



EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

**Guide for Experts on
Quality Assessment
2020**



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1. Introduction

A large part of the European Solidarity Corps is implemented under the indirect management mode. This means that National Agencies in the Participating Countries are in charge of the selection of projects to be funded at decentralised level. National Agencies as well as the Education, Culture and Audiovisual Executive Agency are also in charge of awarding the Quality Label. National Agencies assess proposals¹ with the assistance of independent experts to ensure that only those of the highest quality are selected for funding and that only organisations fulfilling specified criteria obtain a Quality Label. Thus, the final decision on the selection or rejection of applications and on the awarding of Quality Label is taken by the National Agencies.

This Guide for Experts is a tool for experts when assessing applications submitted under the European Solidarity Corps². It provides instructions and guidance in order to ensure a standardised and high quality assessment of applications for the actions managed by the National Agencies - and by the Education, Culture and Audiovisual Executive Agency in the case of the Quality Label.

The Guide for Experts provides information on:

- the role and appointment of experts;
- the principles of the assessment;
- the assessment process in practice;
- information on how to assess the award criteria for each action.

2. Experts

2.1 Role of experts

The assessment and selection of grant applications is organised on the basis of a peer review system following a transparent process that guarantees impartiality and equal treatment of all applicants.

The role of experts is very important to provide a fair, impartial, consistent and accurate assessment of project applications according to the objectives of the European Solidarity Corps and the action.

The assessment is an essential part in the selection procedure. Based on the experts' assessment, a list of grant applications per action ranked in quality order is established, which serves as a basis for the National Agency to take the grant award decision, following the proposal of the Evaluation Committee.

The assessment of applications for Quality Label results in the decision of awarding or refusing the Quality Label.

¹ Please note that the terms "proposal" and "application" are used interchangeably in this Guide.

² Regulation (EU) 2018/1475 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 October 2018 laying down the legal framework of the European Solidarity Corps and amending Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013, Regulation (EU) No 1293/2013 and Decision No 1313/2013/EU

Based on the experts' comments, the National Agency shall provide feedback to the applicants on the quality of their application in order to ensure transparency and help non-selected applicants to improve the quality of their possible future applications (cf. section 4).

2.2 Appointment of experts, code of conduct and conflict of interest

Experts are appointed on the basis of their skills and knowledge in the areas in which they are asked to assess applications.

Where relevant, for assessing inclusion projects involving participants with special needs or fewer opportunities, it is encouraged to include experts with expertise in the equity and inclusion field.

To ensure their independence, the names of the experts are not made public. Experts are required to perform the assessment to the highest professional standards and within the deadline agreed with the National Agency.

Through the appointment by the National Agency experts are bound to a code of conduct as set out in the appointment letter or contract with the expert. All information related to the assessment process is strictly confidential. Therefore, experts are not allowed to disclose any information about the applications submitted and results of the assessment and selection to the public.³

Depending on the action and the level of grant requested, the assessment of applications will be undertaken by minimum one or two experts, which can be either internal or external to the National Agency. Experts can also be appointed from another Participating country than the one of the National Agency.

Experts must not have a conflict of interest⁴ in relation to the proposals on which they are requested to give their opinion. To this end, they sign a declaration provided by the National Agency that no such conflict of interest exists and that they undertake to inform the National Agency of both the existence and its nature should such conflict arise (cf. template in Annex I to this Guide). The same declaration binds experts to confidentiality.

Persons involved in an application in the selection round for the action under assessment are considered as having a conflict of interest for that selection round and will not be appointed experts.

When a potential conflict of interest is reported by the expert or brought to the attention of the National Agency by any means, the National Agency will consider the circumstances and decide either to exclude the expert from the assessment of the given application or the whole selection round or allow the expert to take part in the assessment, depending on the objective elements of information at its disposal.

³ Please note that any personal data shall be processed in accordance with:

- Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the European Union institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data;
- In secondary order and only in so far as Regulation 45/2001 does not apply –the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR or EU Regulation 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council) or the national data protection legislation in case the GDPR does not apply (non-EU countries).
- where applicable, the national legislation on personal data protection of the country where the application has been submitted.

⁴ Financial Regulation Art. 61(3): « ... a conflict of interests exists where the impartial and objective exercise of the functions of a financial actor or other person, is compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other direct or indirect personal interest.»

3. Assessment of applications

3.1 Preparation for assessment

Before the start of the assessment, the experts are briefed by the National Agency on the Programme and the action under assessment, as well as on the assessment process and procedures.

Experts are provided with the reference documents for the assessment and get access to the Online Expert Evaluation Tool (OEET), in which they perform the assessment using the standard quality assessment forms.

Before starting the assessment of applications, experts must:

- have a sound knowledge of the European Solidarity Corps Guide which provides all necessary information to potential applicants on the Corps in general and on the actions for which they can apply for a grant;
- acquire an in-depth knowledge of relevant European policies and quality frameworks, the European Solidarity Corps principles, the action concerned and its objectives;
- have an in-depth understanding of the award criteria applicable to the applications under assessment (cf. section 3.3);
- know the content and structure of the application form;
- be familiar with all the reference documents and tools provided by the National Agency.

Experts have to read the whole application carefully before completing the quality assessment form. It is recommended to read several applications before assessing any one of them in full: this allows experts to benchmark answers in different sections of the applications.

Each expert works individually and independently, gives scores and comments for each criterion and summarises his/her assessment in the quality assessment form in the language specified by the National Agency.

3.2 Assessment

The standard quality assessment forms – embedded in the Online Expert Evaluation Tool - are established by the European Commission and used in all Participating Countries in order to ensure a coherent assessment of applications across the countries.

When assessing experts have to:

- Participate in the briefing organised by the National Agency and follow the technical instructions for the use of assessment tools provided by the European Commission;
- Examine the issues to be considered under each award criterion;
- Enter scores for each applicable criterion and provide comments on each criterion and on the application as a whole (cf. section 3.3);
- Fill in the typology section;
- Provide information on data included in the applications for quality assessment and statistical purposes;
- Validate the individual assessment;
- Where relevant, consolidate the assessments.

