

An Analysis of European Solidarity Corps Networking Activities (NET) 2025

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1. Executive Summary

This analysis provides an **overview of the events of the European Solidarity Corps International Networking Activities (NET) implemented in 2025**, at a time when discussions on the next EU programme period are underway. It draws on quantitative data, National Agencies' work plans and annual reports, previous NET analyses and interviews with National Agency NET and SALTO officers to have a closer look at the content, development and strategic role of NET Activities.

The findings show that NET Activities have **evolved from supporting** the launch and understanding of the European Solidarity Corps towards **becoming a mature and strategic support mechanism**.

Quality development, capacity building and skills development remain at the core of NET Activities, with training continuing to be the dominant format, and online activities providing an established complement. Horizontal programme priorities are increasingly embedded in planning and implementation, with Inclusion & Diversity remaining the most prominent priority. At the same time, emerging themes such as impact, safeguarding, preparedness and the Union of Skills indicate how NET Activities **respond to changing EU policy priorities**.

The analysis also shows a development in how solidarity is addressed. While the early years focused strongly on understanding and defining the concept of solidarity, **solidarity is now increasingly embedded across thematic areas** and activities as a cross-cutting principle of the European Solidarity Corps. This does not mean that its future role is clear-cut interviews indicate a strong wish to preserve solidarity, while also exploring how it could be positioned and translated into the future programme, including through community impact, active citizenship and participation.

International **NET Activities provide added value beyond individual training and networking events**. They foster European cooperation, peer learning and exchange of practice, strengthen the European dimension of the programme, and **broaden the scope of locally implemented Solidarity Projects to a wider European context**. NET Activities also serve a broad range of stakeholders beyond the traditional youth work field, reflecting the **wider volunteering and civic engagement field** as beneficiaries in the European Solidarity Corps.



The findings highlight the **importance of the existing NET support ecosystem**. Close cooperation between National Agencies, SALTO Resource Centres and the TCA/NET officers' network, combined with coordinated planning and established tools and structures, provides a strong foundation for implementation. **Flexibility is one of the greatest strengths** of NET Activities, allowing the network to respond quickly to changing needs and to translate emerging European policy priorities into practice. Cross-sectoral cooperation offers additional opportunities for learning, innovation and sharing expertise, while calling for attention to the different needs and identities of the sectors involved.

Overall, the analysis suggests that the current NET ecosystem is functioning effectively and provides a strong foundation for the next programme period. The findings point towards **building on existing strengths rather than creating new structures**. Three messages emerge particularly clearly from the interviews: **ensure clarity, stability and adequate resources for volunteering and youth engagement in the future programme**; keep what works, including the flexibility of NET Activities, the coordinating role of SALTO ESC, national NET Activities and the wider support ecosystem; and preserve the core of the ESC programme by keeping solidarity, community impact, inclusion, volunteering and non-formal learning visible and recognised.



2. Introduction

This analysis provides an overview of the European Solidarity Corps international Networking Activities (NET) in 2025. The focus of the analysis is:

- Key elements of NET Activities with a view of the integration of Solidarity Corps in the next Erasmus+ programme period
- Trends in NET Activities (2025) – reflection of policy priorities, popular topics, and gaps (based on quantitative analysis)
- Support ecosystem for NET & TCA activities – tools, rules, and invisible support enabling activities and EU programmes to thrive
- NET officer perspectives – insights from National Agencies and SALTOs on value and future direction

This report provides an **overview of the activities of the European Solidarity Corps' International Networking Events (NET) held in 2025**. It combines quantitative data with interviews conducted with National Agency NET officers and SALTO Resource Centre staff to explore how NET Activities support the implementation and quality of the programme.

The analysis is particularly relevant as preparations begin for the next programme period and discussions on the future integration of the European Solidarity Corps into Erasmus+. By looking at current practice, the report aims to identify which elements of the NET system work well and should be maintained in the future.

The report **examines trends in NET Activities**, including the **most common topics, emerging themes and policy priorities**. It also looks at **how solidarity, European values and cross-sectoral cooperation are reflected in practice** and explores the **wider support system behind NET Activities**, including the role of National Agencies, SALTO Resource Centres and their cooperation. Finally, the report summarises the **experiences and perspectives of NET officers** to identify strengths, challenges and opportunities for the future. A particular advantage of this analysis is the availability of analyses covering the period from 2020 onwards, making it possible to observe longer-term developments in NET Activities and draw lessons for the next programme period.



3. Data Collection

The quantitative analysis is based on the following data sets:

- National Agencies' 2025 NET work programme provided by the European Commission
- National Agencies' 2025 NET annual report provided by the European Commission
- List of trainings from the Cooperation Platform for the year 2025
- List of training calls from the SALTO training Callendar
- Seven interviews with NET officers representing the National Agencies of Germany, France, Poland, Finland, Czech Republic, Estonia and Austria.
- Three interviews with SALTO Resource Centres: SALTO Euromed (FR), SALTO Education and Training (HU) and SALTO Training and Cooperation (DE).
- Previous NET-analysis covering the years 2020-2024

The analysis focuses on activities implemented in 2025. In this report, the reference year refers to the year in which an activity took place rather than the corresponding budgetary year.

For the quantitative analysis, data were extracted from the Cooperation Platform and supplemented with calls published in the SALTO European Training Calendar. These data were analysed using the **NET matrix**. In addition, information from National Agencies' 2025 work programmes and yearly reports was reviewed to provide a broader understanding of the content and strategic focus of the activities. It should be noted that the different data sources are not fully comparable, as some entries may be missing, duplicated or categorised differently. Consequently, the quantitative findings should be interpreted as providing an indicative overview of the volume, content and trends of NET Activities implemented in 2025 rather than as an exhaustive analysis.

To deepen our understanding of the quantitative findings and provide additional context, interviews were conducted with National Agency NET officers and SALTO Resource Centre officers. The interview sample was designed to reflect a diverse range of National Agencies, representing different organisational sizes and geographical regions. In total, 7 NET officers and 3 SALTO officers were interviewed during April 2026.



The interviews served to contextualise the quantitative findings, clarify emerging trends and explore perspectives on the strategic role and future development of NET Activities that could not be captured through quantitative data alone.

4. NET Activities Implemented in 2025

Based on the data from the European Training Calendar there were totally 44 activities focusing on the European Solidarity Corps under the NET Activities:

- twenty-seven related to volunteering and
- seven to solidarity projects
- ten activities related to both activity types.

The data set focuses on international activities. National activities, research activities and other activities are not captured by this analysis, but they remain important for strategic programme development. The data and results are not totally comparable to previous years; the data analysed this year are from **the Cooperation Platform** and all activities had published the call in Salto Training Calendar; which indicates that the activities were actually implemented. The data analysed last year were from **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 Platform.)

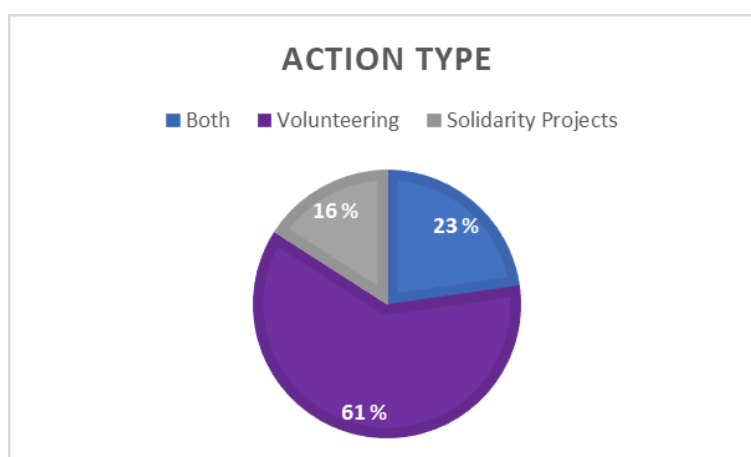


Chart 1: Division of the activities based on activity type



Conclusion:

- In total, 44 international NET Activities focusing on the European Solidarity Corps were implemented in 2025, with volunteering remaining the dominant activity type.
- The 2025 data provides a more reliable picture of implemented activities, as all analysed activities had published calls in the SALTO Training Calendar.
- Comparisons with previous years should be interpreted with caution due to changes in data sources and collection methods.
- The data set focuses on international activities. Research activities and national activities covered by NET funds, as well as other activities are not captured by this analysis but are still important for the strategic programme developments.

