Activating citizens through the European Solidarity Corps,
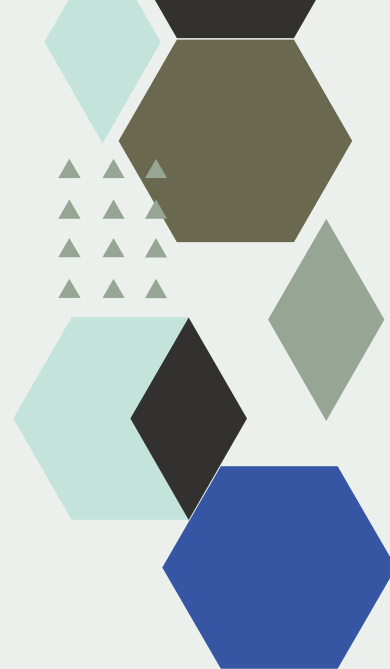
online training

6th and 7th of November 2025

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2 days, 6 best practices and a glimpse of how active citizenship in municipalities supported by the European Solidarity Corps can look like.

6th and 7th of November 2025 brought together representatives of municipalities and representatives of youth structures in municipalities. The event was co-organised by the Latvian Erasmus+ National agency, European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre and the network Europe Goes Local.

The programme of two days consisted of networking and getting to know each other, insight into the European Solidarity programme, getting familiar with different aspects from the Quality label, up to how to apply for a project and how to create partnerships.
All resources and good practices are available in Padlet HERE and summarized in this report.

The first day, next to the very well presented European Solidarity Corps programme from the side of Latvian NA, there were 3 good practices presented. All of them showcased examples of successful implementation of projects under the European Solidarity Corps in collaboration between local organizations and local authorities - municipalities and other public bodies.

Ljubljana Pride Team Volunteering

The ESC group volunteering practice at Ljubljana Pride Association engages LGBTIQ+ young volunteers in 1-month intensive teams (usually 10–15 people) supporting implementation of the Ljubljana Pride Festival. Since 2016, the programme has hosted 181 European Solidarity Corps volunteers, implemented 10+1 standardized group activities involving 146 volunteers, and combines 4-week onboarding, group dynamics facilitation, mentoring, materials preparation, festival support, Pride Day execution, evaluation, and Youthpass/ closing with Youthpass certification and Youthpass recognition and delivery.

Volunteers take on structured tasks such as LGBTIQ+ community tours of Ljubljana, visual decorations (banners, decorations, visuals), photography and video production, merch promotion, sustainable product corners, hospitality, and support at festival events. The method ensures lived community participation, identity-safe group learning, peer support, international civic dialogue, and measurable impacts like confidence growth, citizenship awareness, transnational solidarity mapping, CV building, and lasting friendships.

Beyond Barriers

"Cultivating Skills and Creativity through ESC: Innovative practices for inclusive youth work" by the Albanian youth NGO Beyond Barriers Association (BBA) focused on empowering young people in Albania through human rights education, inclusion & diversity, volunteering, employability, entrepreneurship, and innovation in youth work. The organization has a long history with European youth volunteering programmes, hosting around 300 long-term EVS volunteers in Albania since 2006, sending more than 200 young people from Albania abroad, and providing personal, social, and professional development opportunities for youth participating in solidarity and volunteering initiatives. The seminar presented three flagship practices through the I.C.E model (Inclusion, Creativity, Entrepreneurship): the Greenhouse project for youth with hearing impairment and other challenges, the ArtLab ceramics & pottery programme for youth expression, and the Mobile Youth Work Centre reaching remote and disadvantaged communities with creative youth work formats, financial education, and skill-building modules. The practices illustrated that inclusion is intentional, creativity widens expression formats, and enterprise elements lead to sustainable youth-driven community actions. The seminar also highlighted cross-sector cooperation between youth work, education, social enterprise, culture and sport, and plans to establish a Multimedia LAB for digital expression and media production to scale inclusive opportunities further.

