2020 European Solidarity Corps Handbook

Solidarity Projects

Version 2: September 2021

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Overview of changes

This page outlines the document history from the date of creation, noting all minor and major changes undertaken on the document and any supplementary document(s).

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1. Introduction

The 2020 European Solidarity Corps Handbook for Solidarity Projects is designed as a guide to support UK beneficiaries with the management of their 2020 Solidarity Projects (ESC31).

The Handbook provides **practical guidance on the various stages of your project lifecycle** and should be used as a reference point for all common project queries. Please note that, while we have tried to cover all main areas of the project lifecycle within this Handbook, the guidance is not exhaustive. It is important to note that this guidance is supplementary to your Grant Agreement and Annexes, which you should always refer to first when checking contractual requirements. **We also recommend you continue to refer to the 2020 Corps Guide during your project to ensure you are managing your grant in accordance with European Solidarity Corps rules.** You can find it and other relevant documents under the Project Support webpage on our website under 'Key Documents'.

Please note that this document may be subject to change throughout the course of the initiative. Changes will be recorded on page 3 of this document and the most recent version will be found on our website.

Should any information in this Handbook differ from either the (annual) Grant Agreement or the 2020 Corps Guide, the content of the Grant Agreement, its Annexes and the 2020 Corps Guide will take precedence.

Important note
Remember, if you have any queries or issues that you can't find answers to within the Handbook, the ESC Team at the UK National Agency (UK NA) are on hand to help and should be your first point of call for any questions related to your project at eusolidaritycorps@ecorys.com

2. Background

2.1. The European Solidarity Corps

The European Solidarity Corps intends to bring young people together to build a more inclusive society, supporting vulnerable people and responding to the challenges facing society across the continent. The initiative **offers an inspiring and empowering experience for young people who want to help communities, learn and develop their competencies.** This is ensured by funding a variety of opportunities across a broad range of areas, such as integration of migrants, environmental challenges, prevention of natural disasters, education and youth activities or measures to prevent radicalisation. The initiative aims to support the acquisition and use of knowledge, skills and qualifications to facilitate personal and professional development.

2.2. European Solidarity Corps Guide

The 2020 European Solidarity Corps Guide is the key document produced by the European Commission for anybody requiring a thorough knowledge of the Corps. This document is mainly addressed to those organisations that are already involved or wish to take part in the Corps. It contains detailed information on the Actions and all the rules and conditions required in order to apply for funding under the Corps and to manage the grant. It is essential that organisations continue to consult the Corps Guide for the year in which they receive funding. **The European Commission can make changes to their published documents. To ensure that you use the most up-to-date version of the 2020 Corps Guide, you should check the European Commission's European Solidarity Corps website and download the 2020 Corps Guide.**

2.3. Solidarity Projects

Under the European Solidarity Corps, a Solidarity Project is defined by an in-country activity initiated, developed and implemented by young people themselves, for a period from 2 to 12 months. A group of a minimum of five young people are given the chance to express solidarity by taking responsibility and committing to bring positive change in their local community, upon identifying a topic that is explored and translated into concrete activities.

There needs to be a clear benefit to local organisations, informal groups or young people, as the project must address key challenges within the community. A project may also tackle some regional or national issues.

A Solidarity Project typically consists of the following stages:

- preparation
- implementation of the activities
- follow-up (including the evaluation of the activities and dissemination of project results).

2.4 Participating Countries

The European Solidarity Corps is available to organisations from both **Participating Countries** (Member States of the European Union and non-EU participating countries) and **Partner Countries** (EFTA countries and partner countries neighbouring the EU). **Only organisations and groups of young people from Participating Countries (all European Union countries, Iceland, Turkey and North Macedonia) are eligible to take part in Solidarity Projects (highlighted in green below).**

Overseas Countries and Territories can take part in volunteering activities, subject to the arrangements applicable to the Member State with which they are connected. British Overseas Territories: Anguilla; Cayman Islands; Falkland Islands; South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands; Montserrat; Pitcairn Islands; Saint Helena,

Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha; Turks and Caicos Islands; Bermuda; Gibraltar; British Antarctic Territory; British Indian Ocean Territory; and British Virgin Islands.

European Solidarity Corps Eligible Countries	
Participating Countries	**Partner Countries**

27 Member States	non-EU participating countries	Outermost Regions and Territories	EFTA Countries	Partner Countries neighbouring the EU			
				Western Balkans	Eastern Partnership countries	South-Mediterranean countries	Russian Federation
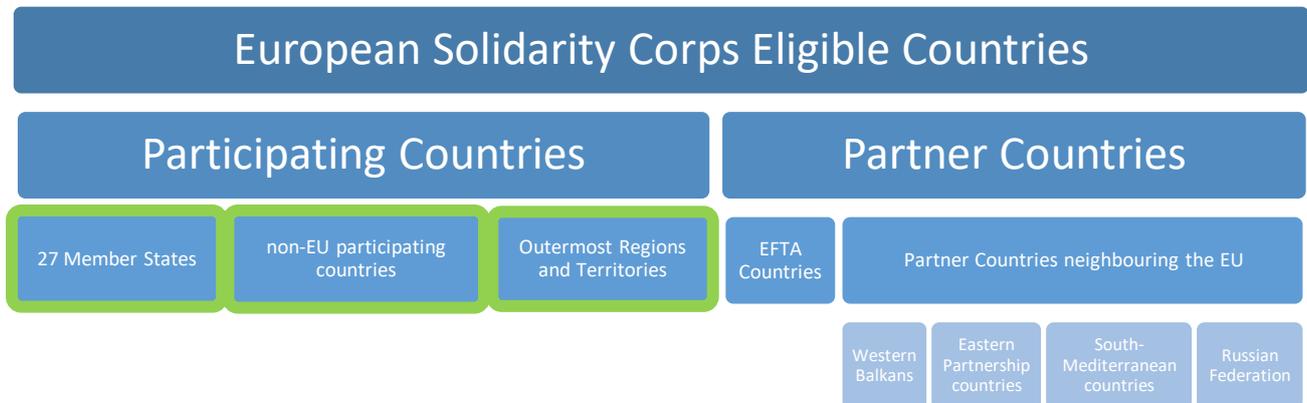
2.5. Target Groups and Participants

The main target groups for Solidarity Projects are the **young people who initiate, develop, and implement the solidarity activities.** Alongside this, projects will have (a) specific target group(s) identified within the community, who will benefit from the project's implementation.