5. Activity Format

The data show that the distribution of NET activity formats has remained **largely consistent across the years** analysed. Training continues to be the dominant format, confirming its central role in supporting the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps. For the first time, online events were analysed as a separate activity format. The findings indicate that they now represent a significant share of the NET offers, reflecting their established role in providing flexible and accessible learning opportunities. Study visits, while frequently highlighted by National Agencies as a particularly valuable format for peer learning and exchanging practices, account for only around 7% of all NET Activities. This suggests that, despite their perceived value, they remain a relatively underused format within the overall NET offers.

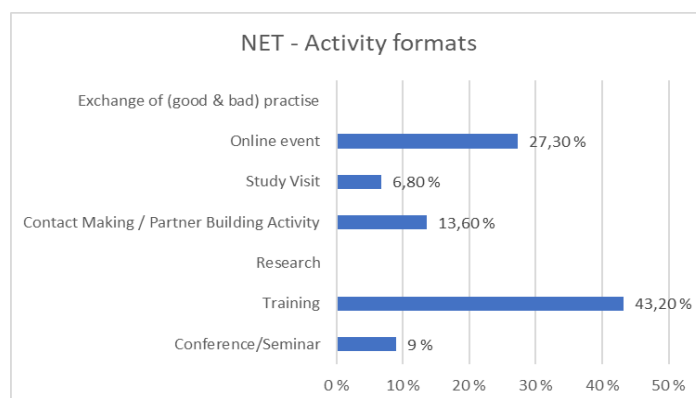


Chart 2: Format of the NET Activities



For the first time, this analysis also covered data on TCA youth activities to compare and find common elements. TCA activities are training and networking activities supporting Erasmus+; targeting youth work. There are a lot of overlaps and synergies but NET Activities specifically target the European Solidarity Corps and therefore naturally the whole volunteering and civic society sector beyond youthwork.

Based on the data on TCA Youth (2025), training also remains the dominant format. Online events are not as prevalent compared to the NET Activities.

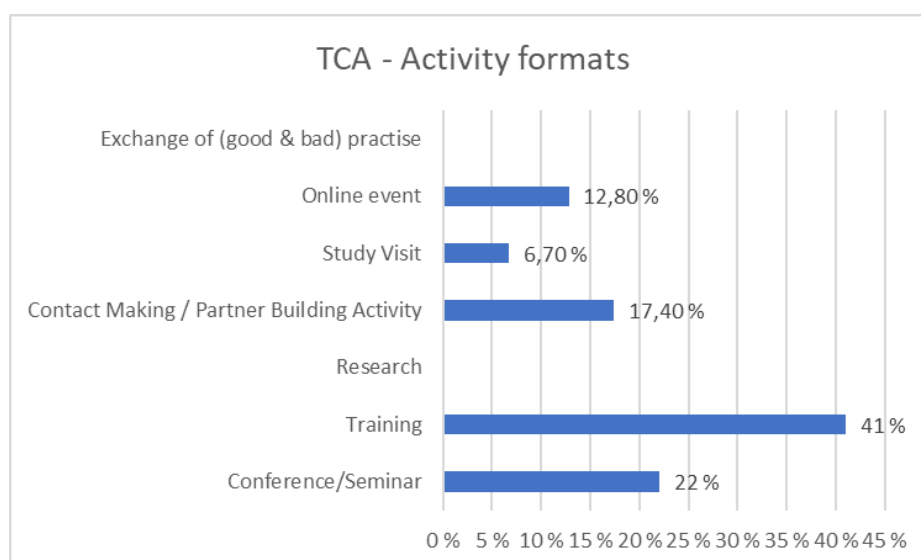


Chart 3: Formats of the TCA Activities.

Conclusion:

- Training activities continues to be the most widely used and established format of NET Activities.
- Online events have become a significant part of the activities, indicating increasing flexibility and accessibility.
- Study visits remain a valued format but are still used relatively rarely.



6. Content of the Activities

The main intention of NET Activities as described in the European Solidarity Corps programme guide is to **support the quality implementation of the ESC programme**. The offers can vary from offering basic information on how the programme operates, pedagogical offers and information about the key elements of the programme or skills development and capacity building for organisations who use the programme. In that frame it is evident that the **most common topics** are: **quality support and development**, as well as **skills and competence development**. The 2025 data confirm the trends identified in previous analyses.

2025 Activities: topics of **impact** were visible as content of the activities; some NET Activities were aiming to follow-up and track the impact of the European Solidarity Corps programme. It gives a signal that understanding and knowing, maybe even collecting data, to show the larger impact, is considered important. For this reason, “Impact” is handled as a separate content topic.

In the call descriptions of many activities, **solidarity was presented as an overarching theme**. Therefore, activities that addressed other topics in addition to solidarity were not separately marked as dealing with the “concept of solidarity.” As a result, no activities are specifically classified under the concept of solidarity. This analytical approach is consistent with previous analyses and reflects the understanding of solidarity as a cross-cutting principle rather than a standalone topic. Instead of being addressed separately, solidarity is understood as being embedded within other thematic areas.