For the assessment of Quality Label applications, experts should note that organisations applying for the Quality Label for Volunteering – Host role might have encoded several locations. These need to be assessed independently, as some might reach the minimum quality threshold and should be approved, while other might not and should be rejected.

On completion of the assessment, by validating their individual assessment, experts thereby confirm that they have no conflict of interest with respect to the assessment of that particular application.

3.3 Award criteria and scoring

Experts assess applications only against the award criteria defined in the European Solidarity Corps Guide.

Each of the award criteria is defined through several elements which must be taken into account by experts when analysing an application. These elements form an exhaustive list of points to be considered before giving a score for the given criterion. They are intended to help experts arrive at the final assessment of the criterion in question; however they must **not** be scored separately.

In order to give clear guidance to experts as to how individual elements of analysis should be assessed, further complementary information is provided in Annex II to this Guide.

When assessing applications against award criteria experts make a judgement on the extent to which applications meet the defined criteria. This judgement must be based on the information provided in the application. Experts cannot assume information that is not explicitly provided. Information relevant for a specific award criterion may appear in different parts of the application and experts take all of it into account when scoring the award criterion.

Experts must duly consider the type of project, the scale of the activities and the grant request when analysing the grant applications. As projects may vary widely in terms of their size, complexity, experience and capacity of the participating organisations, whether they are more process or product oriented etc., experts have to integrate the proportionality principle into the assessment of all award criteria, as indicated in the relevant annexes. For projects involving participants with special needs or fewer opportunities, experts should duly consider any extra support needed to work with these specific target groups.

An application can receive a maximum of 100 points for all criteria relevant for the action. The table below shows the relative weight of each criterion in the different actions managed by the National Agencies.

In the case of Quality Label, only a positive assessment of all criteria will lead to an award of the Quality Label. Additionally, experts are invited to perform further checks and/or on the spot visits in the frame of their assessment.

Award criteria	Maximum scores of award criteria per Action		
	Volunteering Projects	Traineeships and Jobs	Solidarity Projects
Relevance, rationale and impact	30	30	40
Quality of project design	40	40	40
Quality of project management	30	30	20
TOTAL	100	100	100

These maximum scores for award criteria apply as such for all applications submitted under a given action, irrespective of the country in which the application is submitted.

Experts assess the application on the basis of the given award criteria and score each criterion with maxima at 20, 30 or 40 points as set out in the table above. The total number of points out of a maximum of 100 for the application is calculated automatically by the OEET and is the sum of the scores given to each award criterion. Experts cannot use half points or decimals in their individual assessment.

Within the maximum number of points per award criterion, ranges of scores are defined that correspond to a fixed definition of the expected quality standard so that an as coherent approach as possible is implemented, across experts as well as across countries. The standards are as follows:

- Very good – the application addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question convincingly and successfully. The answer provides all the information and evidence needed and there are no concerns or areas of weakness.
- Good – the application addresses the criterion well, although some small improvements could be made. The answer gives clear information on all or nearly all of the evidence needed.
- Fair – the application broadly addresses the criterion, but there are some weaknesses. The answer gives some relevant information, but there are several areas where detail is lacking or the information is unclear.
- Weak – the application fails to address the criterion or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information. The answer does not address the question asked, or gives very little relevant information.

The table below shows the ranges of scores for the individual quality standards depending on the maximum score that can be awarded to the relevant award criterion

Maximum score	Range of scores			
	Very good	Good	Fair	Weak
40	34-40	28- 33	20- 27	0-19
30	26-30	21-25	15-20	0-14
20	17-20	14-16	10-13	0-9

Experts are expected to give comments on each award criterion and, in their comments, refer explicitly to the elements of analysis under the relevant criterion. The comments on each award criterion have to reflect and justify the score given for it.

At the end of the assessment, experts give overall comments on the application as a whole. In the comments, experts must provide a thorough analysis of the application highlighting its relative strengths and weaknesses and indicating what improvements could be made.

As their comments will be used by National Agencies to provide feedback to applicants, experts must pay particular attention to clarity, consistency and appropriate level of detail and draft their comments in the language requested by the National Agency.

As part of the quality assessment, experts check the grant application for accuracy and consistency. In particular, they analyse the coherence of the grant request in relation to the activities and outputs proposed. In case the application is of sufficient quality to receive a grant but such coherence is missing, experts can suggest a reduction of the grant amount requested, specifying clearly the grant items and the reasons why they are considered incoherent or excessive. However, it is the National Agency that ultimately decides on the grant amount that is awarded to successful applicants. N.B. Experts may not suggest a higher grant than the amount requested by the applicant.

The National Agency monitors the quality of expert assessments and can require the expert to revise the assessment should the necessary quality standard not be met. Experts must assess all applications in full, regardless of the score given to any award criterion.

3.4 Thresholds

In order to be considered for funding, an application submitted to a National Agency has to:

- score at least 60 points in total **and**
- score at least half of the maximum points for each award criterion.

3.5 Possible problems with applications

Under all actions, experts are in no case allowed to contact applicants directly. In case of any problems arising during the assessment, experts contact the National Agency. The National Agency decides whether the applicant will be asked to provide additional information or clarifications or if the application should be assessed in the form it was submitted.

Also, if experts notice during the assessment that the same or similar text appears in two or more applications submitted under a given selection round, as well as any other indications of possible double submissions and overlaps, they inform the National Agency about that immediately.

4. General principles of qualitative assessment

4.1 Consolidated assessment and final score

In case of applications assessed by only one expert, that assessment determines the final score and assessment comments. In case of applications assessed by two experts, the two individual assessments will be consolidated in order to arrive at the final score and comments for the application. In case of Quality Label, a consolidated assessment will consist in a final decision and comments for the application. The final score may include decimals. The consolidation is an integral part of the tasks of the expert.