Participants involved in a Solidarity Project must comply with the below criteria to be considered eligible:

Participants	Residency	Age	Additional requirements
the (applicant) group of young people (min 5 members, no maximum)	residents of one and the same Participating Country	18 – 30*	being registered on the European Solidarity Corps Portal

*Participants must have reached 18 years old and must not be older than 30 years old at the start date of the activity.

For any people involved in the project outside of the main (applicant) group, there is no requirement for registration on the European Solidarity Corps Portal.

For accompanying persons, no maximum age limit applies, but they have to be at least 18 years old. An accompanying person is **a person who accompanies participants with special needs or fewer opportunities in an activity, in order to ensure their safety, protection, provide support and extra assistance during the**

solidarity activity. Accompanying persons do not undertake project-related work or training, and they are not the same as the project participants.

2.6. Additional Project Support

Please note, a group of young people who plan a Solidarity Project can seek support from an organisation (any public or private body). An organisation may apply on the group's behalf, but their role should be mainly administrative i.e., to support the group in the project lifecycle with any administrative or financial tasks. They can also offer support and guidance in identifying and documenting learning outcomes.

Additionally, **a coach** may support young people in implementing a Solidarity Project. This 'resource' person could have youth work experience to accompany groups of young people and support their participation, for example. The coach will remain outside of the Solidarity Project, therefore he/she will not be a member of the group. The coach can play different roles depending on the needs of the group, supporting them in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of their project. They can also facilitate and foster the quality of the learning process as well as assist in identifying and documenting learning outcomes at the end of the project or provide advice on certain areas of a project. Coaches can be volunteers or professionals and there are no age restrictions for a coach. A group of young people can use the support of one or several coaches, depending on their needs. Coaching costs are funded for a maximum of 12 days, whether this is to cover one coach or shared between two coaches or more (e.g. 6 days per coach).

It is the beneficiary's responsibility to ensure participants are eligible and meet the above requirements as well as any additional criteria specified in the 2020 Corps Guide. The UK NA will validate participants at the end of the project and if they are found to be ineligible, all associated costs will need to be refunded.

Force Majeure in the context of COVID-19

We appreciate Coronavirus remains active and it is therefore difficult to progress with your project with any degree of certainty.

To incur project costs at this uncertain stage of Coronavirus may no longer be deemed as force majeure and may not be covered by your European Solidarity Corps Grant Agreement.

Therefore, before booking any solidarity activities in relation to your project, you are strongly advised to check the relevant government guidance and support channels e.g. https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus and the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office website for advice on the unique circumstances per country, and to review and accept all risks attached to any advanced bookings.

You must ensure the health and safety of your group and of your community remain at the forefront of all decisions you take, together with the ability of your group (or applicant organisation) to cover any costs

incurred should activities not proceed as planned. Please see section *4.1.3 Health and Safety* for further details.

3. What does the UK National Agency do?

3.1 Contracting Process

Following the assessment and selection process, before starting any funded project activity, you must have a signed Grant Agreement with the UK NA. It is essential that you sign your Grant Agreement before committing any funds to project activities. In exceptional circumstances, any eligible project activities undertaken between the official project start date and the date the agreement is signed by the UK NA will be covered retrospectively, provided they are in line with the terms of the agreement. However, any activity undertaken before the agreement is signed by the UK NA is done so at beneficiary's own risk. If for any reason we are not able to contract with the successful applicant, these costs will not be covered by the UK NA and, as such, you may wish to limit the number of activities you carry out before the process is complete.

During any stage of your project lifecycle, for administrative and financial management project issues or if you require advice and support on your project, please contact the UK NA for support via our email helpline at eusolidaritycorps@ecorys.com.

3.1.1 Bank Details

To enable us to make payments, your group/organisation must be set up on our financial system. We therefore require the full bank details for your group (or applicant organisation). You will be given a unique vendor number that should be quoted on all future invoices / payment queries. Given that all payments made under the European Solidarity Corps will be made in Euros, the UK NA advises that applicants use Euro accounts for their European Solidarity Corps projects.

Should your group's (or applicant organisation's) bank details change, please notify your Project Officer immediately. You must also contact us if:

- your group's (or applicant organisation's) name changes; and/or
- your applicant organisation's legal status changes - please contact us if you are unsure about the legal status of your applicant organisation, as this may have a direct effect on eligibility of your applicant organisation.

You will be asked to complete a new Bank Details Form and upload it on the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Organisation Registration System (ORS) platform. We will use that form to update your group's (or

applicant organisation's) details on our financial system. If we do not hold the most up-to-date information, we will be unable to pay your group's (or applicant organisation's) grant correctly. We recommend that you keep a copy of this form for your own records.