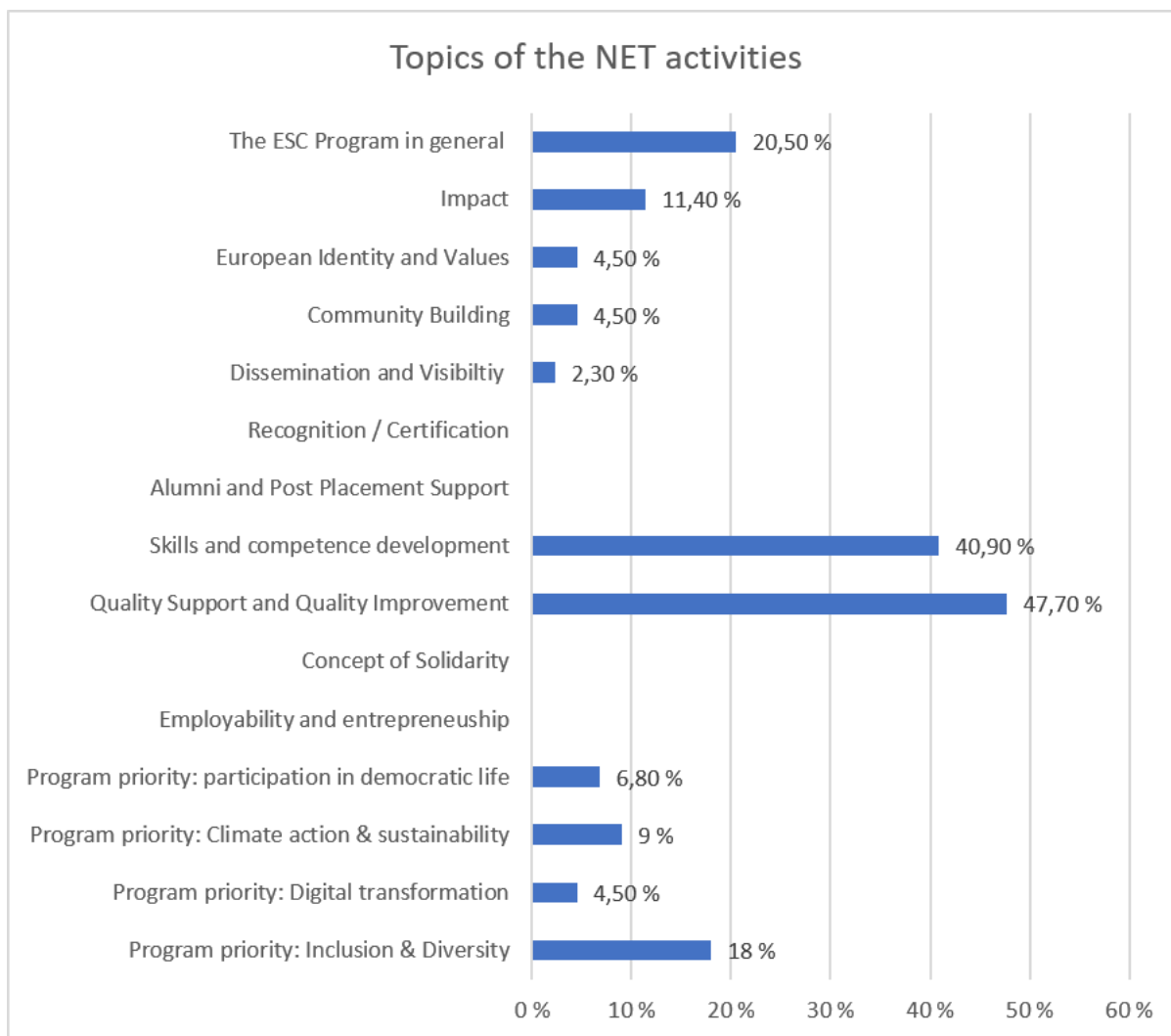


Chart 4: Topics of the NET Activities

Conclusion

- NET Activities continue to focus primarily on supporting the quality implementation of the European Solidarity Corps programme for all activities
- Quality support and development, as well as skills and competence development remain the core thematic areas, following the pattern observed in previous years.
- The growing visibility of impact-related topics suggests an increasing interest in understanding, demonstrating, and communicating the wider effects of the programme.

7. Horizontal Programme Priorities in 2025

During the past years the “Horizontal Program Priorities” had a strong role in the NET Activities. The role has changed over the years. The important finding is that all four are represented, and the distribution is more balanced than in previous years. The **most popular priority is still inclusion & diversity**.

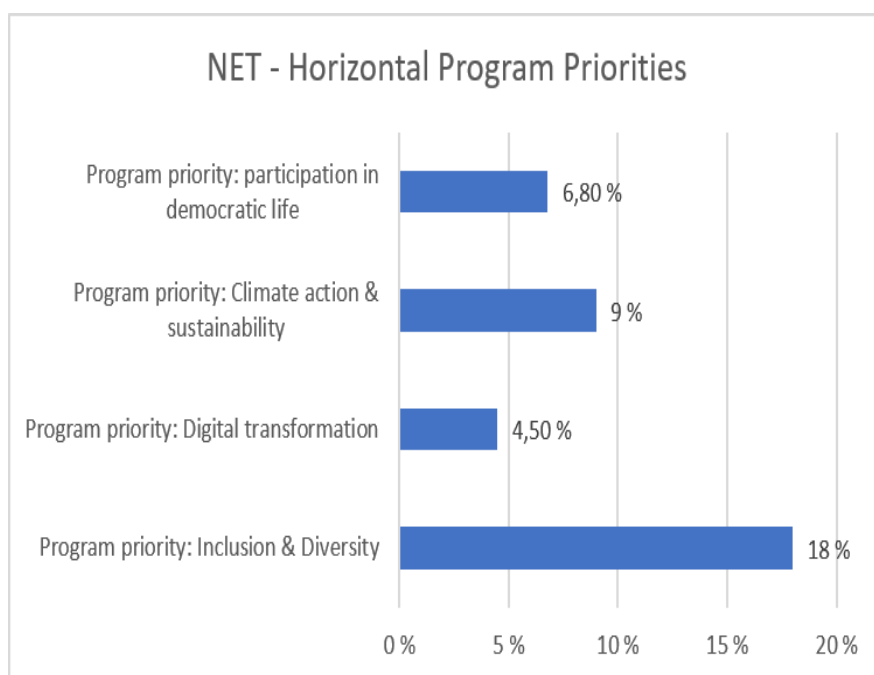


Chart 5: Division of the programme priorities.

Totally 39% of the NET Activities are dedicated to the Horizontal Priorities. According to the data set we received the distribution of activities supporting the priorities is almost the same in TCA.

Conclusion:

- Horizontal priorities have become an established and balanced component of NET Activities.
- Inclusion & diversity remains the most prominent priority, but all programme priorities are now addressed through dedicated activities.
- The share of activities focusing on horizontal priorities is almost identical in NET and TCA.



8. Insight from the 2025 Annual Reports

National Agencies' 2025 annual reports offers information about each National Agencies NET strategies. Data from the annual reports was analysed by looking at the topics mentioned the most.

The strongest cross-cutting theme across the NET-strategies based on annual reports is inclusion & diversity and participation of young people with fewer opportunities, followed by quality development, capacity building and networking / cooperation.

Most Frequently Identified themes across European Solidarity Corps NET Strategies:

- Inclusion & diversity / fewer opportunities
- Quality development & capacity building
- Networking, partnerships & peer learning
- Youth participation, civic engagement & solidarity
- Cross-sectoral cooperation & programme synergies
- Research, monitoring & evidence-based development
- Youth work & non-formal learning
- Mental health & wellbeing
- Sustainability & green transition
- Digitalisation & digital youth work

NET strategies provide a good overview of the content and focus of NET Activities and they are in line with the implemented activities offered by the network of NAs and SALTO Resource Centres.

Conclusion:

- National Agencies share a broadly common understanding of the strategic role of NET Activities.
- Inclusion, quality development, capacity building and networking emerge as the strongest cross-cutting themes across NET strategies.
- Community building is not a theme per se but an important objective of NET Activities
- The priorities identified in the annual reports are well reflected in the implemented activities, indicating strong alignment between strategy and practice.
- Emerging policy priorities are picked up quickly within NET Activities serving as an effective mechanism for translating new European policy priorities into practice in the civic engagement and volunteering field.

9. Participants

As in previous years the analysis looked at the participants of the NET Activities. The trend seems to be that the majority of the activities target both newcomers and experienced programme participants. 2025 is no exception. Comparing the results from 2025 to the results of the first analysis (2020-2022), it is visible that in the early years there were more activities for newcomers and the scope of activities for experienced programme participants has slightly increased. In 2025, activities for the experienced programme participants is almost even with activities targeting both newcomers and experienced participants.