If the difference between the assessments of the two experts is less than 30 points of the total score for the application, one of both experts is requested to prepare a consolidated assessment in terms of scores and comments, based on the two already completed individual assessments and in agreement with the other expert. The consolidation includes giving a final recommendation to the NA on the grant amount to be awarded to the applicant, if the two experts agree that the units that determine the grant should be decreased (see below 4.2). In case the two experts fail to agree on the consolidation, the National Agency will decide on the need for an independent assessment by a third expert.

In case there is a difference of 30 points or more in the assessment results of both experts, the National Agency will always ask a third expert to undertake an additional independent assessment of the application⁵. The final score will then be determined by the two assessments that are closest in terms of their overall score and the most extreme assessment in terms of overall score is not taken into account for the consolidated assessment. Consolidation of the individual assessments follows the same rules as explained above.

The consolidated assessment is considered the final assessment of a given application. It means that in case of applications for a grant, the consolidated assessment forms the basis for ranking the application on the list of eligible grant applications, while in case of applications for Quality Label, it determines if the applicant will receive the Quality Label or not.

4.2 Proportionality

Experts shall assess the qualitative level of the planned activities, intended goals, expected impact and results of the project in a proportional way, in relation to the size and profile of the applicant organisations. Quantity (of activities planned, of priorities met or results produced, etc.) will not be judged in absolute terms but in relation to the capacities and potential of the applicants.

4.3 Quality, cost-efficiency, value for money of the activities

The funding rules are largely based on unit costs (i.e. amounts are calculated per day, per participant, per staff category etc.). Experts may judge that some of the units indicated in an application form are not to be considered, even for projects deserving a high qualitative scoring. They may therefore propose a reduction of these units, which consequently will determine a reduction of the grant awarded by the NA, if the project is selected for funding. This approach applies to all actions of the Programme managed by National Agencies.

⁵ This requirement does not apply in case both experts have scored the application under the thresholds for acceptance for the action.

Annex I - Declaration on the prevention of conflicts of interest and disclosure of information

[European Solidarity Corps], [Call for Proposals N° [XXX]] - [Action], [selection round or reporting period [final submission date]]

I, the undersigned, am informed of

(1) Art.61 of the Financial Regulation following which:

Conflict of interests

1. Financial actors within the meaning of Chapter 4 of this Title and other persons, including national authorities at any level, involved in budget implementation under direct, indirect and shared management, including acts preparatory thereto, audit or control, shall not take any action which may bring their own interests into conflict with those of the Union. They shall also take appropriate measures to prevent a conflict of interests from arising in the functions under their responsibility and to address situations which may objectively be perceived as a conflict of interests.

2. Where there is a risk of a conflict of interests involving a member of staff of a national authority, the person in question shall refer the matter to his or her hierarchical superior. Where such a risk exists for staff covered by the Staff Regulations, the person in question shall refer the matter to the relevant authorising officer by delegation. The relevant hierarchical superior or the authorising officer by delegation shall confirm in writing whether a conflict of interests is found to exist. Where a conflict of interests is found to exist, the appointing authority or the relevant national authority shall ensure that the person in question ceases all activity in the matter. The relevant authorising officer by delegation or the relevant national authority shall ensure that any further appropriate action is taken in accordance with the applicable law.

3. For the purposes of paragraph 1, a conflict of interests exists where the impartial and objective exercise of the functions of a financial actor or other person, as referred to in paragraph 1, is compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other direct or indirect personal interest.

(2) The notion of a 'conflict of interests' applies to cases where a person or entity with responsibilities for budget implementation, audit or control, or an official or an agent of national authorities at any level, is in such a situation.

I hereby declare to the best of my knowledge that I have no conflict of interest with any of the persons or organisations/institutions having submitted a grant application in the framework of the above Call for proposals, including with regard to persons or members of consortia or subcontractors or other partners proposed.

I confirm that if I discover the existence of any such potential conflict of interest while exercising my duties in relation to the above [selection round]/[reporting period], I will immediately notify the [director of the NA/president of the evaluation committee] thereof and that I will refrain from any further activity in relation to the above selection round if required.

Furthermore, I confirm that I will respect the principle of professional secrecy.

I will not communicate to any third party any confidential information that may be disclosed to me intentionally or unintentionally in the context of my work in relation to the above selection round. I will not make any unauthorised use of the information that may be disclosed to me.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Annex II – Interpretation of award criteria

Notwithstanding the general principles of proportionality and quality, cost-efficiency, value for money of the activities, as described in chapter 4 of this Guide, this annex aims to provide further explanation to experts as to how on how to assess the award criteria (only when relevant for specific elements of analysis).

Quality Label

Criteria		Detailed information	Type of application
Relevance	The organisation's aims are in line with the European Solidarity Corps principles	The organisation must demonstrate it understands the importance of the European Solidarity Corps principles and that its aims are aligned with these principles. The first thing to consider is the activities that the organisation carries out, and whether these fall within the scope of the European Solidarity Corps (ie, solidarity related activities). In addition, the organisation must prove the relevance of the activities they will carry out with participants is also aligned with the European Solidarity Corps principles, in particular that they make a meaningful contribution to society.	All applications
	The extent to which the Quality Label will provide benefits to the organisation	The Quality Label will allow the organisation to consolidate/improve its approach to project management, human resources, and – if relevant – volunteering. In addition, it is important for the organisation to be able to demonstrate that the Quality Label will not only be seen as a pre-requirement for applying for funds, but that it is part of an internal process of continuous improvement.	
	The extent to which the organisation reaches out to young people with fewer opportunities	While carrying out activities with young people with fewer opportunities is not mandatory, the approach of the organisation to inclusion should be described. The organisation reaches out and support disadvantaged young people.	

