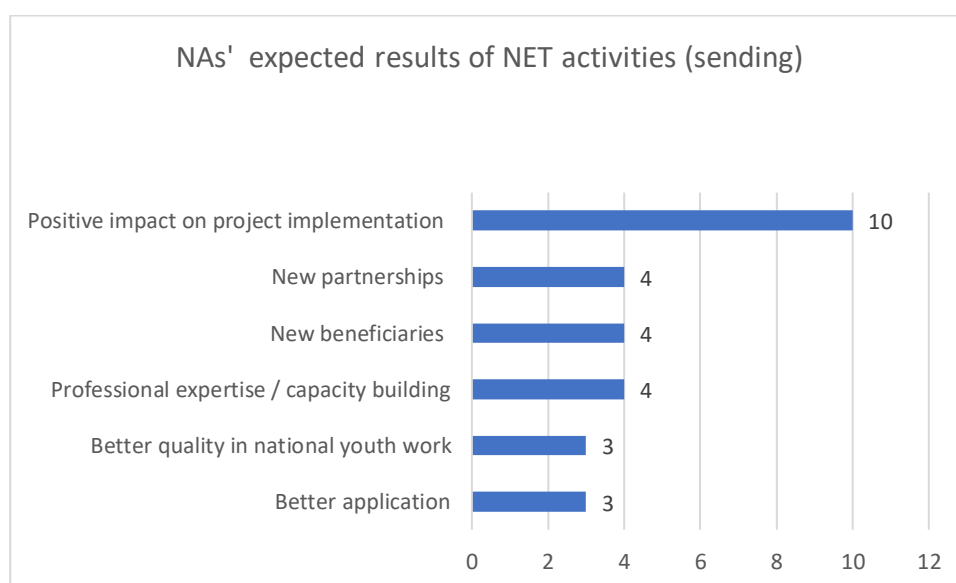


Chart 1: NAs' expected results of NET activities (sending)

These defined results can be both outputs and outcomes and also lead to the impact, depending on the activity.

The topic of NET activity results was partially discussed already in previous editions: *An Analysis of European Solidarity Corps' Networking Activities (NET) 2020-22*. In that analysis, we tackled the topic of monitoring and follow-up of NET activities (see pp. 24-25). The results showed that systematic qualitative monitoring was insufficient. Based on the interviews, many NAs had some kind of follow-up and monitoring but were unsatisfied with it, and many recognize the need to improve their monitoring. Based on the results from previous editions, one of the focal points for this analysis is to **better understand what the results of NET activities are**, and how **NAs follow up on these results**. To do so, we are looking closer at NET activities through sending and hosting, which means mapping out objectives and the reasons behind these: what kind of strategies are guiding NAs when they choose to which NET activities they are sending participants and which activities they are hosting. One specific focus is tracking the results, how this is done, what kind of methods are used, and what kind of possible improvements are needed to better record the results.





5. Organising NET Activities: Sending and Hosting Participants

One of the aims of this analysis is to understand the expected results of NET activities, particularly why participants are sent and how these choices align with the defined objectives for sending participants. The same applies to hosting activities: How are they chosen?

a. Insights on Sending

It became clear from NA work plans that sending decisions are guided by national NET strategies, which are also aligned with broader structures like Long-Term Activities (LTAs). In the youth field, LTAs include Strategic National Agencies Cooperation Partnership (SNACs), and these two terms are present in this analysis as well.

Many NAs describe how they select specific topics or priorities that guide which activities they engage in. Some NAs named specific activities, while others referred to more general themes like horizontal priorities, quality improvement, or capacity building.

“We prioritise working with inclusion—it’s been a strategic focus for us and often the reason for sending participants.”

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“We’ve tried to get team volunteering activities up and running.”

In the interviews, NA officers gave more detail about how participants are selected and what strategy guides this process. Many described an approach where participants are selected based on how well their background, needs, and goals match the call and topic of the activity.

“We use scoring to select participants—motivation, target group, potential for future projects, etc.”

Horizontal priorities play a central role here. NAs actively try to send participants to activities that deepen their understanding of the priorities, promote a good practice exchange on topics related to those priorities, and ultimately strengthen the capacity of the organisations to implement meaningful projects.

The most frequently mentioned long-term goal behind sending was **improving the quality of applications and projects**, with some NAs targeting specific areas, such as short-term or team volunteering, or more practical components like mentoring.

Sending participants also serves to:

- Facilitate networking and the exchange of good practices.
- Introduce new organisations to the programme.
- Foster a sense of belonging to the European Solidarity Corps community.





"The NA approves participants to different events in order to exchange best practices in ESC implementation."

"It fosters networking among organisations, young people, and NAs, contributing to a sense of belonging in the ESC community."

The Chart below (Chart 2) differentiates in more detail what topics are given focus when choosing activities to send participants. The data are taken from NA work plans.