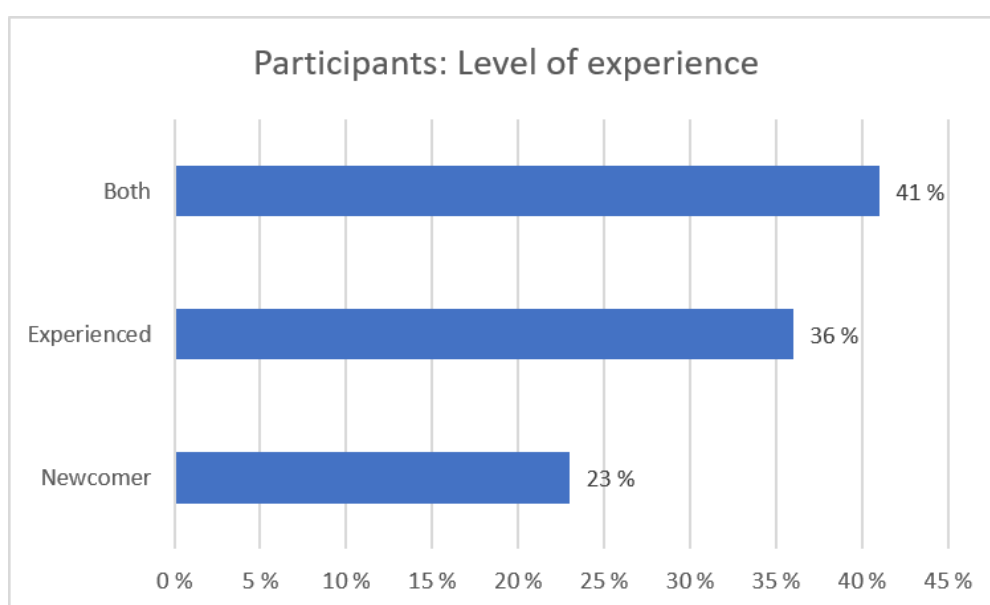


Chart 6: Participants: level of experience 2025

Each analysed year, included the topic of participants. **NAs have different** strategies and objectives **for recruiting participants** to their offered NET Activities. Some are putting more effort on attracting new participants and some focusing more on quality elements with old and experienced programme participants. In the annual reports (2025), one third of the NAs defined “newcomers” as one separate target group for NET Activities, reflecting the budget distribution situation especially for volunteering activities. In the earlier years, recovering from COVID-2019 effects, one big issue was the difficulties to find good, suitable participants for NET Activities (NET analysis 2020-2023 pp. 22). This year, the topic was not covered by the interviews. The **new Erasmus+ programme period can bring new target groups** that might reshape the audience targeted by the NET Activities.



Conclusion:

- NET Activities increasingly serve both newcomers and experienced programme participants, reflecting the diverse needs of the ESC communities.
- Compared to earlier years, there is a gradual shift towards supporting more experienced participants while maintaining accessibility for newcomers.
- National Agencies continue to use NET strategically, balancing outreach to new organisations with quality development among existing participants.
- Challenges related to recruiting suitable participants appear to have decreased, although the next Erasmus+ programme period may bring new target groups and participation requirements.

10. Development of the NET Activities over the Years

Looking back at the NET analyses from 2020 onwards reveals how the focus and role of NET Activities have evolved over time.

The **first analysis (2020–2023)** gave the first full picture of NET Activities. In the early years of the European Solidarity Corps, the **focus was clearly on the programme in general and how to understand the concept of solidarity**. There was a clear need to understand the new programme, as well as identify and define the core concepts together with participants, and attract new organisations on board.

In the subsequent years, the concept of solidarity became less prominent as a standalone topic compared to the 2020–2023 period. The 2024 NET analysis suggests that the **focus shifted from “What is solidarity?” towards “How do we practise solidarity?”**. Rather than becoming less important, solidarity appears to have become increasingly embedded and unquestioned as a fundamental value of the European Solidarity Corps. It is therefore naturally reflected across different themes and activities, rather than being addressed as a standalone topic.

Looking at the development of the content of the activities, the topic of European Identity and Values seems to be strongest in the earlier years, progressively decreasing over the later years. During the **2024 analyses**, some possible answers were received. 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.

The **topic of employability and entrepreneurship** was strong in the early years, naturally since Jobs & traineeships were still an ongoing strand, but has also visibly decreased in 2024 and 2025. In the work plans, Union of Skills is mentioned, so it will be interesting to see will the topic of employability and entrepreneurship grow again in the future. In the chart below, it is presented how the topics developed between 2020 and 2025.

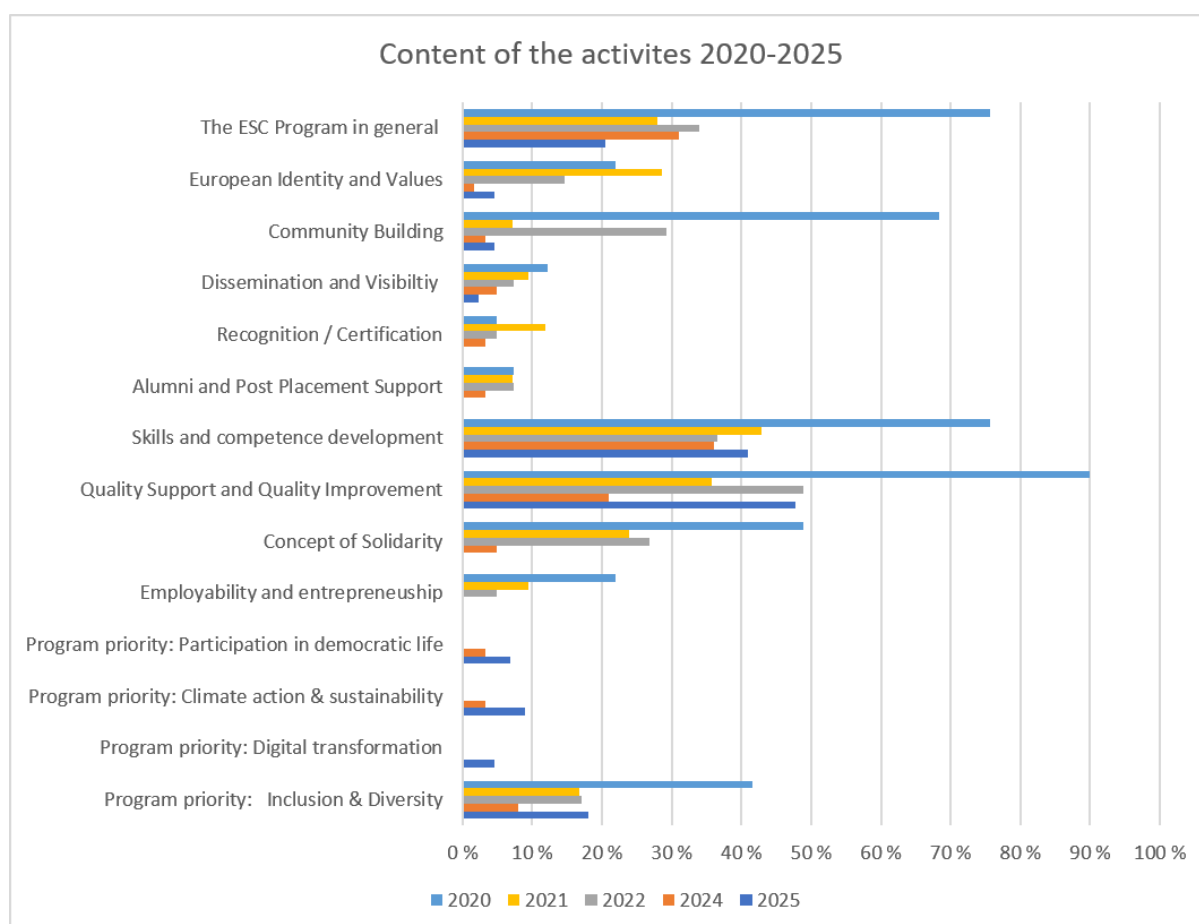


Chart 7: Development of the content of the activities in the 2020-2025 period

This analysis has been following up the development of the horizontal programme priorities from 2020. In the first analyses, horizontal programme priorities were new and, in many ways, lacking as a content topic. During the previous interviews NA officers were hoping to work with experts to create new and good NET-activity concepts for programme priorities. Based on interviews, the reason for non-inclusion of the horizontal programme priorities was that they are new, and time will be

needed to foresee what the priorities will be looking like within ESC. (NET 2020-2023 analysis, pp. 16, 27)

The **second analysis (2022-2023)** focused on national NET Activities. Even though it handled only national NET Activities, it is visible that the horizontal programme priorities were presented as a content of the activities. The topic of Inclusion was strongest but some activities have handled the topic of participation and the topic of climate action. (NET 2022-2023 analysis, pp.18)