Criteria		Detailed information	Type of application
Quality of Management	The capacity of the organisation to ensure quality project management, including proper communication and coordination measures with partners and/or affiliated entities where relevant	The organisation must be capable of carrying out the tasks specific to its role and scope, as detailed in pages 17-19 of the 2018 European Solidarity Corps Guide, section on Project management. The application must demonstrate through detailed information how these tasks will be carried out.	
	The extent to which the organisation shows quality levels of support, guidance and monitoring of participants	The organisation must be capable of carrying out the tasks specific to its role and scope before, during and after the activities, as detailed in pages 17-19 of the 2018 European Solidarity Corps Guide. The application must demonstrate through detailed information how these tasks will be carried out.	
	The capacity of the organisations to ensure logistical arrangements	This is especially relevant for organisations wishing to carry out volunteering projects. In particular, the organisation must show its capacity to ensure the appropriate travel (including supporting visa application, if necessary) and accommodation (in case of host organisation) of the volunteer, as well as the transport from its accommodation in the host country to where the activities take place. In the case of Quality Label applications for the occupational strand (Traineeships and Jobs) the organisation should describe its approach to making all other necessary logistical arrangements.	
	The appropriateness of measures to ensure a solid learning dimension for participants	Several aspects need to be taken into account with regards the learning dimension of the planned activities. First and foremost, the organisation must be capable to guarantee a proper degree of support and mentorship and ensure that the learning dimension is structured in such a way that would permit the participant to track its learning process. The process must include regular exchanges with the mentor or other person assigned for the purposes of tracking the learning experience of the participant.	
	The appropriateness of measures for the recognition and validation of participants' learning outcomes as well as consistent use of European transparency and recognition tools	The use of Youthpass and Europass is to be encouraged. Organisations should use these tools, in combination with others when needed, to validate the learning outcomes of participants. At the end of the activity, the organisation is responsible to issue a certificate for the participant.	

Criteria		Detailed information	Type of application
	The extent to which the organisation will ensure a transparent and fair selection process	The recruitment practices of the organisation must ensure that the selection process will be fair and transparent. One of the key aspects of this is to ensure that the motivation of the candidate is taken into consideration as the main reason behind their selection. Additional criteria can be used when selecting participants for a traineeship or job, such as field of education or work experience, but only as a complement to demonstrated great motivation. In addition, for organisations wishing to carry out activities with young people with fewer opportunities, the application must show what specificities of this group are taken into account during the selection process.	
	The appropriateness of measures to ensure the participation of young people with fewer opportunities	For all those organisations wishing to carry out activities with young people with fewer opportunities, it is important to know: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organisation is aware of the Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy; • The organisation is aware of the specificities of each subgroup of young people with fewer opportunities; • The organisation has the resources (human and/or physical) to address the need of the subgroup concerned. 	
	The quality of the measures foreseen to avoid job substitution, routine tasks and tasks without qualifying learning impact.	With regards the job substitution, the applicant must demonstrate that the volunteers or trainees will not replace a worker. In other words, the applicant will ensure that the daily operations of the organisation are not dependent on the participant carrying out their activities. As for the tasks, the applicant must demonstrate that they are not repetitive, but rather vary throughout the duration of the activity. In addition to this, in order to guarantee the activity has the learning impact sought, the tasks must be conducted with the support and mentoring of someone in the organisation's staff, and must provide a learning experience for the volunteer/ trainee.	Volunteering – host role
	Where relevant, the capacity of the applicant organisation to ensure minimum quality standards in its locations	The applicant organisation should describe how it will ensure that its locations have the appropriate capacity to host volunteers.	

Criteria		Detailed information	Type of application
	The quality of measures foreseen to ensure that the Quality Framework for Traineeships is respected, as well as applicable national legislation, in particular regarding remuneration	<p>The organisation describes how it will ensure that the organisations providing the traineeship have in place good practices related to human resources, in particular with regards traineeships. This can take the form of an appropriate, systematic approach towards recruiting, as well as an appropriate remuneration scheme.</p> <p>In addition, the organisation must be aware and must ensure that the traineeship provider respects the Quality Framework for Traineeships as detailed in the Council Recommendation of 10 March 2014 on a Quality Framework for Traineeships (OJ C 88, 27.3.2014, p. 1–4). Alignment with national legislation is also required.</p>	Traineeships
	The quality of measures foreseen to ensure that the specific conditions and benefits of the European Solidarity Corps are respected under the employment contract.	While participants taking place in job activities will have more responsibilities, it is important that they also benefit from the experience. As such, beyond the requirements in terms of learning outcomes, the organisation must prove that it is in a position to ensure that the employment contract not only respects national legislation, but also embeds all the requirements of a European Solidarity Corps activity. In the case of jobs, it is in particular important to be able to ensure appropriate mentorship and a structured approach to learning.	Jobs

Volunteering Projects

Criteria		Interpretation
Relevance, rationale and impact (maximum 30 points)	The relevance of the project to the objectives of the European Solidarity Corps	The project proposal fits with the objectives and the format of the Action as described in Part B of the European Solidarity Corps Guide. The project represents an appropriate means of delivering the objectives set out in the Call and it is clear what the project is aiming to achieve. The goal and the objectives of the project are adequately identified and the key results that the project is seeking to deliver are clearly summarised.
	The degree to which the project takes into account the European Solidarity Corps principles and values and promotes solidarity	The applicant should demonstrate that the proposal will promote solidarity as a value and will overcome important societal challenges while also enabling young people to acquire useful experience, skills and competences for their personal, educational, social, civic and professional development.
	The extent to which the proposal will address well defined and important societal needs	The project aims to tackle important societal challenges to the benefit of a community or society as a whole. This is clearly reflected in the project objectives and in the overall implementation approach described in the application.
	The relevance of the project to the needs and objectives of individual participants and participating organisations	The rationale for the project should be clearly described, the applicant should explain why the project is needed and how the demand for the project has been identified. The proposal addresses issues relevant to the participating organisations and target groups. The applicant should demonstrate the value and benefits created through the project for the participants, enabling them to make a meaningful contribution and to express their solidarity.
	The extent to which the project will provide benefits to the communities within which the activities are carried out.	The activities proposed address unmet needs and therefore contribute to strengthening the capacity and resilience of vulnerable communities as well as to enhancing cohesion and solidarity at the level of communities. Concrete benefits, relevant potential beneficiary organisations and individuals are identified in the proposal.
	The potential impact of the project at local, regional, national and/or European levels	The project is framed within a long-term perspective, and planned with a view to achieve a multiplier effect and sustainable impact. The expected impact of the project is not limited to the participants in the activities. When appropriate, the proposal shows that participating organisations will involve other stakeholders from the local community as much as possible in the project activities. The expected impact of the project outside the organisations and participants directly involved is adequately and realistically estimated. The planned complementary activities – if any – support and expand the impact of the project.