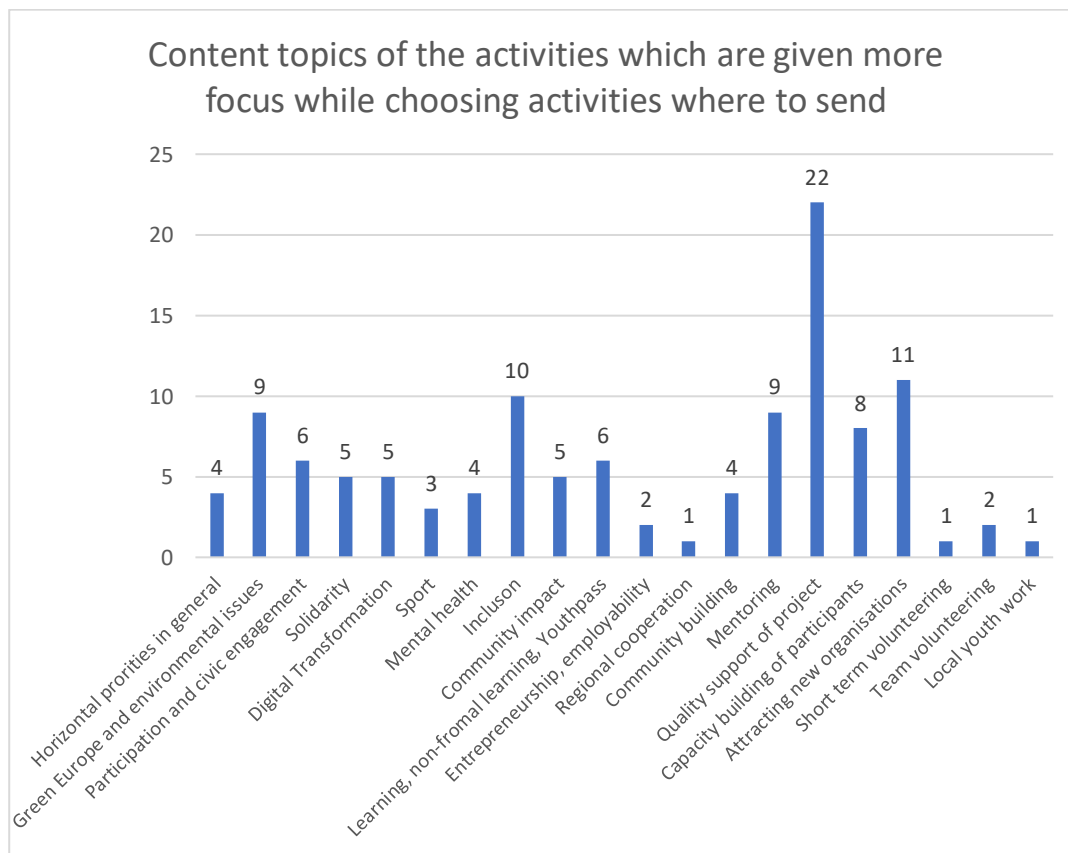


Chart 2: Activity topics which are given more focus when choosing activities to send participants

b. Insights on Hosting Activities

In contrast to sending, the purposes behind hosting NET activities are often described at the individual activity level in NA work plans, rather than as part of a broader hosting strategy. However, during the interviews, several NAs elaborated on how they decide what to host and why.





Hosting decisions are often based on:

- **Needs identified in the national context**, using evaluation reports and feedback.
- **Alignment with horizontal priorities.**
- **A desire to improve project quality, visibility, dissemination, and impact.**

"It's based on need—we use our reports and needs analyses to identify gaps. For example, we saw mentoring was a challenge, so we organised a mentoring-focused activity."

"We prioritise horizontal themes and quality elements—implementation, visibility, dissemination. These guide our national-level work."

Thus, while based on the data from NA work plans and interviews, strategies for hosting may be limited, but decisions are clearly guided by identified national needs, priorities, and a strong focus on enhancing quality.

Conclusion: The results of NET activities, as defined within the framework of European youth programmes, means *outputs, outcomes, and impact*. National Agencies define expected results for NET activities in their work plans, primarily aiming to enhance project quality and support the professional development of participants. The selection of sending activities is guided by national strategies, with an emphasis on horizontal priorities, such as inclusion or capacity building and the exchange of good practices. While hosting strategies seem to be less systematic, decisions are guided by national needs assessments, evaluation data from previous NET activities, and horizontal priorities.

6. NET Activities implemented in 2024

This chapter will focus on how the defined objectives and expected results from the previous chapter are visible in the planning and implementation of NET activities.

According to the TCA/NET Overview 2024, there were a total of **113 NET activities planned** that are marked as being relevant for both programmes: Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. In addition, there are **61 activities planned specifically for the European Solidarity Corps**.

In the first edition of this analysis (which covered the years 2020–2022), the number of NET activities targeting the ESC was around 40 per year. It is important to **recognise that the planning tools, reporting practices, and data availability have changed since then**, and that the COVID-19 pandemic had a disruptive impact on NET activity planning and implementation.





Despite previous discussions about potentially reducing the scope of NET activities—especially in light of post-COVID reflections and environmental concerns—the quantitative data shows that the number of NET activities has not decreased. On the contrary, it has slightly increased.

For the purposes of this analysis, we will primarily focus on the 61 NET activities planned specifically for the European Solidarity Corps in 2024. While we acknowledge that the two programmes (ESC and Erasmus+) often operate in joint activities, our focus remains on activities dedicated to ESC. However, where relevant, we will also reference joint activities that serve both programmes.

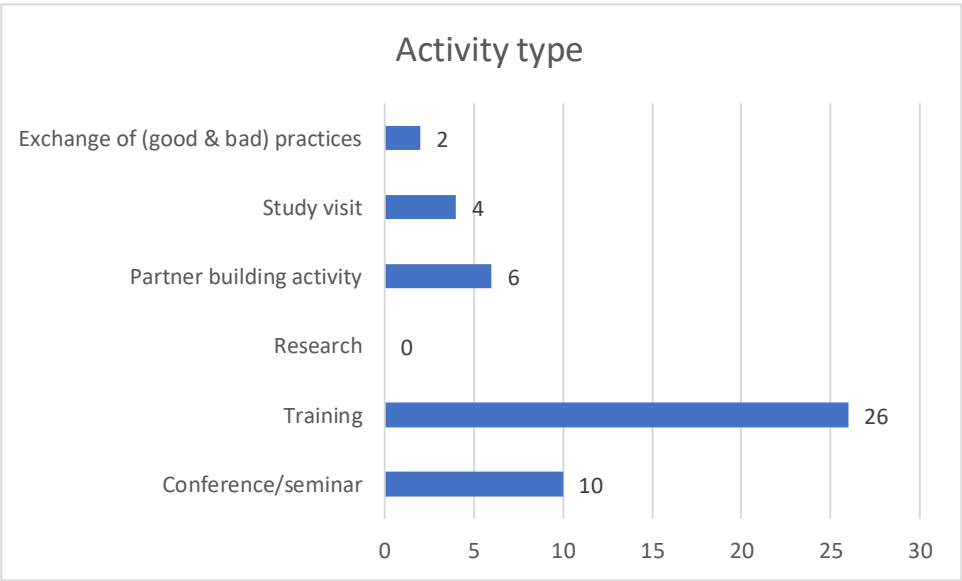
Among the 61 ESC-specific NET activities:

- **46 activities** focus on **volunteering** (e.g., individual volunteering and team volunteering).
- **15 activities** focus on **Solidarity Projects**.
- **20** of these activities were **supported by SALTO ESC**

a. Activity Type

Training remains the backbone of networking activities. Nevertheless, we can see the emergence of several other types of activities, as shown in the figure below (Chart 3). In the previous NET analysis (*Analysis of European Solidarity Corps' Networking Activities 2020–2022*), one recommendation for the future was to include more practical and concrete formats, such as study visits. These are now well represented in current activity plans. Due to differences in data structures, we cannot make a direct numerical comparison to previous years in order to determine whether their share has increased.

Chart 3: Different activity types





Another notable shift relates to the digital transformation brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic years, many NET activities were moved entirely online. While fully online formats are now less visible—and not consistently marked as a separate category in the NET Overview—hybrid elements have clearly become part of the standard practice. For example, many face-to-face activities now include online components, such as *kick-off meetings* or *preparatory sessions*, held in advance of the main event.