The **third 2024 analyses** showed that horizontal priorities have clearly become a more central part of NET Activities. They guide planning, as seen in work plans, and they are in process of implementation. In that analysis, inclusion remains the most visible and well-understood priority, while digital transformation continues to be challenging. Important insight was that activities often address these priorities on two levels: supporting individual project development and encouraging wider organisational change. (NET 2024 analysis, pp.21-23)

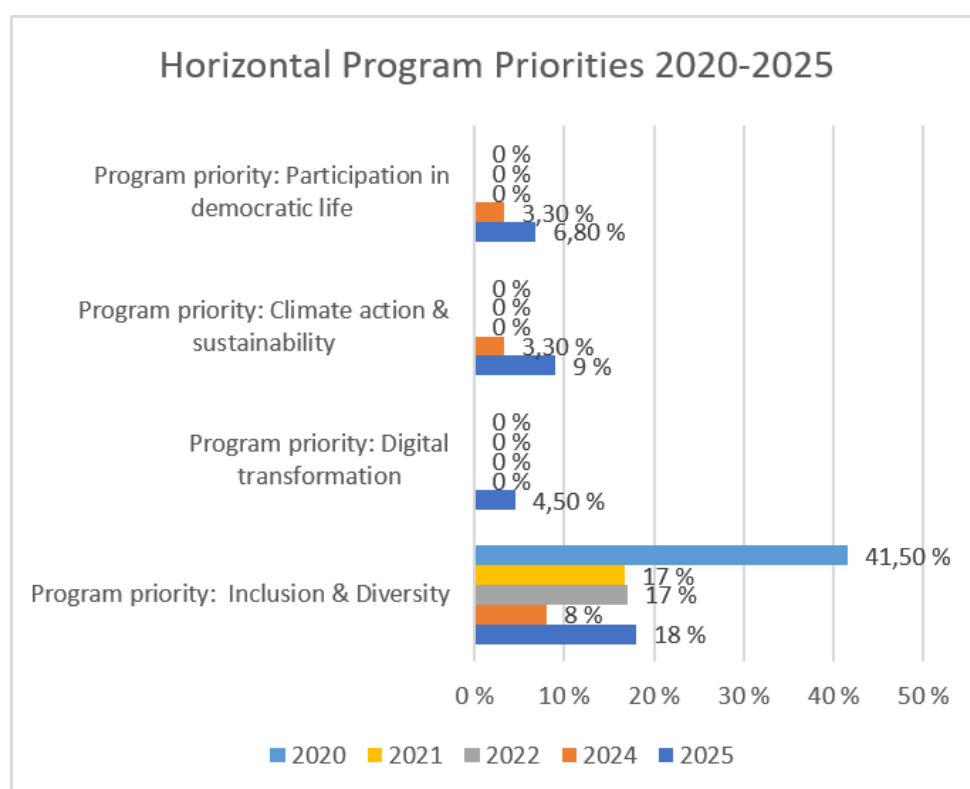


Chart 8: Horizontal Programme Priorities 2020-2025



During the interviews, one topic was role of NET Activities in recent years and the future role of solidarity. Many referred that the role of NET Activities has not necessarily changed, but the way the activities are planned and implemented has become **more structured and well-coordinated**.

"I have the feeling that Salto ESC's role has also changed a bit, because now we can see more fixed formats that are delivered and that are coming back like the Tosca or SoliDare every year and so on. For me, it is a compliment, a bit more professional in a way, you know, with the Resource Centre you have a more non-standardised but a clear approach..."

The role of **solidarity sparked discussion** in the interviews. While solidarity has become increasingly embedded in the practice of the European Solidarity Corps, its future positioning within the programme remains less clear.

"Now they're trying to find a way how the Solidarity will be integrated into the Erasmus+, you know, so it's a bit tricky in some way. So yeah, I think that's the element to bear in mind. We will not be just eaten by the needs of youth workers, strategic partnership and so on, but to really focus and kind of keep a standard in in the volunteering activities and supporting them."

Some were reflecting that maybe there is a need to go "back to the basics" and **define together what solidarity means in the new program**, would it become one of the horizontal priorities or a cross-cutting element. Strong wishes shared with the interviewers were that the **topic of solidarity should stay** somehow because it brings in the topic of the community impact that has a strong role in volunteering and also in solidarity projects. **Community impact** can also be an easier and more concrete way to understand the layer of solidarity:

"I know that a lot has been done on the topic of solidarity and this is great. And at the same time, I still have the impression that for organisations it's still a bit blurry and not completely clear as to what we mean? Maybe even if we know what we mean, how we can concretely transform this into more projects. I would say that in theory I would like the idea of solidarity being the focus, but at the same time this maybe connected to the local impact. I see a more concrete way to translate this solidarity.. That may also the question of impact. So on the local and community impact and I really have the impression that yeah it's useful and quite concrete for people.."

Also, active citizenship and participation are closely linked to solidarity, and can be one way of keeping the element of solidarity in the next programme period:

"We are not doing activities so much on this if we think about the stakeholders of solidarity, but for example with active citizenship, it is really much present. When we are talking about this or how to get young activists to be more active in their organisations. That is also maybe under the priority of active citizenships, but it is also about solidarity."



The role of solidarity affects also the organisations who use the programme. Some officers reflected that because of solidarity and community work it has been easier to find new organisations beyond the youth field and it has given richness to the programme.

“Enlarging the audience from youth work to solidarity, it was much easier to sell the programme to different kinds of organisations. And I think that it will add richness to the programme. So, I really hope that solidarity remains as the focus.”

Based on the interviews it seems that the **topic of solidarity has an important role** and there is a strong wish to keep it also part of the new programme in the future. But at the same time there is readiness to look at it from a new perspective, part of community impact or active citizenship. The new chapter of the programme is giving the chance to renew and recreate the good aspects that are part of the topic of solidarity.

Conclusion:

- NET Activities have evolved from introducing the European Solidarity Corps and its core concepts towards supporting the practical implementation, quality and impact of the programme.
- The concept of solidarity remains central to the identity of the programme for both activities - solidarity projects and volunteering activities - but its interpretation is evolving towards themes such as community impact, active citizenship and participation.
- Horizontal priorities have become an established and increasingly balanced component of NET Activities, demonstrating the network's ability to adapt to new strategic priorities.
- Over the years, NET Activities have become more structured and coordinated, while maintaining flexibility to respond to emerging needs and developments. Data confirms the support of SALTO ESC in this matter.
- The next programme period offers an opportunity to redefine and strengthen the role of solidarity, building on the experiences and practices developed during the current programme cycle.
- The next programme period offers an opportunity to redefine the role of solidarity, potentially positioning it as one of the horizontal priorities.



11. New Elements - Signals Pointing to the Future

The 2025 data from the Cooperation Platform and National Agencies' work programmes provide early indications of **emerging, new themes** that may shape the future development of NET Activities. New in the sense that they have not been part of the matrix and considered as separate content topics. One strong, often mentioned topic is impact and for this analysis the matrix is adjusted and “impact” is added as a topic.

Looking at the work plans, *safeguarding* and *Union of skills* were mentioned several times. During the interviews one topic was emerging trends that NET should respond to. Below, you can see the list of topics that officers mentioned as “emerging trends”:

- Preparedness
- Recognition and validation of volunteering
- Skills for the future labour market
- The well-being of young people
- To work with the trauma
- Prepare organisations better for youth transformation
- Participation
- Peace education
- Saving the planet
- Loneliness of the youth
- Mental health
- Neuro diversity
- Sexual harassment
- Inclusion
- Recognition of skills
- The youth-led activities
- Mentoring

Some of the topics are already part of the NET Activities, but they were seen so important that interviewees wanted to mention them as a trend; like inclusion, participation and mental health. It is also interesting to see that, “skills for the labour market” and “recognition of skill” are mentioned as a new trend. Also, the Union of skills is mentioned in the work plans. It can indicate that in the framework of volunteering, the narrative is shifting from a community aspect to individuals' development of skills. This was also discussed during the interviews.