Please attach your organisation's letter-head above	
Bank detail form – text boxes will automatically expand as you type in the details. **Guidance notes on next page.**	
Project Code	
Organisation or applicant full name	
Organisation or applicant registered address	
Bank account holder's name	
Bank & Branch Name	
Bank Branch Address	
Bank Branch Postcode	
Account Number	
Sort code (UK)	
Swift/International BIC Code	
IBAN Number	
Fedwire/ABA Routing Number **(for USA banks only)**	
Registered VAT number (if applicable)	
Company registration number (if applicable)	
The British Council will pay in **Euro**	
Confirm the account specified will accept payments in the currency above	☐ confirmed
Routing Bank Information: If the payment requires to be redirected via a routing bank please provide the routing information below. The following information must be provided if the IBAN / SWIFT numbers do not correspond with your bank account number and sort code details.	
Routing bank & branch name	
Routing Account number	
Routing Bank & Branch Code / Sort code (UK)	
Routing IBAN Number	
Routing Swift/International BIC Code	
Other routing code	

3.1.2 Grant Agreements and Annexes

To enter into a contract, all successful applicants must sign a Grant Agreement with the UK NA. If you are a coordinator of a project and have any partners, you will have signed the agreement on behalf of any other potential partners in the project, based on the provisions of the internal Partnership Agreement(s) you should have in place with your partners.

The Grant Agreement is a legally binding contract between your group (or applicant organisation) and the UK NA, which includes key details about your project, based on your initial application as well as the requirements and guidance for managing your grant.

Your agreement is tailored to the type of project and activities you have been funded for. All agreements include Special Conditions, followed by several Annexes applicable to your project.

You must ensure that you have at hand a copy of your:

- Grant Agreement (GA) for Solidarity Projects (ESC31) and Annexes.

Please ensure that you read the entire agreement carefully so that you are familiar with your group's (or applicant organisation's) contractual obligations.

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                                    │      Special Conditions       │
                                    └──────────────────────────────┘

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                                    │  Annex I: General Conditions   │
                                    └──────────────────────────────┘

                                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                                    │  Annex II: Description of the  │
                                    │   Project; Estimated budget    │
Solidarity Projects  Grant          └──────────────────────────────┘
Agreement (GA)
                                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                                    │   Annex III: Financial and     │
                                    │     Contractual Rules          │
                                    └──────────────────────────────┘

                                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                                    │  Annex IV: Applicable Rates    │
                                    └──────────────────────────────┘

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                                    │    Annex VIII: GDPR            │
                                    │  Contractual Governance        │
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                                    │      Annex 1 Addendum*         │
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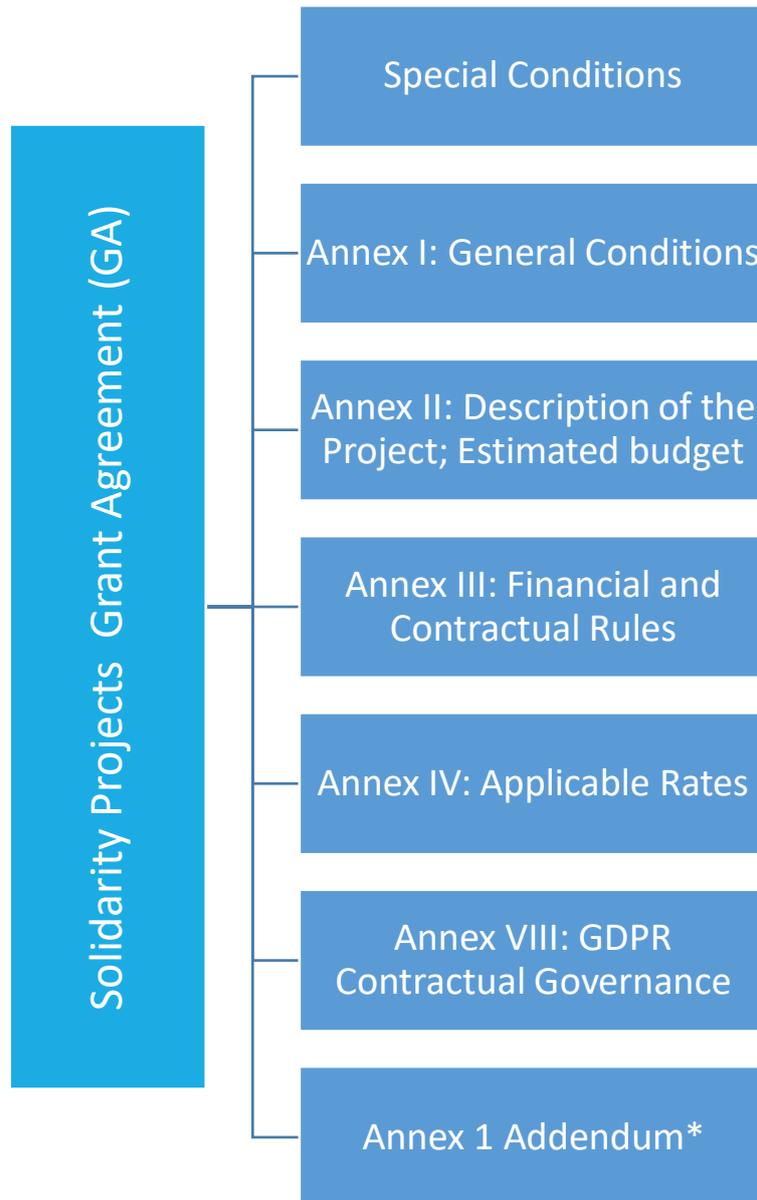
*Please note that the '*Addendum on Additional Financial and Contractual Rules only applicable to Projects organising Virtual Activities due to COVID-19*" features under Annex IV for Call 2020, Round 3 projects.

Special Conditions

This is the main part of your agreement, which includes **essential information that is specific to your project.**

It is very important to check this information carefully, especially the following sections:

- Article I.2.2 (in GA) – Project start and end dates as well as its duration
- Article I.3.1 (in GA) – Maximum grant awarded
- Article I.4.4 (in GA) – Final Report and final payment

- Article I.9.1 (in GA) – Mobility Tool+ requirements (reporting).