Empowering Rural Youth Through CrossSector Participation

The practice Empowering Rural Youth Through Cross-Sector Participation from the Cēsis region demonstrates a strong model of inclusive, municipality-led youth activation. It tackles typical rural barriers—low youth participation, limited access to culture, sport, and volunteering, and disconnected institutional work—by building a coordinated cross-sector system that links local government departments, schools, and NGOs into one shared youth-support ecosystem. The model intentionally creates multiple non-formal formats for youth expression, ensures accessibility for young people with fewer opportunities, and strengthens civic ownership through real roles in local school councils and youth-initiated organizations. Youth activism rose from 10 → 13 → 20 participants (2023–2025), proving continuous growth and local trust building. This practice is considered successful because it connects youth to community decision-making, increases visibility of local opportunities, fosters intercultural dialogue through volunteering pathways, and coordinates previously separated sectors into long-term cooperation for youth empowerment rather than one-off engagement.

Last session of the first day was dedicated to open space. The Open Space block gave participants a structured, self-directed space to explore project challenges on the municipal level. The session started with a short framing by the facilitator, explaining that the purpose is to dive deeper into topics participants find most relevant and to continue their questions and ideas in smaller focused groups. Five thematic rooms were available, each guided by one workshop leader providing a small input or answering questions. Participants chose rooms independently, joining two 20-minute discussion rounds. Each workshop leader harvested up to 3 key questions or insights into a shared Canva synthesis board.

The block resulted in clear clustering of responsibilities, quality requirements, partner-search options, feasibility conditions, and common obstacles, reducing complexity and creating visibility of priorities. The session ended with a plenary harvesting moment compiled into Canva summaries, turning individual participant needs into a collective municipal action lens and concrete next-step clarity.

OPEN SPACE TO ADDRESS DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF PROJECTS

PRACTICAL INFORMATION, QUALITY LABEL ETC. (INESE NA, LINDA)

Quality Label - must apply for QL, in order to implement volunteering projects in ESC program.

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Types/Roles of the Quality Label:
- LEAD (coordinating) organisation;
- HOST (receiving) organisation;
- SUPPORT (sending) organisation

Linda Kalniņa

Organisations/Municipality institutions can apply for the Quality Label in the EU European Solidarity Corps/Erasmus+ website for application calls. Every year until 31.10. these applications are evaluated for the next year of implementation.

Linda Kalniņa

In the application you must describe different aspects that shows how suitable, strategically connected to the organisations aims and challenges is to implement the ESC projects according to the type/role they are applying.

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PARTNER FINDING POSSIBILITIES (JUDIT)

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO DO THE PROJECT IN THE MUNICIPALITY? (BARBARA, LIVA)

CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM (MAJA)

- **Recruitment & Inclusion**
Difficulty reaching diverse volunteers, especially those with fewer opportunities, and unclear volunteer profiles.
- **Mentoring & Support Capacity**
Limited staff time, unprepared mentors, and inconsistent emotional or learning support.
- **Accommodation & Living Conditions**
Issues with availability, safety, affordability, or isolated locations with poor transport.
- **Meaningful Tasks & Activity Design**
Volunteers not having enough real responsibilities, unclear roles, or tasks that replace paid work.
- **Administrative & Financial Complexity**
Challenges with insurance, visas, reporting, allowances, and understanding programme rules.
- **Cultural & Social Integration**
Language barriers, difficulty connecting with the local community, and weak intercultural preparation.
- **Partnership Coordination**
Poor communication between hosting and supporting organisations, unclear roles, and mismatched expectations.
- **Crisis & Conflict Management**
Unpreparedness for mental health issues, conflicts, safety incidents, or early withdrawal of volunteers.

The second day started with another 3 good practices, that offered a more strategic insight into how to develop the organisation thdough the EU programes.

Youth Studio BaMbuss

Youth Studio BaMbuss, run by Baltic Regional Fund, is an open youth and volunteer-driven creative space that supports municipalities in activating young citizens through non-formal learning, artistic workshops, project experimentation, and intercultural volunteering. The practice welcomes youth from diverse backgrounds, builds their community-project and creative skills, and shows the strategic value of involving international volunteers to enrich local participation and civic engagement. Its model proves that meaningful youth work can start from local reality, grant agency over learning focus, and grow into sustainable, youth-led community initiatives that strengthen social inclusion and municipal cooperation with civil society.