“I believe it will be crucial for NET or for the TCA division to focus on solidarity or volunteering and on community welfare, not only on the development of skills or personal development.”



This weak signal of shifting narrative resonates with the “old times”, **when volunteering activities were part of Erasmus+ and strongly focused on skills development of young people**. When volunteering activities became part of an independent, new programme - The European Solidarity Corps, there was a **shift from skills development to community impact** - how communities can benefit and learn by offering volunteering opportunities to young people. Volunteering went **beyond the youth field**. The future will show how these elements are balanced in the new programme - skills of young people and community impact.

The **topic of preparedness** was addressed by the interviews, many mentioned that these global situations are pushing European programmes to discuss the topic of preparedness. At the same time, many reflected that it is not totally clear what the topic means for youth engagement and volunteering stakeholders.

“I'm just saying that until now it has not been clear what exactly they mean with preparedness. There are different ways to go about it.”

Some were also hoping to go beyond war preparedness and remembering the core of the programmes:

“This is kind of war themed, but to go about it on a more relaxed way. It's not exactly that heavy a topic. You can talk about preparedness, not only in war times and things like that. I mean, of course it's important considering everything that is happening around, but you can also think about peace education and things like that, but not connected to war, but like how to participate, how to be part of a group and how to be resilient and so on and not connected to the heaviest topics..”

**

“That we keep something that is light, but not in a bad way, you know, like something that is not just difficult because the world around is heavy as such, because there are already some difficult topics, difficult situations and I think that, If we can see the programme through its priorities and its supposed values, then it could also be like quite positive as well. So maybe this is just me being a bit too hopeful, but this would be nice.”



Conclusion:

- New themes such as impact, safeguarding, preparedness and the Union of Skills are emerging within NET Activities and may become more prominent in the next programme period.
- At the same time, long-standing priorities such as inclusion, participation and mental health remain highly relevant and continue to shape NET Activities.
- The increasing emphasis on skills recognition and employability suggests a possible shift in the narrative of volunteering, balancing individual skills development with community impact and solidarity.
- Preparedness emerged as an important but still evolving concept, with a need to define approaches that are aligned with the values of solidarity, participation and resilience.
- The future development of NET Activities will require balancing new policy priorities with the core values of the European Solidarity Corps, ensuring that solidarity remains a visible and meaningful element of the programme.

12. Role of the NET Activities

Over the past years, the NET analyses have provided valuable insights into the role, implementation and evolution of NET Activities.

In the first analysis which covered the 2020-2022 period, the biggest finding was the ability of NAs to reorganise activities during the COVID times. NET Activities were rapidly transformed to online format as much as possible and the topics of the activities were targeted at support organisations and participants through changing situations. The focus was on content, for example, supporting mentors in their work with volunteers. (NET 2020-2022 analysis, pp.6-7)

The **European Solidarity Corps** is a programme **for a large variety of organisations and informal groups**. It has gone **beyond youth work** because of the core topic of solidarity & volunteering. The



programme has opened doors, for example, for **cultural and environmental organisations**. This is visible also in NET Activities and some of them directly target this “new” audience.

Based on all previous annual analyses, it is evident that **NET Activities are adjusting quickly to changing situations**. The tool is flexible and it operates directly with participants, so that different policy elements, like priorities or other new topics can be quickly introduced to the field. NET Activities serve as a fast and effective mechanism to introduce and mainstream new priorities and themes among the ESC programme’s target group.

One element that is closely related to international NET Activities is the nature of European Solidarity Corps volunteering activities, in which a **long-term approach** is key. Activities often last for several months and involve different roles, such as Quality Label holders and mentors. Given the nature of these activities, there is a clear need for ongoing support, making training and networking activities particularly relevant and well justified.

At the same time, international **NET Activities** are also **important for informal groups and Solidarity Project organisers**, which are local by nature. International NET Activities can **strengthen the European dimension of local projects** by bringing young people from different countries together, creating opportunities for peer learning and exchange of experiences at European level. A good example is the “International Solidarity Project Meet-up”, coordinated by SALTO ESC, which annually brings together local Solidarity Projects from across Europe. In this way, international NET Activities can add value not only to international projects but also to locally implemented projects by connecting them to a wider European context. (NET 2022–2023 analysis, p. 25)

a. Value of International NET Activities

An analysis of European Solidarity Corps' International Networking Activities (NET) 2024 explored the perceived value of NET Activities. The analyses show 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. International NET Activities are irreplaceable in fostering European cooperation, shared values, and peer learning. (NET 2024 analysis, pp.7-10)

The value of NET Activities can also be seen in its role as a means to strengthen or build communities. In the beginning of the European Solidarity Corps programme community building was a new element, but quite clear at the onset. In the first analysis, one interesting outcome was that every analysed year included **activities focusing on community building and the concept of solidarity**. (NET analysis 2020-2023 pp. 17)

“Community building in volunteering makes super sense and partnership-building activities are part of this, and we focus on that.” (NET 2020-2023 analysis, pp. 17)

The topic of community building was also covered by interviews this year as a unique aspect of NET Activities:

“Or at least in my perspective, yeah, this is something that differentiates us a little bit from others because all of us can participate in the training programmes on specific skills or specific topics, but this community aspect is what I think makes it stand out.”

b. Role of National NET Activities

The European Solidarity Corps programme was the **first programme to allow organisation of national NET Activities**. This opportunity was investigated deeper in an analysis of European Solidarity Corps National Networking Events (NET) 2022-2023.

Based on the mentioned analyses, national NET Activities have several roles and benefits. They are seen as a **step-in activity for the EU programmes**, and it is seen as lowering the steps to join, like a language barrier. The possibility to operate in the national realm gives a good channel to reach new audiences and promote the programme. NA Officers feel that national NET Activities provide opportunities to get closer to their field.



It is also seen as an important tool to **guarantee the quality of the projects** and, based on interviews, some officers see the connection between national NET Activities and **increasing number of quality applications**.

Based on the analyses, National NET Activities are seen as an important element. They are particularly relevant because **some ESC activities, especially Solidarity Projects, are implemented locally**. Local / national NET can therefore provide support that is closer to the local context and to organisations / groups that may not participate in international activities. This is particularly compatible with the **community-based dimension of solidarity**.

c. Has the Value Changed? - New Way of Looking at the Value

Previous analyses have consistently highlighted the value of NET Activities. Given the ongoing preparations for the next programme period, this year's analysis revisits this topic to assess the continued value of NET Activities and to explore the role of the European support ecosystem. The interviews show that NA officers are defining new values. Almost everyone mentioned the ***flexibility of NET Activities***.

Flexibility is seen as a cross-cutting element; NET Activities are flexible in many ways. The format of activity and the topic can be chosen based on needs. And the way the budget can be planned together with the network gives the needed flexibility.

“For us, the flexibility, this was always the biggest strength that we could do a lot of things within the budget, like the residential activities, but also some online ones, publications, studies, a lot of things like that. But also it was very easy to respond to needs.”

“TCA or NET, whatever it is called, activity that still allows us to meet the needs of our participants, no matter what format or project they are implementing, we see to it that we meet those needs and that we still have the already discussed flexibility in doing so. Be it sending, hosting, co-funding, long-term activities or single activities, this broad flexibility that we still can bank on in the future and that we still have enough funding to do so.”



Beside the value of the flexibility, the same elements that have been defined in earlier analyses were mentioned this year as well. NET Activities ensure the quality of implementing the ESC programme and it is a well-functioning tool to attract new organisations.