All approved European Solidarity Corps project activities must take place between your project start and end dates which can be found in your Grant Agreement. Any activity that falls outside of the project start and end dates will not be eligible for funding and would lead to a reduction to your final grant amount.

Addendum on Virtual Activities

This Annex only refers to projects organising Virtual Activities (due to COVID-19) and provides information on Virtual Activities and applicable additional financial and contractual rules. Please ensure you read this document carefully and if you have any questions, please contact the ESC Team at the UK NA.

Annex I: General Conditions

The General Conditions are standard rules that include information on the legal, administrative and financial provisions for all EU funded grants. To understand these in the context of European Solidarity Corps, the Special Conditions part includes information about how to correctly read and understand the General Conditions. This document contains a large amount of important contractual information and should be consulted carefully.

Annex II: Summary of the budget and activities

This document includes information that has been taken from your original project application, but it may also contain corrections or amendment applied by the UK NA, where necessary, following various checks. This is your **contractual budget**, so you should use it when implementing your project to ensure that you are completing the same activities that you planned for in your application and that have been approved by the UK NA. This is very important because the UK NA will use Annex II of your agreement during the assessment of your Final Report.

The numbers and amounts specified in this Annex are fixed. If you wish to change these, you should contact the UK NA as soon as possible. Any alteration to your project implementation, which differs from the information set out in this Annex may result in the full or partial repayment of your grant at the Final Report stage. Please see section *3.4 Contract Amendments* for further details.

> **Important note**
>
> For small changes that do not affect the objectives of your project, you may implement budget transfer without amendment to redistribute funds. For this, please check Article I.3.3 in your Grant Agreement for the transfers permitted without amendment. However, we advise you to contact the ESC helpline first to ensure eligibility of the intended change.

Annex III: Financial and Contractual rules

This Annex provides comprehensive information on the financial and contractual rules you must follow when managing your grant and implementing your project. For each budget heading you can check what activity this covers, how the funding is calculated and what supporting documents you will need to provide to evidence the activity. There is also information about the assessment of the Final Report that will need to be submitted **after the end of your project** and the types of checks the UK NA may undertake during and after your project. You should read this Annex thoroughly to ensure that your project activities are eligible, compliant and supported by the right documents to prevent issues with your Final Report. The documents cited therein will also need to be retained for audit purposes.

By signing the Grant Agreement, your group (or applicant organisation) has entered into a legal contract with the UK NA under these terms. If you do not comply with the Corps rules and terms of the Grant Agreement, your group (or applicant organisation) may be required to repay all or part of the grant.

Annex IV: Applicable rates (and Addendum on Virtual Activities)

Here is where you can find the breakdown of all the **applicable unit costs** for the budget headings applicable to your project that were used to calculate individual budget categories. This includes: Project Management and Coaching Costs. Information about Exceptional Costs (if applicable to your project) is not included in this document as this budget is based on actual (real) costs incurred. This document will help you make decisions about any necessary budget transfers, should these be required during the lifetime of your project.

This Annex contains the *Addendum on Additional Financial and Contractual Rules only applicable to Projects organising Virtual Activities due to COVID-19* for 2020 Call, Round 3 projects. Please see below for further details.

Annex VIII: GDPR Contractual Governance

This Annex provides information on how to store and process data in line with the GDPR provisions.

Annex 1:

This Annex contains the *Addendum on Additional Financial and Contractual Rules only applicable to Projects organising Virtual Activities due to COVID-19*. Please ensure you read this document carefully and if you have any questions, please contact the ESC Team at the UK NA. This Annex comes under Annex IV for 2020 Call, Round 3 projects.

3.2 Quality Assurance

The UK NA strives to ensure that only the highest quality applications are funded and to provide as much help and support as possible to you throughout your project lifetime. However, it is your overall responsibility to ensure the quality of planned activities.

During the course of your project, you may be asked to provide quarterly updates that should include key project milestones and any changes from the original application form. **This information should be as accurate as possible as the UK NA will use this to monitor your project's progress against the application form.** You should make sure that you keep in regular contact with the UK NA to receive relevant help and guidance.

Ensure that:

- the recruitment and selection of participants is relevant, fair, transparent and inclusive (if applicable)
- the project is relevant to the needs of participants and the community as well as meeting the objectives of the Corps programme
- you have clear management strategies in place, with appropriate personnel responsible for managing the project
- your participants are supported with relevant preparation prior to their involvement in the project and that practical support is available to them throughout the duration of the project
- there are clear and appropriate monitoring arrangements in place
- solidarity, equity and inclusion for participants are promoted
- access to participants with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities is facilitated.

3.3 Monitoring Activities

Under the contract with the European Commission, the UK NA is required to undertake monitoring activities, audits and checks on a representative sample of projects each year. The checks vary in scope and depth according to the type of check performed. These activities are carried out to ensure that the management of the European Solidarity Corps is satisfactory and within the terms of the Grant Agreement and Corps rules. Therefore, beneficiaries should ensure that appropriate reporting and monitoring procedures are in place.

Your group or applicant organisation must gather and retain all necessary information and documentary evidence, which demonstrates clear and transparent management of your project(s) as this may be inspected by the UK NA and/or the European Commission. Monitoring is also an opportunity for you, as the beneficiary, to ask questions and receive further support from the UK NA.

3.3.1 Monitoring Calls/Emails

A sample of projects is chosen every year to participate in quarterly monitoring calls or to provide quarterly emails about the progress of their project. If your project is selected, **the UK NA will get in touch and schedule these calls with you or request email updates throughout the lifetime of your project.** Monitoring calls/emails are a great way for us to get to know you better and to find out more about your project as well as get to know the types of challenges our beneficiaries face when implementing their projects.