This suggests that **digital elements** have **become an established feature of NET activities** post-COVID, even though the core of **most activities** has returned to **in-person formats**.

b. Single Activities and LTAs

In the first edition of this analysis, LTAs, also named SNACs (Strategic National Agencies Cooperation Partnerships) were a new initiative. At that time, interviews revealed a certain level of confusion and inconsistency in how SNACs and LTAs were understood and integrated into the NET framework. Awareness of their purpose and potential varied widely among National Agencies.

Since then, **SNACs have become more structured**, which has likely brought more clarity to their role in supporting European youth programmes. As described in the *Let's SNAC!* publication (see p. 2).

"SNACs are making an impact on Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps by promoting quality youth work in Europe. They are long-term cooperation processes where National Agencies across Europe share knowledge, inspiration, and resources, aiming to support the youth sector through strategic approaches."

The SNACs:

- **Beyond Borders**
- Democracy Reloading
- **Digital Youth Work**
- Education and Training of Youth Workers
- Europe Goes Local
- European Academy on Youth Work
- **Europeers**
- Growing Youth Work
- Mental Health in Youth Work
- **New Power in Youth**
- **Strategic Partnership on Inclusion**
- **SNAC Volunteering**
- YouSports
- **Youth@Work**

Out of the 14 existing SNACs, 7 (highlighted in bold) explicitly reference the European Solidarity Corps, either through their stated goals or specific activities. The SNAC Europeers and SNAC Volunteering remain however the only SNACs connected fully to NET funds.





When analysing the NET activities planned for 2024, most are marked as single activities—meaning they are not connected to any SNAC. Only a small portion of activities are linked to a SNAC.

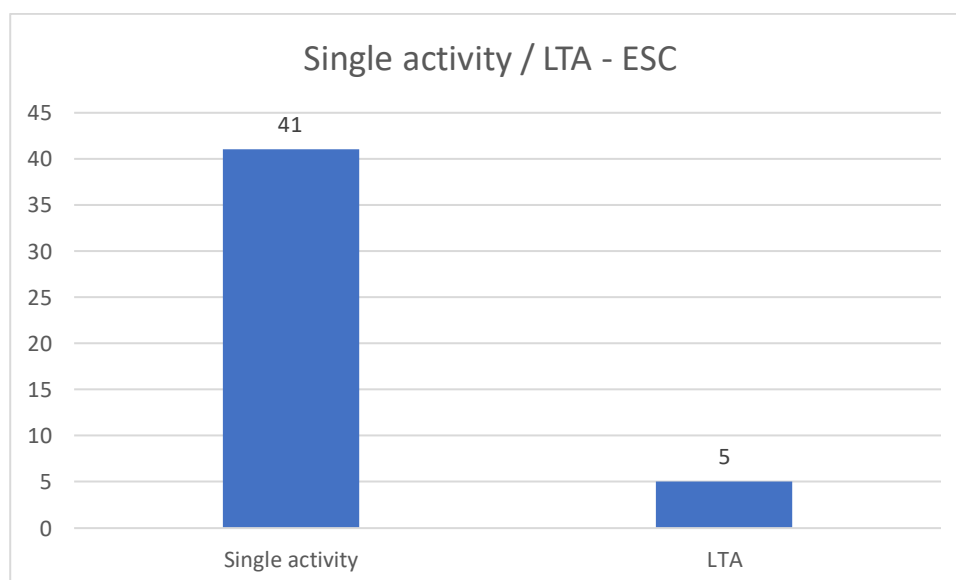


Chart 4: NET activities marked as single activity or LTA activities just for ESC

However, when we expand the scope to include NET activities that are marked for both Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, the distribution shifts: single activities and SNAC-related activities are balanced.

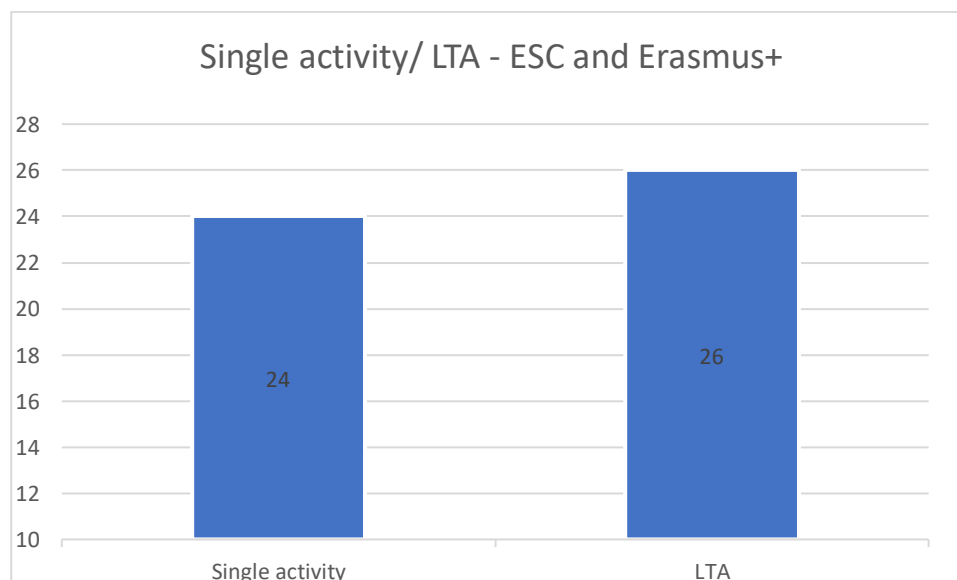


Chart 5: NET activities marked as single activity or LTA activities for ESC and Erasmus+

LTAs were frequently mentioned in work plans and interviews, especially in the context of activity planning. The existence of an ongoing **SNAC partnership influences both hosting and sending decisions**. National Agencies often align their priorities and resources with SNAC themes when developing their annual work plans.





This indicates that, while activities linked to **SNACs** may represent a smaller share of the total, these activities **play a strategic role in guiding and shaping focus areas**.

Conclusion: The data shows that the number of NET activities has not decreased from previous years. The analysis also shows positive developments in the diversity of activity types, with more concrete formats like study visits becoming more common. Additionally, hybrid approaches have become standard practice post-COVID, combining the benefits of digital accessibility with the value of in-person engagement.