“I believe this is a good chance for us to invite new organisations or target groups because it's, I think the best way to attract new people, especially if we have events that touch upon a specific topic and then to just speak about the programme and opportunities, I believe, is not enough. Now we have to attract people with the content and also by showing examples and offer events like study visits. We see that it's much more convincing to the organisation if they see another, for example, cultural organisation that is already ESC volunteering.”

Conclusion:

- NET Activities have proven to be a flexible and responsive support mechanism, capable of adapting quickly to changing circumstances and emerging policy priorities.
- By working directly with participants, NET Activities serve as an effective channel for strengthening the quality, implementation and impact of the European Solidarity Corps programme.
- International NET Activities add value by fostering European cooperation, peer learning and community building, which are considered unique and irreplaceable aspects of the programme.
- National NET Activities complement the international dimension by lowering participation barriers, reaching new audiences and supporting project quality in local contexts.
- International NET Activities can strengthen the European dimension of local Solidarity projects by bringing young people from different countries together, creating opportunities for peer learning, exchanging experiences at European level and enabling participants to feel part of “something bigger”
- Flexibility emerged as one of the most valued features of NET Activities, enabling National Agencies to respond to diverse needs through different formats, topics and cooperation models.
- Looking ahead, the continued success of NET Activities will depend on maintaining this flexibility while preserving their core strengths: quality support, community building and openness to new organisations and target groups.



13. The NET Support Ecosystem – A Foundation for the Next Programme Period

To better understand why NET Activities have proven to be an effective support mechanism for the European Solidarity Corps, it is important to look beyond the individual activities themselves, and examine the **European support ecosystem** that enables them. The analysis shows that the success of NET Activities is not only linked to their content but also to the coordinated structures, shared working agreements and use of tools, as well as close cooperation between National Agencies and SALTO Resource Centres.

International NET Activities do not function in isolation. They are **supported by a European network** in which different SALTO Resource Centres provide complementary expertise, coordination and infrastructure.

Two dedicated SALTO Resource Centres play a particularly key role in supporting NET Activities in the youth and volunteering field:

- **SALTO Training & Cooperation (Germany)** coordinates the European Training Strategy and the Youthpass Strategy. In relation to NET Activities, it provides the common European infrastructure on which international TCA and NET Activities are built. In cooperation with NAs and the SALTO network, it develops and maintains European tools such as the European Training Calendar, the Cooperation Platform, the HOP online learning platform and Youthpass which are used by all National Agencies and without which international cooperation would not be possible. SALTO T&C also coordinates the TCA/NET Working Group, whose mission is to foster a common understanding and a well-established quality culture among TCA and NET officers across Europe. In addition, SALTO T&C delivers the long-term Training of Trainers (ToT) programme, contributing to a shared pool of facilitators and trainers, and promoting common quality standards throughout the network.
- **SALTO European Solidarity Corps (Austria)** builds on the common European infrastructure by ensuring that it responds to the specific needs of the European Solidarity Corps. Since the launch of the programme in 2018, SALTO ESC has worked closely with SALTO Training & Cooperation to adapt the European Training Strategy, common tools and planning



mechanisms to the volunteering and civic engagement sector, including organisations beyond the traditional youth work field. Its role extends beyond the coordination of individual NET Activities. SALTO ESC provides the strategic framework that enables National Agencies to plan and offer a coherent European NET offer. Through the NET matrix, annual analyses of NET Activities, coordinated planning, the development of activity concepts and quality standards, and continuous cooperation with National Agencies and other SALTO Resource Centres, it identifies gaps, supports innovation and ensures that NET Activities collectively address the full range of programme objectives, target groups, activity formats and policy priorities.

By connecting National Agencies, facilitating cooperation and providing evidence-based planning, SALTO ESC helps ensure that NET funding is used strategically and efficiently, while maintaining a balanced, high-quality European offer that supports the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps.

- In addition to these 2 SALTO Resource Centres, **SALTO Education and Training (Hungary)** also complements this work by contributing expertise in educational methodologies and training design, particularly where youth, volunteering and formal education intersect. While SALTO ET has a broader mandate covering the formal education sector, this analysis focuses on those functions that support youth and volunteering activities.

Together, these complementary roles **create the infrastructure that enables National Agencies to plan and implement international NET Activities** in a coordinated and strategic way.

The interviews carried out for this analysis show that the success of the current NET system is not based on one organisation or one tool. Instead, it comes from the way the different elements of the support ecosystem work together and are targeted to the sector and field-specific requirements.

National Agency officers repeatedly **highlighted the value of the common planning processes**, such as the **annual TCA/NET Officers' Meeting**, the strategic support provided by SALTO European Solidarity Corps, the **shared European tools** and the **close cooperation between National Agencies and the SALTO Resource Centres**. These elements make it easier to plan activities together, find partners, avoid overlaps and respond quickly to emerging needs.



“I think what is working really well at the moment is the very strong and active role of SALTO European Solidarity Corps. They are very much involved in NET Activities and very simple things, like very early during the year, they provide detailed planning for the coming year, what activities they are planning, what are available for hosting, for co-funding, etc. And this role I find is very helpful for NAs and they are very good at providing this kind of information and to support NAs with the actual implementation of NET Activities. So this is something that I think has a great benefit and ideally would be kept of course!”

Another meaningful support eco-system is the **network of NET and TCA officers**. It consists of NET and TCA officers from different NAs. Close collaboration between NET officers and the support provided by the TCA/NET working group has also contributed to the development of common ways of working around NET Activities. Common structures and processes are helping smooth planning and implementation. TCA/NET officers annual meeting was mentioned several times. These meetings are seen as an efficient way to collaborate with NAs and plan and agree on NET Activities.

“The support system of the of SALTO and the working group or the community of other coordinators the TCA/ NET Officers, and also the agreed ways of working.”

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“One of them really is in TCA/NET officers’ meetings. I must say out of all the business trips I make in a year, like to me it's the one that is the most useful in my work because I just always come back with concrete ideas on what to do and partners to do that with. So this is just really very, very useful. “

Several interviewees also referred to the **NET matrix** and the **annual analyses of NET Activities as valuable planning tools**. They help identify gaps in the European offer, monitor developments over time and ensure that NET Activities cover different target groups, activity formats and programme priorities.

Between 2021 and 2025, **SALTO European Solidarity Corps coordinated and supported 237 international NET Activities**, involving more than **9,300 participants across Europe and its partner regions**. While these figures demonstrate the scale of the work, the interviews suggest that the greatest value lies in the **strategic coordination of the activities**. National Agencies particularly appreciated the early planning of the annual offer, the overview of planned activities, the development of common activity concepts and the opportunity to shape activities together with colleagues from other countries.



"So I would say that the work of the Salto ESC is super important when it comes to NET and to the programme itself."

The interviews with **SALTO representatives** also gave a new perspective of the NET support ecosystem. An additional perspective emerging from the interviews with SALTO representatives concerns the role of NET as a **capacity-building mechanism for National Agency staff** themselves.

Rather than supporting only beneficiary participants and organisations, the NET ecosystem also **contributes to professional development, peer learning and organisational learning within National Agencies.**

"Behind-the-scenes transnational cooperation is also a kind of internal staff learning and organisational learning."

Taken together, the SALTO representatives' interviews suggest that the strength of the NET support ecosystem lies not only in its structures and tools but also in the long-term relationships, trust and shared ways of working that have developed across the European network. These elements enable coordinated planning, peer learning and continuous quality development.

"It's not only about the tools, but also about the people knowing each other and knowing how to work together."

Overall, the findings suggest that the **European support ecosystem has become one of the key strengths of NET Activities.** The combination of common European tools, coordinated planning, shared quality standards and close cooperation between National Agencies and different SALTO Resource Centres enables NET funding to be used effectively.