3.3.2 Audits, Checks and Monitoring Visits

There are four types of visits which can be undertaken by the UK NA or other agencies:

- Monitoring Visits (UK NA only)
- On the Spot Checks (UK NA only)
- System Checks (UK NA only)[1]
- Audit Visits (UK NA or other agencies).

At the end of any of the above visits or checks, you will receive a feedback report and the opportunity to provide further information if it was not available at the time of the check. We will provide you with formal feedback in the form of a draft Visit/Check Report within 30 days of the visit or check, taking into account any initial comments from yourself (i.e. the beneficiary). You will then have a set period of time within which to respond to the draft report and provide any missing information or additional comments, as necessary. The final version of the Visit/Check Report will be then sent to you within two months of the visit/check and it will also be appended to your project file at the UK NA.

Monitoring Visits

A Monitoring Visit aims to support and counsel the beneficiary and provides an opportunity for you to take stock of the project achievements and review your progress against the objectives set at application stage. It could also be used to gather and disseminate good practice examples.

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[1] System checks are not applicable to Solidarity Projects.

The visit also provides an opportunity for the UK NA to gain a greater understanding of your project and to **review whether the project is meeting the needs of its participants and other stakeholders.** Where possible, you should ensure that a participant and any partners/stakeholders, where applicable, are available for a short interview with UK NA representatives.

The key areas for discussion are:

- project management, progress and implementation
- recruitment, preparation and support of participants (if applicable)
- project monitoring, evaluation and future activity
- impact of the project
- dissemination
- financial management

UK NA representatives will assess whether you can deliver your project to **the specifications detailed in your application form, your contract and in line with the requirements of the European Solidarity Corps**, ensuring that your activities are eligible and compliant to avoid any reductions to the grant amount at the Final Report stage and to provide you with advice and support.

Monitoring Visits will explore examples of good practice that you have developed that other projects might benefit from. The information gathered during the visit will feed into our work in monitoring the progress of the initiative in the UK as a whole and will be used to inform reports produced for the UK National Authority for the initiative – the Department for Education and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport - as well as for the European Commission.

On the Spot Checks

A random sample of projects will receive an 'on-the-spot' financial check from the UK NA to provide assurance on the reality and eligibility of project activities during project implementation. On the Spot Checks verify that the amounts claimed in relation to the agreement are supported adequately by the documentation held by your group (or applicant organisation).

There are five areas that an On the Spot Check aims to investigate:

- eligibility of costs under each budget category
- eligibility of participants for the action
- coherence of participants with the application
- eligibility of activities
- quality of activities.

It is a compulsory requirement for beneficiaries to retain evidence of any payments. **This may be in the form of invoices for payments made directly by the beneficiary (yourself) or in the form of bank transfers/receipts**

issued to service providers. During On the Spot Checks, the UK NA will need this evidence to be provided alongside any other supporting materials to verify the reality and eligibility of undertaken activities.

Organisations that are subject to an On the Spot Check are chosen at random or based on a risk assessment, using a methodology specified by the European Commission. Typically, an On the Spot Check will take one day and you will be notified at least two weeks in advance if you have been selected.

Audit Visits

The European Commission may request an external audit or wish to arrange a random inspection of the project accounts after the project has been completed. You are, therefore, required to keep all original documents relating to the implementation and financial management of your project for a period of 3 years (for projects with grants of less than €60,000.00) after the final payment has been made, in line with Article II.27.2 in Annex I (in GA).

Audit visits may be undertaken by the European Commission, the European Court of Auditors, the UK NA's own Internal Audit and/or Compliance Teams and other relevant bodies.

The European Commission and the European Court of Auditors operate on a short timescale and may request a visit at a very short notice.

The European Commission and the European Court of Auditors have their own method of planning visits and the UK NA is only informed of the organisations they intend to visit when they announce a visit.

The UK NA may identify organisations for ad hoc visits on the basis of the amounts of funding awarded, issues arising from previous reports or other information received from the beneficiary, project partners (if applicable) or participants involved.

3.4 Project Amendments

Due to the nature of managing a Solidarity Project, beneficiaries are likely to encounter situations that result in the details of their projects changing from the plans made in original applications. This may be something as small as the Contact Person changing within their organisation to a substantial change, like changing project activities. For either type of change, please contact the UK NA to request an amendment. For any budget change, please see art. I.3.3 of your GA and inform the UK NA via email.

3.4.1 Minor Changes – Notification Only

Minor Changes are changes which the UK NA would expect to see throughout a project lifecycle and can be implemented with minimal impact upon the beneficiary, project or the UK NA. Therefore, these are classed as

administrative amendments to the Grant Agreement and the beneficiary only needs to notify the UK NA of the type of change and any details which need to be updated. There is a simple and short form to complete, which the UK NA can provide you with. Upon completion, this form needs to be then emailed back to the UK NA to be approved automatically and processed, usually within 5 working days.

3.4.2 Significant Changes – Contract Amendment Request

Significant Changes are changes that have the potential to substantially affect the delivery of a project or alter the project-specific content of the Grant Agreement and so they have the potential to call into question the initial assessment decision or have a significant financial/legal impact. Therefore, to request a Significant Change, the beneficiary must submit a formal Contract Amendment Request Form, providing a clear justification for the proposed changes to the project. Please contact the UK NA to discuss the proposed changes and to request the form.

Due to the nature of Significant Changes to a project, the request will be formally assessed by the UK NA and, if approved, a Supplementary Agreement will be annexed to the original Grant Agreement. Therefore, Significant Change requests are deemed exceptional and carry no guarantee of approval by the UK NA. They also take longer to process (up to 45 days) and may require you to provide additional documents.

All proposed changes must be communicated to the UK NA in advance and at least one month before the end date of the project. The table below provides a list of potential changes which can be requested by beneficiaries and which category they fall into.