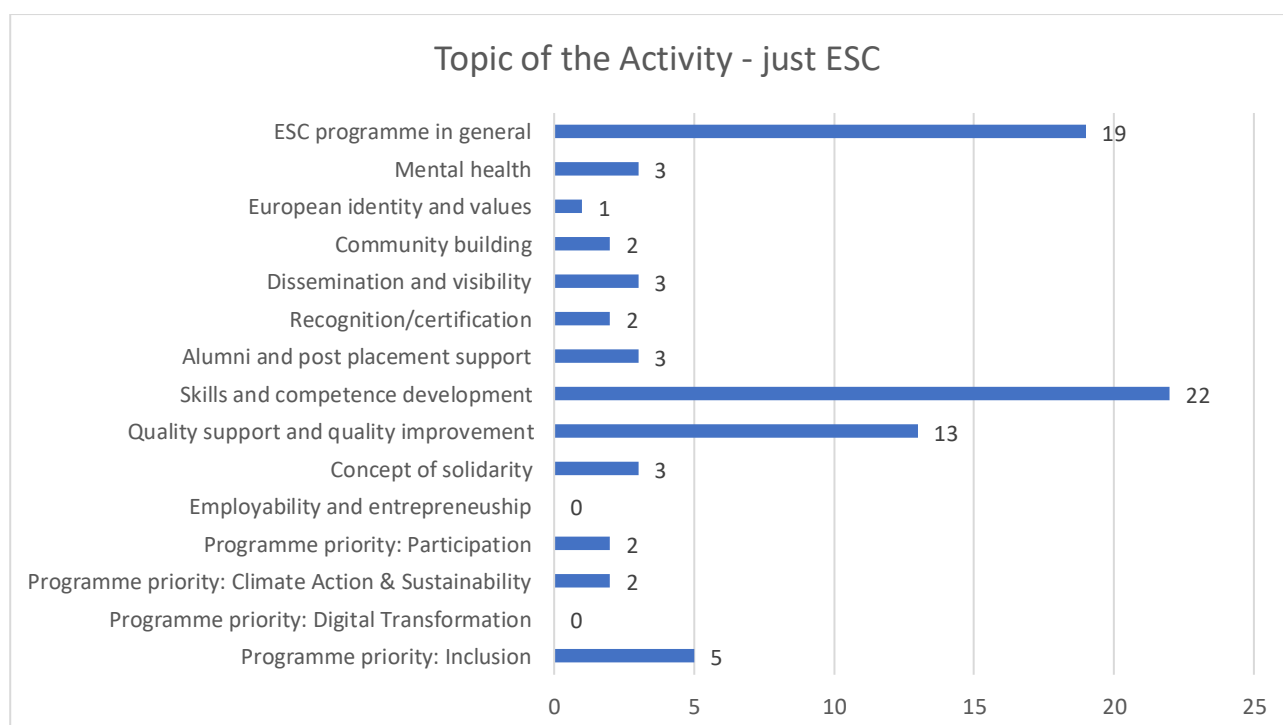
Although most 2024 NET activities remain single activities, the growing clarity and influence of **LTAs point to a more strategic layer** in the background. LTA-based cooperation increasingly informs how National Agencies plan and prioritise their activities.

7. Content of Activities

The division of the content of 2024 NET activities aligns closely with the findings from the first edition of this analysis. Activities that target the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) tend to focus on:

- Skills and competencies
- Quality support and quality management
- The ESC programme in general

The chart below (Chart 6) shows how the topics of NET activities are divided. One activity can have more than one topic selected.





In interviews, National Agency officers commonly acknowledged that many current activities address basic programme elements and focus on improving the quality of project implementation.

“In general, I think we are quite balanced. The NET activities also mirror the situation with organisations and applications. If there are not so many newcomers, that would reflect what offers we have on the table.”

It is interesting that, even though the quantitative data suggest that a majority of activities fall into categories like *quality improvement* or *general ESC topics*, interviewees often expressed a strategic mindset aimed **toward European priorities and qualitative development**.

“Because of budget limitations, it’s sometimes hard to decide where to put the focus. There are so many needs, and you have to choose what’s most relevant. We also organise regional activities where we focus on horizontal priorities like solidarity, inclusion, green topics... But we don’t organise thematic activities only around those. In Erasmus+, the field is more open, so we tend to mix the two programmes.”

These insights lead to the conclusion that a single activity may serve multiple objectives—for example, building capacity and addressing thematic priorities such as inclusion or sustainability. The current categorisation system in the planning tool (Cooperation platform) is too limited and does not align with best practices. There is a strong need to invest in its further development.

8. Horizontal Priorities in NET Activities

The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) programme defines^[8] horizontal priorities:

- Inclusion and Diversity
- Digital Transformation
- Environment and Fight Against Climate Change
- Participation in Democratic Life, Common Values, and Civic Engagement

In the first edition of this analysis, one key finding was that horizontal priorities, which had been newly introduced in 2021, were not yet clearly present in NET activities. Now, there are clear signs of change: **priorities are more visible** in strategic planning, highlighted in NA work plans, and supported through LTA structures.

When examining the content of NET activities targeted only at ESC, Inclusion stands out as the strongest and most frequently addressed priority. Climate Action, Participation, and Mental



Health and Well-being are also present. Mental Health—despite being often considered part of Inclusion—has been treated as an individual theme. (See Chart 6)



Activities related to Digital Transformation and themes such as European identity, community building, and employability/entrepreneurship are named as such and rare or missing.

When we look at activities marked for both ESC and Erasmus+ (Chart 7 below), horizontal priorities appear more frequently. European identity and entrepreneurship still remain underrepresented, while Solidarity Projects offer youth entrepreneurship that enhances the format.