	<p>The extent to which the project provides European added value</p>	<p>The proposal presents a clear European added value, a concept described in Part A of the European Solidarity Corps Guide.</p> <p>For in-country activities, complementarity to existing national schemes is clearly demonstrated. If there are any national schemes or local provision in place that may be the same or similar to the proposed project, the applicant clearly demonstrates how their project adds value and does not duplicate this provision. If applicable, the proposal is in line with the conditions set out in the national funding strategy published by the National Agency.</p> <p>Proposals with in-country activities presenting a weak or a lack of European added value should not be considered as relevant in the context of the Corps.</p>
	<p>The extent to which the project involves young people with fewer opportunities</p>	<p>The proposal aims to involve participants with fewer opportunities, as described in Part A of the European Solidarity Corps Guide. The applicant's description of the inclusion target group makes it clear that the project will include young people who are at comparative disadvantage i.e they have comparatively fewer opportunities than the average young person in the country/area/age group/situation. This is also reflected in all the specific measures put in place to cater for the needs of this group.</p> <p>By "involving" it is understood the set of activities and measures designed to include participants with fewer opportunities in the project. It does not refer to a target group.</p> <p>The additional support that the young people with fewer opportunities would need and will be provided because of their comparative disadvantage is fully explained and justified.</p>
<p>Quality of project design (maximum 40 points)</p>	<p>The consistency between project objectives and activities proposed</p>	<p>The proposed activities are well suited to address the identified needs and reach the objectives that were set for the project. The applicant describes in detail how the project will be delivered. The information provided is sufficient and of high-quality. The project logic is clear and well designed.</p> <p>The type, number and duration of solidarity activities applied for are appropriate, realistic and match the capacity of the applicant organisation.</p>
	<p>The clarity, completeness and quality of all the phases of the project (preparation, implementation of activities and follow-up)</p>	<p>The proposal shows that all the phases of the project have been properly designed in order for the project to realise its objectives.</p> <p>The applicant demonstrates a good understanding of what volunteering means and how it is different from paid work. The proposal shows that volunteers do not carry out tasks of professional staff, in order to avoid job substitution and/or excessive responsibility for the volunteers. The applicant explains how the involvement of volunteers complements but not substitutes the work of paid staff. The applicant provides sufficient assurance that volunteers will not displace paid staff or undercut their pay and conditions of service. The proposal foresees concrete activities to monitor the implementation and address any problems encountered.</p>

		<p>The activity programme is clear and well planned. The programme uses a variety of working methods and is adapted to the profile of participants in order to ensure the best learning outcomes. It provides learning opportunities for all the participants involved.</p> <p>When relevant, effective matching between tasks and volunteer profiles is targeted. Their tasks reflect, as far as possible, their individual abilities, desires and learning expectations. Routine tasks are also limited to the maximum extent. The tasks of the volunteers include contact with the local community.</p>
	<p>The quality of the preparation provided to participants and of the support provided on participants' return</p>	<p>The proposal shows that participants will receive good quality preparation before their solidarity activity, including linguistic, cultural and/or pedagogic preparation as necessary.</p> <p>The description of the preparation phase is clear and shows a clear division of tasks, programme of activities, working methods, practical arrangements (venue, transfers, accommodations, support material etc.).</p> <p>The preparation phase enhances the diversity and participative nature of the chosen methods and the participants' involvement in the activities and shows that the participants will be prepared for intercultural encounters with other people with different backgrounds, including with fewer opportunities, and cultures.</p> <p>In the preparation phase, the issue of protection and safety of participants will be addressed.</p> <p>The support offered on return to participants is described in detail, with regard to how young people will be assisted to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - make best use of the experience and learning acquired through the project, particularly with regard to accessing the labour market - remain engaged and active, including through involvement with associations, cooperatives, social enterprises, youth organisations and community centres.
	<p>The quality of arrangements and support for the recognition and validation of participants' learning outcomes, as well as the consistent use of European transparency and recognition tools, in particular Youthpass</p>	<p>The proposal shows that the learning outcomes of the participants will be appropriately recognised and validated. The issue of participant's learning objectives and recognition of their learning outcomes is addressed at the start of the activity. The fact that - beyond making available the Youthpass certificate to participants - the participating organisations intend to use the Youthpass process and tool to stimulate participants' reflection on their learning process is considered as an element of quality of the project.</p>
	<p>The appropriateness of measures for selecting and/or involving participants in activities</p>	<p>The proposal clearly defines the criteria on the basis of which each organisation will select young people to participate in solidarity activities.</p> <p>The criteria are fair and transparent and allow for selecting individuals whom the project</p>