Change Requested	Permitted		Not Permitted
	Minor Change	Significant Change	
Contact Person	✓		
Legal Representative	✓		
Bank details	✓		
Beneficiary / organisation's address	✓		
Project activities	✓	✓	
Budget changes not covered by budget transfers (Article I.3.3 in GA)		✓	
Change to the composition of the group		✓	

Change Requested	Permitted		Not Permitted
	Minor Change	Significant Change	
Project start and end dates		✓	
Project duration		✓	
Beneficiary group/organisation name		✓	
Beneficiary organisation legal status		✓	
Replacement of beneficiary group/organisation			✓
Reporting schedule			✓
Payment structure and schedule			✓

Please be aware that requests for changes to project activities can be classed as either a Minor or a Significant Change, depending on the scope of the request. This will be verified by the UK NA when you contact us. Moreover, a change to the project dates or duration will naturally change the reporting schedule for the project. However, you will not be able to request a change to the reporting schedule independently of this.

Should you wish to implement a change because of the impacts of COVID-19, please contact the ESC Team via email to outline this change in advance, so the UK NA may provide you with further support and guidance. Please see the section 'Impact of COVID-19' below for further details.

4. What do beneficiaries do?

Monitoring falls both on the UK NA, as aforementioned, but also on you as the beneficiary and Project Manager. **You will be accountable to the UK NA for the implementation of the project, the use of the awarded funding and any amounts paid in relation to your project.** Your role for monitoring is also detailed in Article I.4 (in GA) and features throughout the Grant Agreement and the Annexes. Monitoring covers the activities of your project, the financial management of your project as well as your project partners (if applicable) and participants.

Your Grant Agreement details what you need to have in place regarding the level of monitoring and support to ensure the safekeeping of your participants and help you to understand the expectations that we have of

you as the beneficiary. It is essential that you continue to consult the 2020 Corps Guide and your agreement to ensure compliance with the European Solidarity Corps rules for the year in which you received the funding for your project and that you contact the UK NA for further guidance where needed.

4.1 Management of your project

4.1.1 Project Monitoring

When it comes to monitoring your project, you will need to ensure that it is progressing in line with your application. Your role in monitoring also includes ensuring compliance with your Grant Agreement as well as checking that you are adhering to the roles and responsibilities that you set out in your application and as agreed upon by signing the Grant Agreement.

You will need to monitor your project finances, too, and make sure you are familiar with the various budget transfers that you can and cannot do. The Project Management budget is the funding available for you, as the coordinator, to aid with the costs of implementing project activities as well as the project evaluation, dissemination and follow-up activities.

Impact of COVID-19

The UK NA understands that COVID-19 related restrictions are still common across the world and in the UK and might affect the development of your project. In response, the European Commission has implemented several mechanisms enabling beneficiaries to adapt better to the external factors surrounding the current pandemic. You can therefore make use of the following:

- **Extend your project duration.** You can request a duration extension of up to 12 additional months in accordance with the latest possible end date and project duration as specified by the European Commission – contact the ESC Team for further support.

- **Apply virtual or blended activities**[2]. Please check the Virtual Activity Guide and the Addendum of your Grant Agreement – 'Additional Financial and Contractual Rules Applicable to Projects Organising Virtual Activities and Mobility Tool+'. Note, you will have to register virtual activities on Mobility Tool+.

- **Apply budget transfers**. Please check art. I.3.3 (3.3) *Budget transfers without amendment* of you Grant Agreement. In addition to this article, and according to your contract Addendum entitled 'Addendum on Additional Financial and Contractual Rules only applicable to Projects organising virtual activities due to COVID-19' you are permitted to transfer (without amendment) up to **10% of funds from any budget category into the Exceptional Costs** budget to cover costs to support the participation of participants with fewer opportunities or with special needs in virtual activities due to COVID-19 related to buying and/or renting of equipment and/or services necessary for the implementation of virtual activities due to COVID-19.

- **Interrupt an activity** if needed. Please note that you will have to register interrupted activities on Mobility Tool+.

Additional costs related to **Tier 5 visa and health surcharge** fees would be possible to be claimed through a **contract amendment request** to the UK NA, which will be considered on a case by case basis. Transfers may be made from any budget category into the Exceptional Costs budget to cover visa-related costs, even where no Exceptional Costs budget was requested at application stage. Reimbursement is 100% and must be supported by relevant invoices/receipts. Please note that it is not possible to request additional funding over and above the total grant amount approved by the UK NA.

To apply any of the above mentioned, you should first contact the UK NA for further guidance.

Should you have incurred additional costs due to COVID-19, please check the updated acceptable costs you can claim under Exceptional Costs budget category (even if such costs have not been originally claimed):

- Costs to support participation of young people with fewer opportunities; and
- COVID-19 related costs (e.g., COVID-19 test).

Please note that any costs incurred in relation the COVID-19 pandemic will be eligible **ONLY IF** they are necessitated by the relevant national authorities, but **NOT** when they are a precautionary measure in a situation where physical activities can be conducted as usual.

Please note, Exceptional Costs will always require justification and supporting evidence, such as invoices or receipts (Invoices must be compliant as per government instructions https://www.gov.uk/invoicing-and-taking-payment-from-customers/invoices-what-they-must-include.We strongly advise you to take any

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[2] Check out a case study about a project that adapted its activities during lockdown on our website here.

screenshots of the online recommendations issued by relevant national authorities regarding international travel. Such screenshots should include a clear date for verifications purposes.