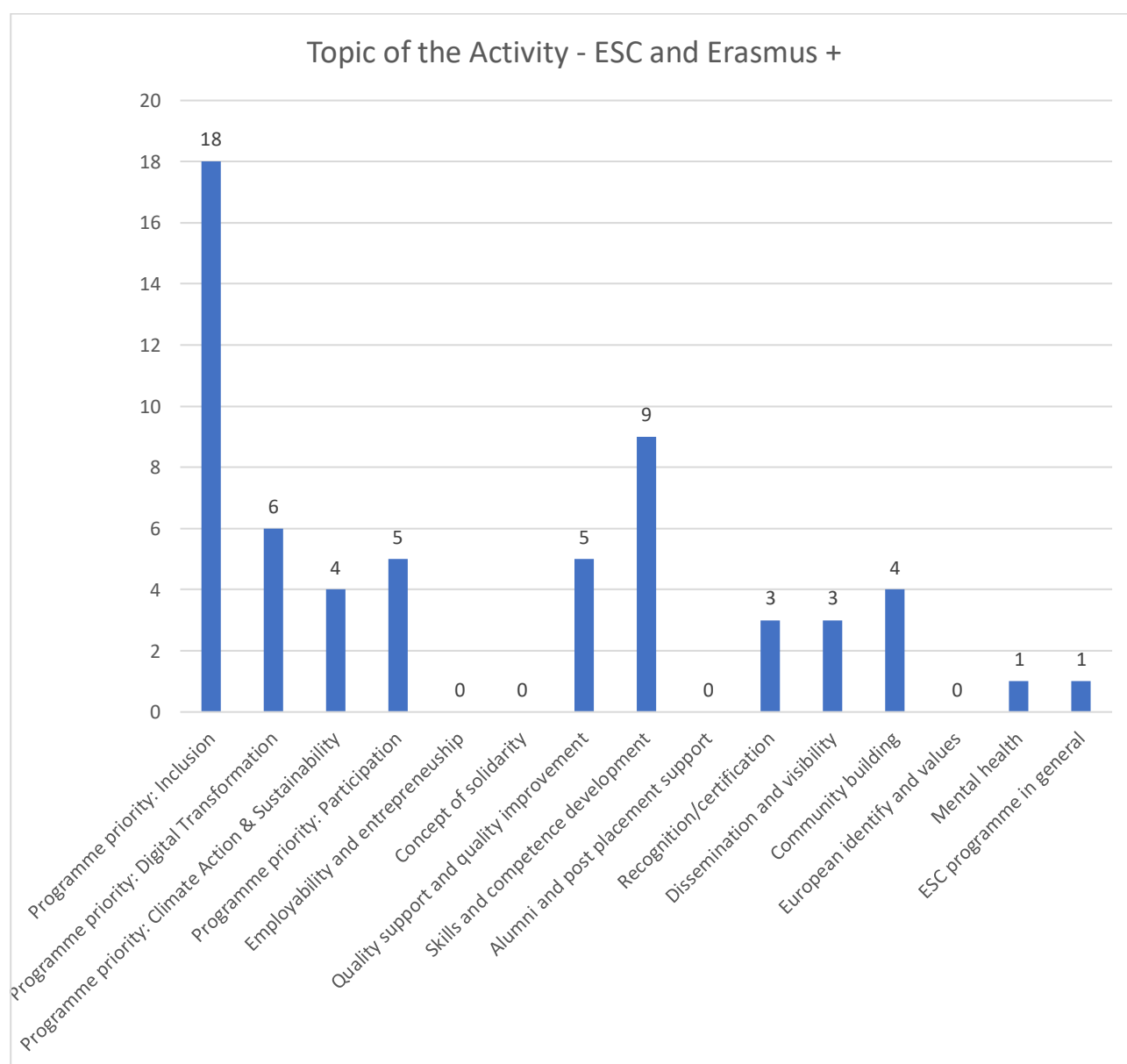


Chart 7: Topics of NET activities: ESC and Erasmus+





In the interviews, NA officers explained how they take horizontal priorities into account in their planning processes. Several officers described structured approaches to ensure all priorities are covered annually, either through national or international activities:

"We follow three strands in our planning. The priorities for sure—all of them—each year we have at least one activity for each priority, at the national or transnational level. We try to help people understand what these priorities mean and how they can implement them in their projects."

The approaches vary:

- Some NAs begin with national activities for a given priority and later expand them to the international level.
- Others address priorities only at the international level.

"We started by using NET to attract organisations, but now our strategy focuses more on quality and addressing priorities. We've had activities on inclusion and green issues. This year, the focus is on digitalisation—we're doing that nationally first, then internationally."

From the discussions, it is clear that not all priorities are equally easy to address.

- Inclusion is widely understood and implemented.
- Participation and Environmental Sustainability are increasingly present.
- Digital Transformation, however, remains more abstract and difficult to translate into meaningful activities.

"We had a workshop on digital transformation—but it's still unclear for us how to approach it. We also have to consider what role the programme has in this field and what we can realistically do."

★★

"Our beneficiaries are strong in solidarity, inclusion, human rights, and participation—but when we shift toward digitalisation or green economy, it's harder. They don't always have time or resources to develop competencies in those areas."

The activities are structured to address priorities on **two complementary levels**:

- they enable participants to take **individual action**,
- while at the same time encouraging **organisations** to implement **structural changes**.

This dual approach ensures that the impact extends beyond personal learning outcomes to include long-term organisational development. The priorities are thus an important part of activities and help you learn how to do quality ESC projects, but they also influence the organisation's practices.





"We always work on two levels: what participants can do personally and what their organisations can do structurally. For example, in green practices, we bring in experienced organisations to share how they changed their approach, and then generate new project ideas from that."

This observation was also reflected in the calls published on the SALTO Training Calendar, for example: *"This training aims to showcase ways to integrate green practices into projects and activities, promoting environmentally sustainable and responsible behaviour among participants and participating organisations."*

To drive more Inclusion and Diversity in Volunteering and Solidarity Projects, to develop participants' knowledge and competencies on working with a diverse group of young people."

Horizontal priorities have clearly become a more **central part of NET activities**.

- They guide planning, as seen in work plans.
- They are in process of implementation, as confirmed in both interview data and activity descriptions.

Conclusion: Horizontal priorities have clearly become more integrated into the planning and implementation of NET activities. Inclusion remains the most visible and well-understood priority, while Digital Transformation continues to be challenging. Activities often address these priorities on two levels: supporting individual project development and encouraging wider organisational change.

9. Insights on Concept of Solidarity and EU Values from Interviews

In the first NET analysis (2020–2022), EU values were clearly reflected in the content of NET activities (see pp. 16–19). However, in the 2024 data these topics are less visible, raising questions in this new round of analysis. During the interviews, we explored this change further—focusing in particular on solidarity, a core concept of the ESC programme.

The interviews suggest that EU values are perceived as an integral part of the programme as a whole and are written into the implementation and priorities of the programme, embedded in its implementation and priorities. This may explain why they are no longer highlighted as a separate topic within NET activities, even though the current societal situation in Europe is increasingly challenging EU values.

"I have a really hard time working with the topic of European values. What does it even mean? So many of those values are already embedded in the programme priorities. Working with the programme itself means working with European values."





While EU values are fundamental, they may not require specific NET activities—especially when the broader framework already reinforces them.

The concept of solidarity has been central to the ESC programme since its launch. In the early years, NET activities often aimed to define and build a common understanding of what solidarity means in this European context.

Now, based on both quantitative data and interview findings, it seems that solidarity has become a widely accepted and integral part of the programme.