	aims to address and with a high potential of achieving the intended outcomes.
The quality of proposed measures to reach out and involve young people with fewer opportunities	<p>The proposal shows how the participating organisations will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reach out to specific young people with fewer opportunities, and how they will support them to participate fully and on equal footing with other participants in the preparation phase - support these young people to learn from the experience and capitalise on it to improve their situation.
The quality of the non-formal learning methods and measures proposed to enable the participants to gain skills and competences that are valuable for their personal, educational, social, civic and cultural development	<p>The expected learning outcomes of the participants are clearly explained and in line with the identified needs.</p> <p>The proposal provides young people with appropriate opportunities in view of acquiring knowledge and skills for their personal development and employability.</p> <p>The project leads to the acquisition/improvement of competences resulting in the personal, socio-educational and professional development of all participants involved. This will be achieved through non-formal and informal learning, in line with the principles described in Part A of the European Solidarity Corps Guide.</p> <p>The support is reinforced by a mentor responsible for providing personal and learning support and for helping to integrate into the local community.</p> <p>The project is based on a learning process stimulating creativity, active participation and initiative (entrepreneurial spirit) and the methods used are adapted to the target group. The proposal shows that such learning process will be planned and analysed throughout the project: participants will be provided with a place for reflection on learning experiences and outcomes, in particular with the support of the Youthpass tool.</p> <p>The proposal indicates that participants will play an active role in the implementation of the project to the maximum possible extent: participants will be actively involved in the preparation and follow-up phases of the project. Participants will be able to take part on an equal basis, regardless of their language abilities or other skills.</p> <p>Support (where needed) is offered to young people with special needs or fewer opportunities, to allow them to participate fully and on equal footing with other participants.</p>
The appropriateness and quality of the measures proposed to improve the participants' employability and facilitate their integration on the labour market;	<p>The learning support on offer has the potential to effectively augment the employability of young people.</p> <p>The combination of the activities and the learning methods applied prove a good understanding of the needs of young people and are built on approaches that have been shown to help improve their access to the labour market.</p>

	If relevant, the added value of the complementary activities to the project objectives and the impact of the project	The type and number of complementary activities applied for are appropriate, realistic and match the capacity of the participating organisations.
Quality of project management (maximum 30 points)	The quality of the practical arrangements, management and support modalities	<p>The proposal demonstrates that efficient measures are put in place and appropriate resources allocated to ensure high quality activities.</p> <p>The project relies on relevant quality control measures to ensure that the objectives are achieved on time and on budget.</p> <p>The proposal foresees a clear method and regular and concrete activities to monitor progress and address any problems encountered.</p> <p>The proposal describes who will take day to day responsibility for the project, who has overall responsibility, how the applicant organisation is structured and the associated accountability and reporting lines for the project.</p> <p>The applicant organisation shows adequate experience to enable the implementation of the proposal as described.</p> <p>The distribution of tasks and responsibilities demonstrates the commitment and active contribution of all participating organisations. The proposal shows that the distribution of responsibilities and tasks of all participating organisations is balanced.</p> <p>If applicable, the capacity and expertise of the organisations to support (where needed) participants with fewer opportunities is adequate (e.g. the proposal shows that there is support available at the hosting venue and contingency plans for dealing with specific situations and specific needs that may arise).</p>
	The quality of cooperation and communication between the participating organisations, as well as with other relevant stakeholders	<p>The proposal shows the active involvement of all partners.</p> <p>There are effective mechanisms in place to coordinate and communicate between the participating organisations and with other relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>When the partner organisations have not been identified, the proposal indicates effective and sound ways of ensuring the above factors.</p>
	The quality of measures for evaluating the outcomes of the project	The proposal includes adequate activities for evaluating the results of the project, in particular the quality of the learning outcomes of activities and the effectiveness of support measures put in place by the participating organisations, as well as the outcomes of the project as a whole.

	<p>The appropriateness and quality of measures aimed at disseminating the outcomes of the project within and outside the participating organisations</p>	<p>The proposal includes a clear and good quality plan for the dissemination of the project results, concretely describes the dissemination activities and identifies the right target group(s) of these activities.</p> <p>The proposal includes proactive measures that will be taken to reach out to these target groups and to make the project results visible.</p>

Traineeships and jobs

Criteria		Interpretation
Relevance, rationale and impact (maximum 30 points)	The relevance of the project to the objectives of the European Solidarity Corps	The project proposal fits with the objectives and the format of the Action as described in Part B of the European Solidarity Corps Guide. The project represents an appropriate means of delivering the objectives set out in the Call and it is clear what the project is aiming to achieve. The goal and the objectives of the project are adequately identified and the key results that the project is seeking to deliver are clearly summarised.
	The degree to which the project takes into account the European Solidarity Corps principles and values and promotes solidarity	The applicant should demonstrate that the proposal will promote solidarity as a value and will overcome important societal challenges while also enabling young people to acquire useful experience, skills and competences for their personal, educational, social, civic and professional development.
	The extent to which the project will address well defined and important societal needs	The project aims to tackle important societal challenges to the benefit of a community or society as a whole. This is clearly reflected in the project objectives and in the overall implementation approach described in the application.
	The relevance of the project to the needs and objectives of individual participants and participating organisations	The rationale for the project should be clearly described; the applicant should explain clearly why the project is needed and how the demand for the project has been identified. The proposal is addresses issues relevant to the participating organisations and target groups. The applicant should demonstrate the value and benefits created through the project for the participants, enabling them to make a meaningful contribution and to express their solidarity.
	The extent to which the project will provide benefits to the communities within which the activities are carried out;	The activities proposed address unmet needs, and therefore contribute to strengthening the capacity and resilience of vulnerable communities as well as to enhancing cohesion and solidarity at the level of communities. Concrete benefits, relevant potential beneficiary organisations and individuals are identified in the proposal.
	The potential impact of the project at local, regional, national and/or European levels	The project is framed within a long-term perspective, and planned with a view to achieve a multiplier effect and sustainable impact. The expected impact of the project is not limited to the participants in the activities. When appropriate, the proposal shows that participating organisations will involve other stakeholders