Monitoring

You will need to ensure equal participation and engagement during the project development. **You may want to set up a Facebook or WhatsApp group and invite your project participants to join. This way you can encourage and ensure collaboration and monitor participation more closely.**

The participation must be an important non-formal or informal learning experience and it should foster a sense of initiative, active European citizenship and entrepreneurial spirit. Participation in a Solidarity Project could also be a first step into self-employment or setting up organisations in the solidarity, non-profit and youth sectors.

You will have to ensure that there is efficient coordination and communication between your group participants, and define clear responsibilities, roles, timeframes and targets. Working methods should aim to involve all participants of the group in a balanced way through the various phases of the project and activities.

Insurance and project activities will need to be organised beforehand, and you will need to ensure your participants are aware of the applicable arrangements and what to do if the solidarity activities they are involved in do not go according to plan or if they need help when something goes wrong whilst they are working on the project.

4.1.2 Roles and responsibilities

The responsibilities of the **group/beneficiary** are to:

- Monitor and ensure the project is implemented in accordance with the Grant Agreement.
- Act as the intermediary for all communications between the project participants and the UK NA.
- Inform the UK NA of any changes to the name, address, Contact Person or Legal Representative as well as of any legal, financial, technical, organisational or ownership situation change(s)– if applicable.
- Inform the UK NA of any event likely to affect or delay the implementation of the project.
- Be responsible for supplying all documents and information to the UK NA required under the Grant Agreement.
- Establish requests for any payment in accordance with the Grant Agreement.
- If applicable, ensure that appropriate payments are made to service provider(s) without any unjustified delays - all payments should be made directly by a bank transfer and appropriate evidence of the amounts transferred should be kept in case of any future checks.
- Provide all the necessary documents in the event of checks and audits initiated before the payment of the balance.

- Regularly update the online reporting system - Mobility Tool+ (please see the [EC Online Guide for using the Mobility Tool+](#) for further guidance).

The responsibilities of the **applicant** (youth group or organisation) are to:
- comply with all arrangements agreed upon for their involvement in the project and do their best to ensure the project is delivered to a high standard and that it is a success
- abide by the rules and regulations agreed upon, including the code of conduct and rules of confidentiality
- inform the applicant organisation of any event likely to affect or delay the implementation of the project
- communicate with the applicant organisation about any problems or changes regarding their solidarity activities
- advisable, but not mandatory - complete and submit an evaluation questionnaire (i.e. a Participant Report) in the specified format (standard template), together with any supporting documentation, at the end of the project (for dissemination purposes).

Please keep in regular contact with the ESC Team at the UK NA so that we can provide on-going help and guidance to ensure that your project's delivery is of the highest quality.

4.1.3 Health and Safety

Ensuring that participants are working in a safe and healthy environment is not just a contractual requirement of running a Solidarity Project, it guarantees that the participant has a good experience and that he/she is safe. **It is essential that you cover all aspects of participant's health and safety from the start of the project and throughout its duration.** The UK NA recommends that as the beneficiary, you ensure there are health and safety procedures and rules, and/or a code of conduct in place, to be followed by all people involved in the project.

Due to the current and ongoing situation with COVID-19, you must ensure the health and safety of your participants remains at the forefront of all decisions you take. This means observing national restrictions. For UK, please follow the UK Government's websites:
- for England: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do
- for Scotland: https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/
- for Wales: https://gov.wales/coronavirus
- for Norther Ireland: https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19.

Virtual Activities

Considering the exceptional circumstances created by COVID-19, a safe and suitable option for your project participants may be virtual activity. This is where it is possible for participants in the project to continue part of their physical solidarity activity virtually/online.

Although you can implement Solidarity Project activities virtually, the majority of project activities should be undertaken physically as originally planned where possible (thus becoming a blended activity). You should not deliver activities in the project virtually in their entirety as this goes against the principles and rules of the European Solidarity Corps programme.

Virtual activity calls into question the original aims and objectives of your application form and must not be the first option for the beneficiary.

Therefore, you are strongly encouraged in the first instance to extend your project's duration, if possible, up to the maximum eligible duration stipulated by the 2020 Corps Guide to allow physical activities to take place as originally planned, but at a later date and when it is safe to do so.

If you still wish to request that part of your European Solidarity Corps Solidarity Project activities takes place through other virtual activities (i.e. becomes a blended activity), please note:

- Your total grant awarded cannot be increased
- the UK NA may carry out a check by attending part of the virtual activity online
- Virtual activities must be reported in Mobility Tool+
- At the Final Report stage:
  - Evidence will be required for all budget categories paid on an actual costs' basis, e.g. Exceptional Costs (if applicable)
  - Any ineligible costs or ineligible activity will lead to an automatic reduction in your final payment or a refund to the UK NA;
  - Evidence that a virtual activity took place should be provided and may include: a timetable of virtual activities, virtual meeting agendas and screenshots; and
  - In any request and in your Final Report the UK NA will be interested to hear why you opted for a virtual activity, over a project extension, which would allow for a physical activity.

Further details on virtual activities can be found in Addendum of your Grant Agreement entitled 'Additional Financial and Contractual Rules only applicable to Projects organising Virtual Activities due to COVID-19'.

4.1.4 Risk Assessment

Risk assessments should be completed on venues, activity environments, travel arrangements and any other areas you deem appropriate. **A good risk assessment will help you avoid incidents and would aid a smooth running of your project.** The UK NA recommends that you follow the risk assessment procedures used within

your applicant organisation (if applicable). Further information on the risk management and how to conduct a risk assessment can be found on the UK Government's Health and Safety website.

4.1.5 Safeguarding

Safeguarding can refer to either a person or mechanisms in place to ensure protection against danger, damage, injury, etc. **Particularly when working with young people and/or vulnerable adults, it is important that you have safeguarding policies in place.** This may mean that you have accompanying persons (who have been vetted as appropriate) to travel with the young persons or to assist vulnerable adults involved in activities. Further information about safeguarding can be found on the UK Government's Disclosure and Barring Service website.