Curba de Cultura - Romania

"Community Building through Youth Work in Rural, Post-Communist Romania" presented by Curba de Cultură describes a youth-initiated rural intervention model anchored in a fully private youth centre built by local young people. Its methodology combines non-formal learning, community engagement, and international partnerships, always starting from local youth interests and trust building. The seminar showcased that youth policies should move beyond consultations toward co-construction, making space for youth to act authentically, shaping initiatives with parents involved, and positioning youth work as complementary to formal education. The key community needs raised included low institutional trust due to communist heritage, weak involvement of youth over 19, limited space, and low local authority support, while the innovative responses emphasized local policy proposals created by youth, long-term community programmes, peer cooperation, and structured inclusion mechanisms in planning and management.

Empowering Youth in Strasbourg

Age-Specific Approach

Strasbourg.eu
eurométropole

1 **Ages 8-11**
Focus on developing cooperation skills and learning to manage frustration constructively.

2 **Ages 12-16**
Building initial responsibility through structured participation in decision-making processes.

3 **Ages 16-20**
Creating pathways to concrete responsibility through junior associations and thematic projects.

4 **Ages 20-30**
Supporting transition to full civic responsibility, institutional participation and professional insertion.

The Seat of the Council of Europe since 1949

The Seat of the European Parliament since 1958

The Seat of the European Court of Human Rights since 1959

The Municipality of Strasbourg transformed its youth policy by sharing real responsibility with young people, treating mistakes and experimentation as part of learning, not failure. Through an age-sensitive empowerment path, youth are supported to grow from participants to co-creators, working on community life alongside schools, associations, and city administration. Youth are invited into municipal committees and thematic project groups with decision-making roles, not only feedback roles, which strengthens civic confidence and long-term engagement. Young people are also encouraged to act as ambassadors who reconnect isolated peers back into community and local democratic processes. The approach combines human rights education, creative youth work formats, digital community initiatives, and direct policy dialogue, proving that youth participation becomes strongest when it is linked to real public cooperation, trust, responsibility, and a sense of belonging in the public space. Accessibility and smooth guidance, provided with support from partners such as the municipal administration, schools, and regional youth support networks, ensured that this model became systemic, lived, and municipality-anchored rather than symbolic.
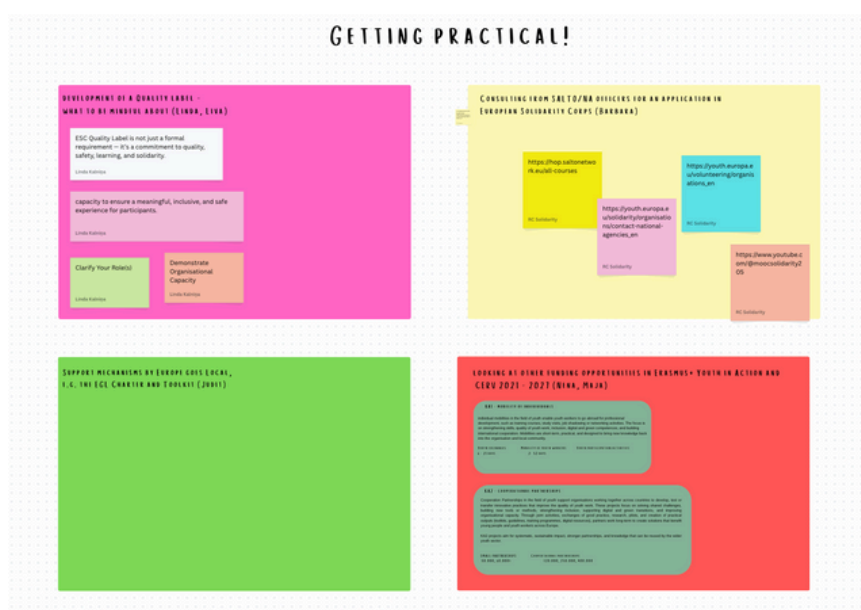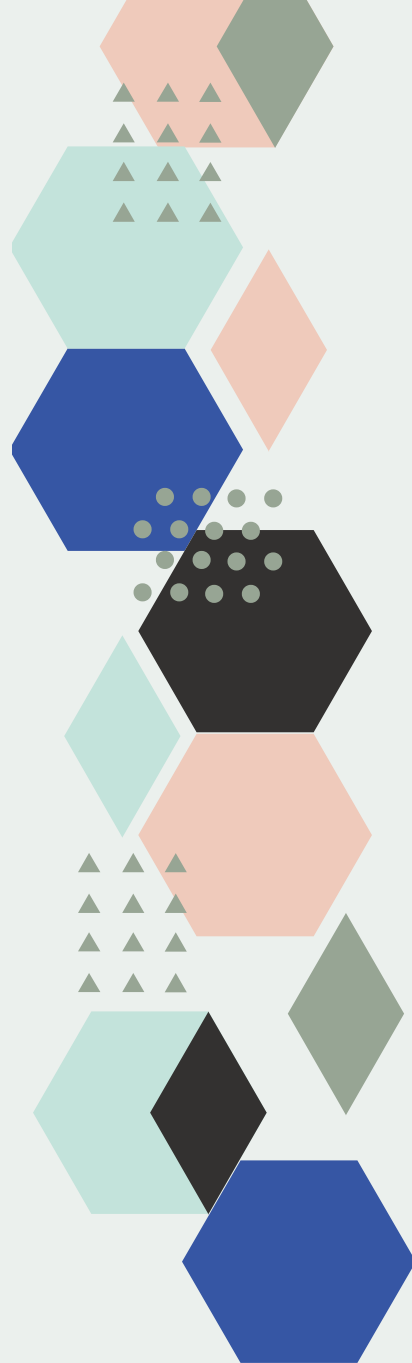
The Getting practicas session used participant self-selection into smaller groups to ensure relevance and ownership of learning. It opened with a 10-minute facilitation frame, where the process, group themes, and links to good practices from Day 1 and Day 2 were clearly explained, helping participants orient and enter discussions confidently. Two 30-minute rounds followed, where groups were opened one by one and participants independently joined rooms that best matched their needs. Each group received short expert input or coaching from workshop leaders—Quality Label mindfulness, application guidance supported by Europe Goes Local tools, Strategic advice for the youth programme Erasmus+ Youth in Action and CERV 2021–2027 by Slovenian National contact point and Nena BIbica, and practical Q&A and congress-level support from Latvian National Agency and SALTO-YOUTH. After each round, insights were harvested into concise visual summaries on Canva, creating clarity and shared understanding. The block closed with a 20-minute plenary harvesting and light Q&A, turning group insights into actionable local project thinking and confidence for future steps.