		<p>from the local community as much as possible in the project activities. The expected impact of the project outside the organisations and participants directly involved is adequately and realistically estimated.</p> <p>The planned complementary activities – if any - support and expand the impact of the project.</p>
	The extent to which the project provides European added value;	<p>The proposal presents a clear European added value, a concept described in Part A of the European Solidarity Corps Guide.</p> <p>For in-country activities, complementarity to existing national schemes is clearly demonstrated. If there are any national schemes or local provision in place that may be the same or similar to the proposed project, the applicant clearly demonstrates how the project adds value and does not duplicate this provision. If applicable, the proposal is in line with the conditions set out in the national funding strategy published by the National Agency.</p> <p>Proposals with in-country activities presenting a weak or a lack of European added value should not be considered as relevant in the context of the Corps.</p>
	The extent to which the project involves young people with fewer opportunities as participants.	<p>The proposal aims to involve participants with fewer opportunities, as described in Part A of the European Solidarity Corps Guide. The applicant’s description of the inclusion target group makes it clear that the project will include young people who are at comparative disadvantage i.e they have comparatively fewer opportunities than the average young person in the country/area/age group/situation. This is also reflected in all the specific measures put in place to cater for the needs of this group.</p> <p>By “involving” it is understood the set of activities and measures designed to include participants with fewer opportunities in the project. It does not refer to a target group.</p> <p>The additional support that the young people with fewer opportunities would need – and will be provided - because of their comparative disadvantage is fully explained and justified.</p>
Quality of project design (maximum 40 points)	The consistency between project objectives and activities proposed	<p>The proposed activities are well suited to address the identified needs and reach the objectives that were set for the project. The applicant describes in detail how the project will be delivered. The information provided is sufficient and of high-quality. The project logic is clear and well designed.</p> <p>The type, number and duration of solidarity activities applied for are appropriate, realistic and match the capacity of the applicant organisation.</p>
	The clarity, completeness and quality of all the phases of the project (preparation, of participants, implementation of activities, follow-up and support provided on	<p>The proposal shows that all the phases of the project have been properly designed in order for the project to realise its objectives.</p> <p>The proposal shows that participants will receive good quality preparation before their solidarity activity, including linguistic, cultural and/or pedagogic preparation as necessary.</p> <p>For cross border activities, the applicant describes how the participants will be prepared in the</p>

	<p>participants' return)</p>	<p>country of departure and how they will be supported on their return. There is no eligibility requirement for a hosting organisation to be involved in the project but the evaluators should be satisfied that the applicant has the capacity to deliver these services to all participants.</p> <p>The applicant must prove that it is in a position to ensure that the employment contracts not only respect national legislation, but also embeds all the requirements of a European Solidarity Corps activity. The same applies for the traineeship agreements, which should be in line with the Quality Framework for Traineeships⁶.</p> <p>In the preparation phase, the issue of protection and safety of participants is addressed.</p> <p>The activities foreseen are clearly defined, comprehensive, realistic and linked to the objectives of the project. They provide learning opportunities for the participants involved.</p> <p>The support offered on return to participants is described in detail, with regard to how young people will be assisted to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - make best use of the experience and learning acquired through the project, particularly with regard to accessing the labour market - remain engaged and active, including through involvement with associations, cooperatives, social enterprises, youth organisations and/or community centres.
	<p>The quality of arrangements and support for the recognition and validation of participants' learning outcomes, as well as the consistent use of European transparency and recognition tools, in particular Youthpass</p>	<p>The issue of participant's learning objectives and recognition of their learning outcomes will be addressed at the start of the activity.</p> <p>The fact that the participating organisations intend to use the Youthpass process and tool to stimulate participants' reflection on their learning process, is considered as an element of quality of the project.</p>
	<p>The appropriateness of measures for selecting and/or involving participants in activities</p>	<p>The proposal clearly defines the criteria on the basis of which each organisation will select young people to participate in solidarity activities.</p> <p>The criteria are fair and transparent and allow for selecting individuals whom the project aims to address and with a high potential of achieving the intended outcomes.</p>
	<p>The quality of proposed measures to reach out and involve young people with fewer opportunities</p>	<p>The proposal shows how the participating organisations will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reach out to specific young people with fewer opportunities, and how they will support them to participate fully and on equal footing with other participants in the preparation phase - support these young people to learn from the experience and capitalise on it to improve their

⁶ See Council Recommendation of 10 March 2014 on a Quality Framework for Traineeships (2014/C88/01).

	<p>The appropriateness and quality of the measures proposed to enable the participants to gain skills and competences that are valuable for their personal, professional, educational, social, civic and cultural development</p>	<p>situation.</p> <p>The expected learning outcomes of the participants are clearly explained and in line with the identified needs.</p> <p>The proposal provides young people with appropriate opportunities in view of acquiring knowledge and skills for their personal development and employability.</p> <p>The project leads to the acquisition/improvement of competences resulting in the personal, socio-educational and professional development of all participants involved. This will be achieved through non-formal and informal learning, in line with the principles described in Part A of the European Solidarity Corps Guide.</p> <p>Participants should receive specialised and personalised support from a mentor or a coach, to facilitate their integration, both in the new country and in the new training/working environment. This should be offered in accordance with the participants' needs and requests and aimed at improving the participant's skills, competences and adaptability to a "foreign working environment". Experts should refer to the training and mentoring section in Part C of the European Solidarity Corps Guide.</p> <p>Support (where needed) is offered to young people with special needs or fewer opportunities, to allow them to participate fully and on equal footing with other participants.</p>
	<p>The appropriateness and quality of the measures proposed to improve the participants' employability and facilitate their integration on the labour market</p>	<p>The learning support on offer has the potential to effectively augment the employability of young people. The combination of the activities and the learning methods applied prove a good understanding of the needs of young people and are built on approaches that have been shown to help improve their access to the labour market.</p>
	<p>The quality of the practical arrangements, management and support modalities</p>	<p>The proposal demonstrates that efficient measures are put in place and appropriate resources allocated by the participating organisations to ensure high quality activities.</p> <p>The project relies on relevant quality control measures to ensure that the objectives are achieved on time and budget.</p> <p>The proposal foresees a clear method and regular and concrete activities to monitor progress and address any problems encountered.</p> <p>The proposal describes who will take day to day responsibility for the project, who has overall responsibility, how the applicant organisation is structured and the associated accountability and reporting lines for the project.</p> <p>The applicant organisation shows adequate experience to enable the implementation of the proposal as described.</p> <p>The distribution of tasks and responsibilities demonstrates the commitment and active contribution of all participating organisations. The proposal shows that the distribution of</p>