“Solidarity runs through everything. It’s visible, it’s on taglines. Organisations get it—they understand what solidarity means in the context of the programme.”

This has led to a **shift in focus: from defining solidarity to practising** and implementing it.

“In the beginning, it was important to define solidarity. But now it’s embedded—it’s in the core of the programme and doesn’t need separate NET activities anymore.”

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“We used to need a shared definition, but now there’s peace with the fact that different countries may interpret solidarity differently. The basics are the same, and we’ve accepted that.”

However, this does not mean that the concept of solidarity is no longer discussed. Many interviewees pointed out that solidarity is now more actively explored in practical terms, such as:

- What does solidarity look like in day-to-day project work?
- How do organisations practice solidarity in their local contexts?
- How is solidarity visible in volunteering and community engagement?

“I feel that we focus more on solidarity now than we did 2–3 years ago. Today, when we do training, we always talk about it—not just philosophically, but what it means practically in the programme and how it works in organisations.”

Even though the concept of solidarity is widely understood, there is still a need for practical tools and methods to work with this concept in a training context. Some NA officers mentioned a **lack of content and concrete practices** that help participants and trainers explore solidarity in depth.

“There’s still misunderstanding about how to include solidarity in trainings. We collected good practices in one activity, but it wasn’t enough. Maybe this could be a topic for Tool Fairs—sharing and developing new ways to approach solidarity.”

In particular, trainers also need more support with regard to how to facilitate sessions around solidarity:





"I always try to include a session on solidarity in our programmes, but it's hard if the trainers themselves don't fully understand it or don't have good tools. The Solidarity Cake is a good start—but it's not enough."

Conclusion: The SALTO ESC Resource Centre was mentioned several times as having played a critical role in the early stages of the programme—especially in helping NAs and organisations conceptualise solidarity. The Solidarity Cake tool was widely recognised, but a need for more advanced resources and tools was expressed.

EU values remain an important foundation as an integral topic but are no longer marked separate topics in NET activities. Solidarity, once a topic needing a shared definition, is now seen as a well-understood part of the ESC.

It seems that the focus has moved from "What is solidarity?" to "How do we practice it?" There is a clear wish for new tools and trainer support to help make the topic of solidarity more real in NET settings.

10. Participants

The main beneficiaries of NET activities are the participants and the organisations they are connected with. Over the years, the discussion around finding the right participants has been ongoing. **Who should activities be targeted at, and who benefits the most?**

The data shows that the primary target groups are organisations (often represented by "youth workers") and young people. This reflects the nature of the programme, where volunteering projects are organised by organisations and Solidarity Projects are aimed directly at young people.

It was more **difficult to assess** whether activities **specifically address newcomers, experienced programme users, or both**. The available data groups these categories together, allowing only one target group to be selected (e.g. "organisations"), without distinguishing between levels of experience. The further development of the Cooperation board could potentially solve this.

In the interviews, participant profiles were also discussed. While some interviewees mentioned challenges such as language barriers or recurring participants, others emphasised the value of NET activities in reaching and engaging new organisations.

"So not quantitative, not attracting new beneficiaries, but more on quality. And we see the impact of focusing on that... we see improvements in project applications—and this is actually our main goal."

★★





"In the beginning, we used NET to attract organisations, but this is no longer the case. We've shifted the focus to quality—one of our strategic goals in NET is to realign with current priorities."

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"I see a lot of PBA-oriented activities, and our actions are moving toward newcomers..."

Conclusion: The question of how to find suitable and relevant participants remains on the agenda to some extent, although the emphasis varies. To better understand and track participant target groups, more tailored and detailed data would be needed. The Cooperation Platform should serve this need as well.

11. Tracking and Analysing Results of NET Activities

Evaluation, monitoring, and tracking of results have also been addressed in previous analyses, with conclusions often based on interviews with National Agency (NA) officers. This year, the data was drawn from the Commission (COM) and the NAs' annual work plans, which included information about result-tracking practices in NET activities.

Based on work plans, all NAs track the results of NET activities on some level. The most common method is a feedback survey conducted immediately after the activity. Some NAs also conduct follow-ups later in order to assess long-term results. Others participate in preparation teams use reports from hosting NAs in order to monitor results.

Other methods mentioned were individual discussions with participants about the benefits of the activity, mandatory dissemination events, and separate evaluation tools, which some officers mention, but the description in the work plan did not provide any further information.





The interviews also addressed **how NAs track results**, with responses differing depending on whether the NA was hosting or sending participants. For **hosting**, the focus is often on **evaluating the event together** with the organising team, gathering participant feedback, and conducting evaluation sessions at the end of the activity.

“We run an activity, we do the evaluation with participants, we have a report, which has a certain structure that you can use for learning.”

More **structured follow-up** tends to happen, when **participants are sent** to the activity. Many NAs require participants to submit a report or complete an evaluation survey, sometimes linking it to travel cost reimbursement:

“If you go somewhere, you need to fill in the survey—our internal one. This is part of the process to get reimbursements for travel. It’s kind of an obligation and makes it easy for us to track participants’ opinions about the outcomes of the events.”

In many cases, the survey is repeated after a few months or even a year in order to **assess long-term results**:

“When I send, I ask for participant feedback. It’s not so much about competencies, but after a year we send another survey asking more in-depth questions. Now we’re changing it to ask if competencies were developed, if projects were applied for, etc.”

Some NAs **collect participants’ personal stories** to gain insight into the training’s success. Others organize follow-up meetings, either for participants of the same event or nationally:

“I would say the value is the stories of the participants.”

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“For PBA, we try to organize a follow-up meeting.”

In some cases, **trainers or facilitators** are given responsibility for follow-up. This follow-up may serve as the final report, especially when an NA representative is present during the activity. Follow-up carried out by trainers can also provide valuable **insights for tracking results**.

“What I see—and I think colleagues in Finland is already doing this—is that they’ve stopped asking for final reports and instead focus on actual evaluation. For example, trainers can do a follow-up survey six months later. It requires more work, but it could be a useful structure across the network. You could track whether newcomers applied for or started projects afterwards.”

Despite these practices, many NAs acknowledged that **current evaluation and tracking methods are insufficient**. Still, almost everyone mentioned that improvements are underway or at least under discussion:

“We don’t have huge numbers... we do evaluate the process, but that’s about it. We could be better.”





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“Not at the moment, but this is something we will invest in more in the future—in a more structured way.”