General objectives

o To protect and promote the rights and values enshrined in the Treaties, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and in the applicable international human rights conventions in particular by supporting civil society organisations and other stakeholders active at local, regional, national and transnational level

o To encourage civic and democratic participation, in order to sustain and further develop open, rights-based, democratic, equal and inclusive societies based on the rule of law

The seminar closed with a clear orientation toward upcoming support and peer continuation. Participants received a short sum up and opportunities long-term municipal youth participation support offered by the network Europe Goes Local, including what happens next in EGL (framing by Judit). Future project support pathways were confirmed by officers from the Latvian National Agency and experts from SALTO-YOUTH, who highlighted follow-up guidance and application assistance. Participants then completed an evaluation via digital polls and surveys using Microsoft Forms and a closing emotional check-in using the polling tool Mentimeter. The agenda allowed a final optional round for everyone to share a team photo and informal reflections through the last few impressions of the participants .

The magic word is networking

1. What was your understanding of young people's involvement in **European Solidarity Corps** voluntary activities or solidarity projects **BEFORE** this seminar (on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest)?
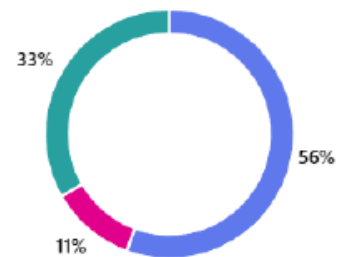
3.80
Average Rating

Level 10 — 1
Level 9
Level 8
Level 7 — 2
Level 6
Level 5
Level 4
Level 3 — 2
Level 2 — 3
Level 1 — 2

3. What is your understanding of young people's involvement in **European Solidarity Corps** voluntary activities or solidarity projects **AFTER** this seminar (on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest)?

7.70
Average Rating

Level 10 — 1
Level 9 — 3
Level 8 — 2
Level 7 — 1
Level 6 — 2
Level 5 — 1
Level 4
Level 3
Level 2
Level 1

10. How likely is it that you would apply for the European Solidarity Corps in the future?

- Definitely yes — 5
- Probably yes — 1
- Not sure yet — 3
- Probably not — 0
- Definitely not — 0

33%
56%
11%

Participants were invited to share their feedback about the seminar and 90% of themevaluated their understanding of young people's involvement in ESC voluntary activities or solidarity projects as highly improved. More than a half of participants after this seminar would use the opportunities of the ESC program. Participants gained a lot of new information about ESC program and its processes, learned about examples of good practices, formed collaborations and developed project ideas with other participants.