		<p>responsibilities and tasks of all participating organisations is balanced.</p> <p>If applicable, the capacity and expertise of the organisations to support (where needed) participants with fewer opportunities is adequate (e.g. the proposal shows that there is support available at the hosting venue and contingency plans for dealing with specific situations and specific needs that may arise).</p>
<p>Quality of project management (maximum 30 points)</p>	<p>The quality of cooperation and communication between the participating organisations, as well as with other relevant stakeholders</p>	<p>The proposal shows the active involvement of all partners.</p> <p>There are effective mechanisms in place to coordinate and communicate between the participating organisations and with other relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>When the partner organisations have not been identified, the proposal indicates effective and sound ways of ensuring the above factors.</p>
	<p>The quality of measures for evaluating the outcomes of the project</p>	<p>The proposal includes adequate activities for evaluating the results of the project, in particular the quality of the learning outcomes of activities and the effectiveness of support measures put in place by the participating organisations, as well as the outcomes of the project as a whole.</p>
	<p>The appropriateness and quality of measures aimed at disseminating the outcomes of the project within and outside the participating organisations</p>	<p>The proposal includes a clear and good quality plan for the dissemination of the project results, concretely describes the dissemination activities and identifies the right target group(s) of these activities.</p> <p>The proposal includes proactive measures that will be taken to reach out to these target groups and make the projects visible.</p>

Solidarity projects

Criteria		Interpretation
Relevance, rationale and impact (maximum 40 points)	The relevance of the project to the objectives of the European Solidarity Corps	The project fits with the objectives and the format of the action as described in Part B of the European Solidarity Corps Guide. The project represents an appropriate means of delivering the objectives set out in the Call, and it is clear what the project is aiming to achieve. The goal and the objectives of the project are adequately identified, and the key results that the project is seeking to deliver are clearly summarised.
	The degree to which the project takes into account the European Solidarity Corps principles and values in particular solidarity	The applicant should demonstrate that the project will promote solidarity as a value and will address important societal challenges.
	The extent to which the project provides European added value	The project presents a clear European added value, a concept which is explained in Part A of the European Solidarity Guide, especially by having a European dimension with regard to the topics, aims, approaches and expected outcomes. The project should reflect a common concern for issues within the European society.
	The extent to which the project will address well defined and important societal needs	The project aims to tackle current or future societal challenges that need to be overcome to benefit the community, also in a broader sense. This is clearly reflected in the project's objectives and in the overall implementation approach described in the application.
	The relevance of the project to the needs of individual participants, communities and target group (if any)	The rationale for the project should be clearly described. The applicant should explain why the project is needed and how the demand for the project has been identified. The project should indicate how this is relevant to the needs of the individual participants, the community that the project is addressing, and a specific target group if there is one.
	The potential impact of the project on participants, incl. their personal, entrepreneurship skills and social involvement	The project clearly describes the expected impact on the participants during and after the lifetime of the project. The applicant should demonstrate the value and benefits created for the participants through the project, enabling them to not only make a meaningful contribution and express their solidarity, but also to foster their sense of initiative, creativity, active European citizenship and entrepreneurial spirit.
	The potential impact on communities	The project clearly aims to tackle societal challenges with a view to benefit the local community.

		The impact on the community is realistically estimated and explained through addressing local issues, targeting a specific group or developing local opportunities (particularly in communities located in rural, isolated or marginalised areas). A potential impact on communities by setting common goals and cooperating on the project can also be attached.
Quality of project design (maximum 40 points)	The consistency between project objectives and activities proposed	The proposed activities are well suited to address the identified needs and reach the objectives that were set for the project. The applicant describes how the proposed activities will be carried out, including their preparation of these activities. The activities are realistic and match the capacity of the group.
	The extent to which the project is designed, developed and implemented by young people.	The proposal shows that the young people have initiated and planned the project. The young people are the ones preparing and implementing the activities. If an organisation is involved, its involvement is minimal in carrying out the project but rather supports the group of young people on administrative aspects.
	The extent to which the composition of the group permits to reach the project objectives	The composition of the group is well described. The profiles of each participant and how they add value to the project are explained in detail. The objectives of the project match the capacity of the group to deliver.
	The clarity, completeness and quality of all the phases of the project (preparation, implementation and dissemination)	All the phases of the project have been properly structured in order to realise the objectives of the project. The activities are clearly defined, comprehensive, realistic and linked to the objectives of the project. It provides learning opportunities for the participants involved. Working methods are clearly presented.
	The balanced involvement of the participants of the group at the various phases of the project	The project clearly describes the division of tasks among the participants. The project aims to involve all participants in a balanced way through various phases of the project and of activities.
	The extent to which learning process and learning outcomes in the project is reflected upon (planned, thought through) and identified and documented, in particular	The applicant explains what the participants expect their learning process to be like. The expected learning outcomes of the participants are described and in line with the identified needs. The fact that the participating organisations intend to use the Youthpass process and tool to stimulate participants' reflection on their learning process, is considered as an element of quality of the project.

	through Youthpass	
Quality of project management (maximum 20 points)	The quality of the practical arrangements and management modalities	The project demonstrates that efficient measures are put in place to ensure that objectives are achieved. The general coordination, distribution of tasks and responsibilities between participants, and working methods are put in place to ensure effective management and control of the project. The distribution of tasks and responsibilities demonstrates the commitment and active contribution of all participants.
	The quality of cooperation and communication between the participants of the group	The project shows that cooperation and communication among the participants is effectively planned. The tasks and responsibilities of each participant are clearly distributed.
	The measures for evaluating the outcomes of the project	The project includes adequate activities for evaluating the results of the project and its overall success.
	The appropriateness and quality of measures aimed at disseminating the outcomes of the project and making it visible	The project includes a clear plan for the dissemination of the project results, describes the dissemination activities, and identifies the right target group(s) of these activities. The project includes a clear plan for making the project's outcomes visible.