Conclusion:

- The current NET support ecosystem has proven to be effective and well-functioning, combining strong coordination, shared ways of working and collaborative planning.
- The coordinating role of SALTO ESC is widely recognised and valued, particularly in ensuring strategic coherence, quality development and balanced implementation of NET Activities across Europe.
- Close cooperation between National Agencies, SALTO Resource Centres and the TCA/NET officers' network has created common practices that support efficient planning and implementation.
- The development of stronger structures and coordination has not replaced flexibility; rather, the existing support ecosystem appears to provide a framework within which National Agencies can respond flexibly to changing (field) requirements.
- These elements have proven to be good practices and could serve as a model for the next programme period.

14. Cross-sectoral Approaches

Cross-sectoral cooperation is naturally embedded in the European Solidarity Corps and the **volunteering sector**, as the programme extends beyond the traditional youth field to volunteering organisations working in areas such as **elderly homes, civil society organisations, organisations active in the fields of culture, sport and the environment**. Cross-sectoral cooperation has become an increasingly visible feature of NET Activities. Each year there are a couple of activities that are directly targeted, for example, at the cultural sector or environmental organisations; like in 2025 the activity: *“Study Visit in Poland: Cultural institutions in Europe”*.

As part of the programme, the European Solidarity Corps and especially in Erasmus+, **cross-sectoral** often means cooperation between the youth sector and educational field. Some NET Activities are



carried in cooperation with the educational sector; like in 2025 the activity: *“Everything starts with dialogue - cross-sectoral PBA on interfaith dialogue & youth work”* which was activity-targeted for both programme participants.

The annual reports (2025) indicate that cross-sectoral cooperation has become an established element of NET Activities; there was mention of cross-sectoral approaches and several cross-sectoral activities. Below you can see citations from annual reports:

“Cooperation with Erasmus+ was strengthened through cross-sectoral activities, such as the joint E+ and ESC conference.”

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“NET Activities focused on connecting youth organisations, educational institutions, municipalities, public authorities and policymakers active in solidarity, volunteering and youth participation. Conferences and large-scale events served as key networking platforms, enabling exchange of practices and cross-sectoral cooperation.”

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“Cross-sectoral activities addressing taboo topics, such as sexual health, in collaboration with Youth, Sports, and ET sectors, are planned for 2026.”

Data from annual reports showed that **cross-sectoral approach and cooperation is part of NET Activities** and a good starting point for the next programme period. During the interviews we talked with NA officers about cross-sectoral cooperation. Most of the time it is seen as an added value that can strengthen the programmes and support capacity building of participants.

“Then probably the synergy effect that each of the sectors can inspire, can do something new, or like the motto of the programme that together we can probably do more things than each of us separately. But yeah, these synergies and the exchange of different approaches.”

The benefit of the **cross-sectoral cooperation** was seen **pragmatically** and it especially makes sense when planning and implementing thematically common activities or using the same pool of trainers.

“But if we are talking about cross-sectoral collaboration, priorities, or solidarity as such, then that is totally like a different kind of thing. So, for that I also see the added value and also to have different kinds of points of views.”

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“Sometimes it's something very practical, like for example, we work with our pool of trainers together.”



Even though the cross-sectoral cooperation brings added value, NA officers also **define some obstacles and barriers** that need to be overcome and clarified. For instance, how the **different target groups; different participants from different background organisations** will fit into the same activity so that it serves everyone's purposes.

“It is also going to be tricky because it's a mix of target groups. So when you're preparing whatever activities, it's a bit harder for trainers to think what is irrelevant for them and on what level they are, you know, and maybe juggling between non-formal and formal methods.”

Another topic that was worrying about interviewed NET officers was the nature of the cooperation. The **fruitful cooperation has to be built on trust and equality, no matter the size of the field** the partner is operating, and also that all **field-related specialities are considered and recognised**.

“The other thing which I consider very complicated about cross-sectoral cooperation is that we don't see each other equal, and that's the biggest problem..”

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“But we still need to be able to meet the unique needs of the youth field.”

As discussed in the previous chapter, the well-established European support ecosystem also provides a strong foundation for developing cross-sectoral cooperation. Common planning structures, established partnerships and shared European tools make it easier to design and implement activities that bring together different sectors and programme fields.

Conclusion:

- Cross-sectoral cooperation is already naturally an integral part of NET Activities and offers opportunities for innovation, capacity building and the exchange of perspectives.
- Cooperation across sectors is particularly valuable when addressing common priorities and themes, or when sharing expertise and resources.
- At the same time, successful cross-sectoral cooperation requires attention to the different needs, backgrounds and expectations of participants and sectors.
- The next programme period offers an opportunity to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation while ensuring that the specific identity and needs of the youth field remain visible and recognised.



15. Hopes for the Future

The last part of the interview with NA officers was a general conversation about the European Solidarity Corps programme 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 was held. To summarise, what do officers hope for the future, approaching the next programme period. We could find three main topics:

NET has evolved into a **mature and strategic support mechanism for the European Solidarity Corps, and the volunteering field**. The strength of NET lies in its **European support ecosystem**, built on cooperation between National Agencies, SALTO Resource Centres, shared tools and coordinated planning. **Flexibility** is the defining feature of NET and should be preserved in the next programme period.

NET effectively **translates European policy priorities into practical support** while maintaining its focus on quality development and capacity building. The next programme period should **build on the existing strengths of NET** rather than creating new structures, while ensuring that **solidarity remains at the heart of the programme**.

1. **Clarity and stability** – ensuring a clear direction for the future programme and adequate resources for long-term development.
2. **Keep what works** – maintaining the flexibility of NET Activities, the coordinating role of SALTO ESC, national NET Activities and the existing wider support ecosystem.
3. **Preserve the core of the programme** – keeping solidarity, community impact, inclusion and the recognition of volunteering at the core of the programme.

These themes were reflected in several concrete expectations expressed by the interviewees. National Agency officers highlighted the importance of timely decisions for the next programme period, sufficient resources, continued flexibility of NET Activities, the preservation of national NET Activities, and the coordinating role of SALTO ESC. They also emphasised the need to build on existing



good practices rather than redesigning support structures, while ensuring that solidarity, volunteering, non-formal learning and community impact remain visible and recognised within the future programme.

Overall, this analysis demonstrates that NET Activities have developed into a **mature and effective support mechanism for the European Solidarity Corps** - for all actors **within volunteering** as well as for the **local, often informal groups of Solidarity project organizers**. Over the past years, they have evolved beyond networking activities into a strategic ecosystem that strengthens programme quality, builds organisational capacity, fosters European cooperation and helps translate policy priorities into practice. **These well-established practices provide a strong foundation for preparing the next programme period and for further development of Networking Activities.**



16. References

- An Analysis of European Solidarity Corps ´ Networking Activities (NET) 2020-2022
- An Analysis of European Solidarity Corps National Networking Activities (NET) 2022-2023
- An Analysis of European Solidarity Corps International Networking Activities (NET) 2024
- 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 an annual basis.

EDITORIAL INFO

SALTO European Solidarity Corps SALTO ESC supports National Agencies and organisations in the youth field and beyond with the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps programme. The mission is to explore the potential of solidarity as a core value in European societies and to promote the use of the European Solidarity Corps as a tool for understanding and living solidarity. SALTO ESC coordinates networking activities, training, seminars and events that will support the quality implementation of the programme and maximise its impact. By doing this, SALTO ESC contributes to building a European Solidarity Corps community of organisations. SALTO ESC is hosted by OeAD. The OeAD is the national agency for the implementation of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps in Austria. SALTO ESC is part of a European network of SALTO Resource Centres with the mission to improve the quality and impact of the EU youth programmes as well as to support and develop European youth work. Find us online at **www.saltonetwork.eu**, **www.oead.at** and **www.talkingsolidarity.eu**