The interviews indicate a shared momentum among National Agencies to **strengthen and streamline evaluation and data collection** in order to better analyse results. When asked to describe their current practices, a recurring point emerged: because the number of activities per NA—both hosting and sending—is relatively low, the available data for meaningful follow-up is often limited.

“If we had more activities, for sure we would have a bigger need for this!”

This finding encourages broader reflection on how **follow-up on results could be strengthened** collectively with all NAs, and in particular among NET officers within the NET network. There is a **recognised need to harmonise data collection and analysis** in a more structured and coordinated way.

Some level of information sharing is already taking place between NAs, as international NET activities are jointly planned and implemented. However, interviewees expressed a wish for **more systematic sharing of results and closer cooperation** already at the **planning stage**.

“It could be better. Sometimes we did share results through trainers’ reports—it was good—and this could become a good practice. Now, with the Cooperation Platform, we have a space where we can add the reports. But this rarely happens. Also, if we have valuable insights into certain topics, which is needed more in the field—what is needed less, we tend to discuss these during TCA/NET meetings. But things change throughout the year, and then we don’t share updates, or no one consults us.”

This highlights the need for a more **structured and continuous exchange** of insights across the NET network—not only during annual meetings, but throughout the year as plans evolve and results emerge.

Conclusion: All National Agencies follow the results of NET activities to some extent, most commonly through post-event feedback surveys and follow-up evaluations. While there is a shared awareness of the importance of results tracking, current practices are often limited or inconsistent across the network. The low volume of activities per NA can make systematic follow-up difficult, but there is growing recognition that more structured and collective approaches are needed. Interviewees expressed a strong interest in improving data use, sharing results more systematically, and strengthening collaboration—especially in using the Cooperation Platform. The future challenge is to move from basic feedback collection to deeper results assessment, ensuring that learning and insights are shared continuously across the NET network in order to guide future planning and practice.





12. Use of Collected Data

During the interviews, we gained some insights into how NAs are using the data they collect. The primary use appears to be **supporting the planning process** for future NET activities and **contributing to annual reports** or **work plans**.

“This data helps us to reform the activity for upcoming years.”

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“The overall analysis happens at the same time as the yearly planning and reporting, so we use the data—scores, recommendations—for our reports. But we don’t really use it for developing new activities or generating new themes, because participants typically don’t propose topics—only comment on existing ones. So, the survey isn’t used for new ideas.”

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“The big questionnaire we send before the work plan process asks about impact and suggestions. We collect all that, but only analyse it before planning. It helps us tailor activities to the field’s needs.”

In a few cases, NAs mentioned using the **data for promotional purposes**, for example, to highlight the benefits of international activities in order to encourage participation.

“We will use the data to promote international activities—why people should go and what they get from it.”

However, these kinds of practices are still in the minority. Many interviewees said that while **data is collected**—often through surveys—it **is rarely analysed or used meaningfully**. The main barriers mentioned were **lack of time, resources**, and **expertise**.

“We don’t really use any methods. We do surveys, there’s a lot of data, but we don’t use it.”

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“I’m not sure how we use the results...”

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“Evaluation is a job in itself. Even if we try, maybe the way we frame the questions is not ideal. We get answers, but they’re not always usable. We know something happened—but not how far it went.”

Even though **data is collected**, it is **rarely used in a systematic way**. These findings point to an opportunity to strengthen how data is utilised—by **developing clearer and comparable evaluation methods**, **enhancing analytical support**, and **integrating results** more directly





into the planning and promotion of NET activities as well as into the ESC programme as a whole. This raises the broader question: ***Who should hold the responsibility for ensuring that results are followed up more effectively?***

Conclusion: Almost all National Agencies evaluate and collect data on the results of NET activities, yet its practical use often remains limited. In most cases, the data feeds into annual reporting and informs future planning. Sometimes, it also contributes to the promotion of upcoming activities. However, more in-depth analysis of results—such as identifying new themes, assessing outcomes, or supporting strategic decisions—is less common.

This is not due to a lack of expertise among colleagues but rather because such tasks are not part of their formal responsibilities and capacities. Many NAs implement only a small number of activities, which makes it challenging to carry out in-depth analysis at national level. Interviewees suggested that a more holistic and streamlined European approach would add real value, enabling the bigger picture to emerge beyond individual activities. These insights highlight a clear development need: to move beyond basic data collection and to invest in standardised methods and tools that allow data to be used more meaningfully across the programme.

13. Necessary Improvements in Results Tracking Practices

According to the interviews, nearly all NA officers interviewed agreed **that evaluation and result-tracking practices could be improved**. In the interviews, we asked what kind of improvements the NA officers would like to see and who would be responsible for these improvements.

The general opinion was that there is a strong need for shared practices for following up on results. The possibility to have shared and harmonized practices for collecting and analysing the data in order to follow up on results would bring credibility and help to collect results more efficiently. It was also highlighted that the impact measurement would be more effective, if done at the European level rather than at the national or regional level.

"It's the impact measurement—it's so unique what happens in NET. Something has changed, something has happened, something has shifted. The benefits of NET... you can feel it: the connection, the value, the passion."

A **shared IT tool**, would increase the credibility of both NET activities as well as the ESC programme as a whole. It could also help address the challenge of low volume (in numbers) at individual NAs since, ideally, all **responses could be processed collectively**—or at least some parts of the evaluation could be unified.

"...Maybe we should be ambitious, in the sense that we establish a common ground: what we want to know, how we are going to do it, and that everyone follows through—so that every 2–3 years we have something to work with, something to





show. It's not just about the number of participants or money spent, but about impact."

Many expressed hope that a **fully developed Cooperation Platform** could make it possible to track results jointly and to use the information collected in the planning process.

"ESC could have a common approach in staff training—how the activity happened, what we should do as a network, where to focus, who can do what—so we have a better division of tasks."

Regarding smaller, more concrete improvements, some interviewees mentioned the need for **support in creating better questionnaires**, formulating effective questions, and analysing results.

"We could work together on an evaluation questionnaire or something... do it together. For some activities, like PBAs, the results are clearer—you know what you're aiming for. If we had a standard questionnaire, it would help. Of course, I can adapt the questions if needed, but the basis would be the same. We need some guidelines for follow-up—examples of questions, a question pool to track capacity building, etc."

It was also suggested that the application form could **include questions about partnerships**, for example, whether a partner was found through a NET or TCA activity. This would provide an easy way to observe direct results using tools that already exist.

"Maybe in the project application form, there could be a question about how the project idea was formed and whether partners were found through NET/TCA."

When discussing what kind of information would be most useful for NA officers, responses were generally aligned. Some interviewees wanted **basic data** on how participants heard about the activity and why they applied. However, many emphasized the importance of **deeper questions** about how the activity influences participants' daily work and whether it leads to real change—questions that indicate deeper results: impact.