GET SUPPORT

National Agencies are your contact for more information.

Find yours here.

FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT:

Trainings

Partners

Volunteers for hosting

Volunteers for sending
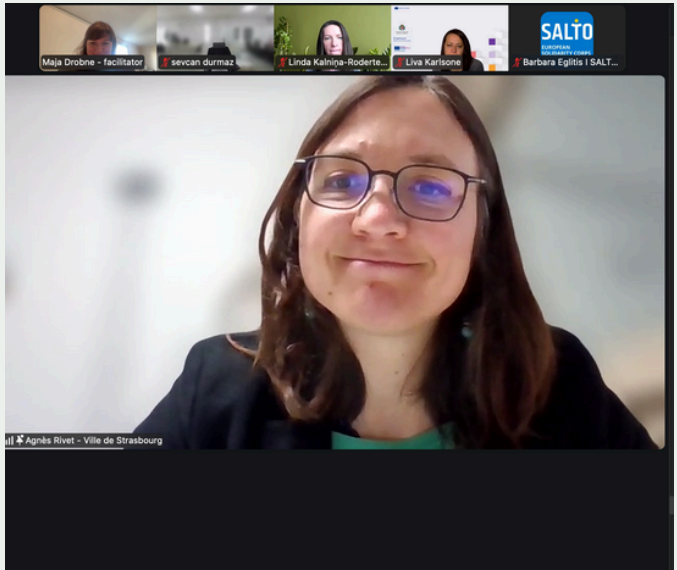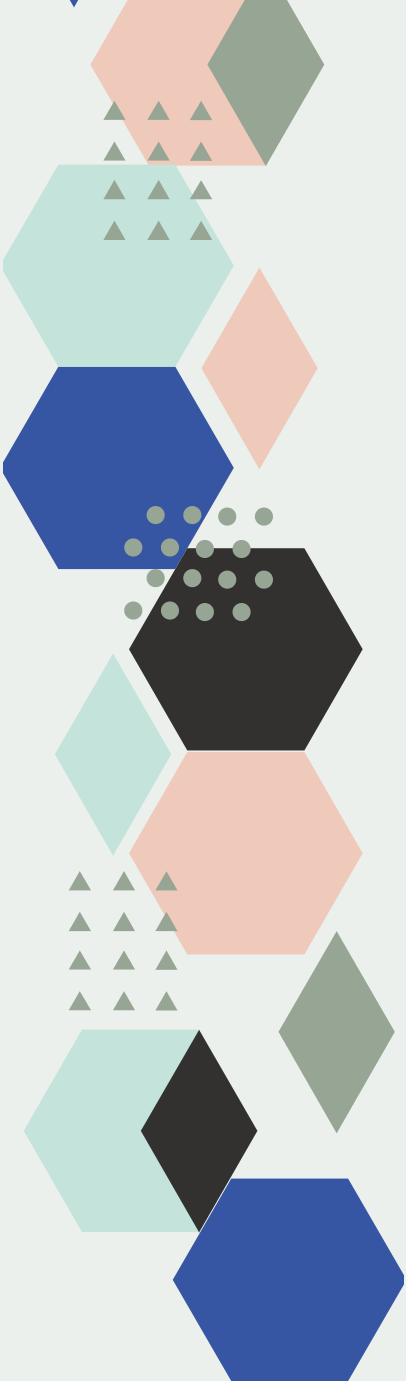
Inspiring examples

Europe goes local

European Charter on Local Youth Work

Changemakers toolkit

10 steps to European Solidarity Corps
projects for municipalities

Citizens' Engagement and Participation

→ Raise awareness of the common European history
→ Promote citizens' engagement and participation in the democratic life of the Union
→ Promote exchanges between citizens of different Member States (town-twinning and networks of towns)

NETWORK OF TOWNS CALL

TOWN TWINNING CALL

CITIZENS ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION CALL

CHILD CALL

REMEMBRANCE CALL