"Concrete capacity building—what kind of skills, confidence, and attitudes were gained to carry out better projects. Did they build partnerships? There are connections to solidarity, participation, and inclusion, but what are they bringing back to their organisations? How did they improve? That's the impact we want to see."

During the interviews we asked **whose responsibility** it should be to collect and analyse this data. Responses varied, and not everyone had a clear view. Some suggested that the **European Commission** should take a more active role, while others hoped that **RAY** could be involved. In general, it was acknowledged that impact measurement goes beyond the responsibility of NET officers. For meaningful impact measurement, **additional resources and expertise** would be necessary, as well as more clarity on whose role it is to make sense of all the data collectively.





"...But in the bigger picture, it's the Commission's role."

★★

"It would be great if it could be RAY. If you have dedicated researchers, it adds more weight, and they can extract insights we wouldn't otherwise see. It could work across all NAs."

Conclusion: There is a clear consensus among interviewees that improvement is needed for the evaluation and monitoring of NET activities. It was widely hoped that a common tool like the Cooperation Platform would make harmonized data collection possible. To analyse collected data efficiently, it is recognized that additional resources and expertise would be necessary since it is beyond the responsibility of TCA/NET officers. While views on responsibility were mixed, some mentioned that the European Commission or RAY should play a coordinating role. The role of SALTO Resource Centres could be examined as well. Overall, improving evaluation practices will require dedicated resources, expertise, and stronger collaboration across the NET network.

14. Hopes for the Future and Some Open Questions

The last part of the interview with NA officers was a general conversation about ESC and its future. These interviews were conducted at the same time as the discussion of the new programme period for Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. This discussion includes the future of the ESC programme and how it will look in the future: will it remain an independent programme or will it be merged with other programmes. It is worth noting that the comments and opinions presented here are the thoughts of individual officers and may not represent the official view of that office.

The interviewees share a clear commitment to emphasising the **unique identity and core values of the ESC**. In addition, the interviewees highlight the **essential role in fostering solidarity in these challenging times**. Views of the future were varied, some hope that the programmes will maintain distinct initiatives with the flexibility to adapt to changing needs, some supported a merge in Erasmus+.

"I hope ESC will stand as an individual initiative. I also hope that the changes and flexibility will be there."

★★

"The programme offers something very unique... I just hope we don't lose all that uniqueness."





There is a strong desire for genuine dialogue between National Agencies, the organisations in the field, and the European Commission, **ensuring that stakeholders' voices are heard** and considered when decisions are made concerning the programme and its future.

"I also hope that we, as an NA, and the field have a place to share opinions and these will be taken into account for new programme years—not just the Commission who says how things should be done—so I hope there is real dialogue."

Many hoped that support structures like NET activities will be part of the future programme so that it is possible to support participants' needs and deliver meaningful opportunities. Many respondents stress the importance of keeping both national and international activities while also developing new, innovative formats to respond to evolving challenges.

No matter how the programme looks in the future, there is a hope that the work around **important themes will continue, fostering engagement and community building**, and offering a relevant and dynamic arena for **inclusion, empathy, and solidarity across Europe** and beyond.

"I find it important that stakeholders understand the potential of this programme and that they help the programme to grow... In 20 years, it could be something that everyone knows, like Erasmus+."

★★

"The drive of the programme is to improve society... and also the young people could not need it any more than now in this world... so we need the programme, we need the solidarity piece, we need to have tolerance and understanding, empathy—in action!"

Drawing on the findings of this analysis, the **following guiding questions** are proposed to support the European Commission, Heads of NAs, and NET and TCA officers in **shaping future developments of NET & TCA**:

How can solidarity be re-anchored through practical tools and advanced training approaches?

- While solidarity is widely understood, many trainers lack effective, up-to-date tools to facilitate meaningful engagement with the concept. Support seems to be meaningful on this matter.
- This document reflects a need for second-generation materials (beyond the Solidarity Cake) that help operationalize solidarity across diverse local realities and organisational levels.





- There is also a call to support trainers more systematically in delivering this content.

What entity should coordinate a harmonised, network-wide impact measurement system for NET activities?

- There is strong momentum toward shared tracking practices, but no clarity on who should lead. Impact measurement requires additional resources.
- TCA/NET officers suggested including the European Commission, RAY, or possibly SALTO Resource Centres, but there is no established ownership nor clarity on who has access to data with respect to data protection.

How can the Cooperation Platform evolve to support smarter planning, participant tracking, and evaluation?

- The platform is clearly seen as a potential game-changer, however, it currently lacks functionalities to track nuanced aspects like:
 - Newcomer vs. experienced status
 - Specific horizontal priorities per activity
 - Multi-level learning outcomes
- There is desire for further investment in developing the Cooperation Platform and integrating tools like the NET Matrix, as well as offering more sophisticated tagging and filtering options.

How can horizontal priorities—especially Digital Transformation—be better supported through content and practice?

- While Inclusion is well integrated, Digital Transformation and Environmental Sustainability remain difficult for many volunteering organisations to apply in practice.
- There is a need to clarify expectations and provide content that makes these priorities accessible and actionable for youth organisations.

What new formats and partnership models can help re-engage participants and diversify outreach?

- Many NAs struggle to recruit fresh participants, and returning participants may experience fatigue.
- Language barriers, accessibility issues, and lack of differentiation between newcomer and experienced profiles hinder broader outreach.





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[Let's SNAC! SNACs Making an Impact on Erasmus+ Youth & European Solidarity Corps for Quality Youth Work in Europe!](#)

[TCA/NET Activities 2024](#) (planning list established during the TCA/NET Meeting 2023, held in Berlin, DE before the Cooperation Board was operational)

NET Matrix developed in 2021 by SALTO European Solidarity Corps to analyse activities and objectives and develop formats together with NET and SALTO officers on annual basis

Study Visit	Exchange of (good & bad) practices	Program me priority: Inclusion	Program me priority: Digital Transformation	Program me priority: Climate Action & Sustainability	Program me priority: Participation	Employability and entrepreneurship	Concept of solidarity	Quality support and quality improvement	Skills and competence development	Alumni and post placement support	Recognition/certification	Dissemination and visibility	Community building	European identity and values	Mental health	ESC programme in general	organisations, institutions, companies, municipalities	young participants	Trainers	Coaches	Mentors	Youth Workers	Assessor/s experts	Other (decision makers, project managers, youth work managers)	Newcomer	Experienced	Both
▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	





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