Solidarity Projects may involve the participation of minors (young people under the age of 18), albeit not as direct participants (i.e. the target group of your participants could be minors). It is the responsibility of the beneficiary to ensure appropriate safeguarding procedures are in place. Child Protection means protecting children from abuse. This could be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect.

All beneficiaries are responsible for minimising the risk of harm by identifying and managing potential risks and having a positive and open relationship with the participants involved in the project. You must consider that whilst in the UK, there are strict child protection laws, while other countries may not have such structures and procedures in place, but it is important to:

- be aware of the situations which may present risks and take appropriate actions;
- make sure that a culture of openness exists between you and the young people in your care, so that it is possible for either party to raise or discuss any issues or concerns; and
- make sure there is a sense of accountability with other adults, so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged.

Please visit British Council's website to find out more about the Child Protection Policy.

The UK NA requires projects to sign a European Solidarity Corps Child Protection Checklist at the contracting stage. The checklist details the legal and regulatory requirements that must be adhered to when working with children directly or when delivering work that has an impact on children. This is to ensure that when involving those who are under 18, and therefore classed as minors (e.g. target groups the participants will be working with), beneficiaries will provide:

- A clear line of accountability by having someone at the top level to take leadership responsibility for the child protection arrangements, including the commissioning and/or provision of services
- A designated professional lead for child protection, with clearly defined responsibilities and cover arrangements in place

- A clear and accessible Child Protection Policy, signed by the most senior person in the organisation (where applicable) and available to all relevant stakeholders, including children
- A written Code of Conduct describing appropriate/expected standards of behaviour for staff/participants when working with children
- Clear policies in line with those from the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) or equivalent for reporting and responding to allegations against staff/participants
- Safe recruitment procedures to carefully screen applicants (both staff and participants) and to help prevent unsuitable individuals working with children
- Clear whistleblowing procedures, suitably referenced in staff training and the Code of Conduct arrangements which clearly set out the processes for sharing information
- Appropriate support for staff (where applicable), including undertaking mandatory induction and Child Protection training.

4.1.6 Insurance

Organisations and groups of young people participating in European Solidarity Corps must have effective procedures and arrangements in place to promote and guarantee the safety and protection of their project participants. Under the European Solidarity Corps, all participants, including staff, must be insured against the potential risks associated with their involvement in the project activities. The initiative does not define a unique format of insurance, nor does it recommend specific insurance companies. It is the responsibility of beneficiaries to obtain appropriate insurance, relevant to the type of project carried out and to ensure the insurance policy is available at a national level. Furthermore, it is not necessary to subscribe to a project-specific insurance if the participants are already covered by the existing insurance policies of the project organisers.

It is the responsibility of the beneficiaries to identify the most suitable insurance policy, depending on the type of activity and availability of appropriate insurance at the national level.

For all activities, as a minimum, the following areas must be covered:

- **Accident and Serious Illness Insurance**, including permanent or temporary incapacity.
- **Medical Assistance Insurance**, including after care and special insurance for particular circumstances, such as outdoor activities.
- **Death Insurance**

You should also establish that the venue(s) where the project activities are taking place has (have) a relevant Liability Insurance which covers participants for the duration of the solidarity activity, whether they are at work or not. It is the responsibility of the beneficiary to check that this is in place as the European Commission is not liable for any damage caused by a participant or beneficiary (please see Article II.4.1 of Annex I (GA).

The level of Liability Insurance coverage and Accident Insurance coverage can vary, so beneficiaries are advised to check this beforehand.

If the participant does not remain in the national health system, a private personal insurance should be in place. It is the responsibility of the beneficiary to ensure that their participants are aware of any health insurance issues.

4.1.7 Selection of Participants

Selection

Solidarity Projects are open to all young people, including those with fewer opportunities. Participants should be selected in a fair, transparent and objective way, regardless of their ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation, political opinion, etc. Furthermore, they should not be selected based on their educational level, qualifications, specific experience or language knowledge. **Also, participation in the project should be free.** You may decide to create a more specific participant's profile, if appropriate, depending on the tasks involved in the solidarity activities or the project context.

Please note that in the case of Solidarity Projects under the European Solidarity Corps, when applying for funding, groups or applicant organisations must select their project participants (in the project group) from the pool of young people registered in the European Solidarity Corps portal. You should carry out your recruitment of young people by registering on the new matching tool, i.e. the Placement Administration and Support System (PASS). Should you have any queries about the matching process, please contact the ESC Team.

4.1.8 Participant Withdrawals: how to prevent or manage them?

It is important to ensure that you take all necessary steps to prevent participants withdrawals before or during the project, especially as a Solidarity Project must have a minimum of 5 group members to be eligible Steps to ensure this include:

- **managing expectations** to ensure that your participants know exactly what is expected of them whilst they are involved in the project;
- providing your participants with **clear information**, so that they are aware of the proposed activities and intended outcomes;
- implementing **good quality selection plans** to ensure that you have involved only appropriate participants - the information you provide to your participants from the outset of your project may influence their expectations, so it would be good practice to conduct interviews as part of the recruitment process in order to determine what participants want to achieve from their placements; and
- **thoroughly preparing participants practically** before the project activities start.

Sometimes participants withdrawals may impact on your project implementation and its completion. Where the minimum duration of the project has been completed, costs will be reimbursed for the completed months. Should the minimum duration requirement not be met (i.e. 2 months), none of the costs associated with the project will be covered by the Corps grant.

Only in exceptional circumstances will the UK NA recognise the cause of project duration to be shorter than 2 months as a **force majeure** and consider reimbursement of the costs incurred. In such cases, you are advised to contact the ESC Team immediately to see if it is possible to submit a claim for one or more of the cost components within your Grant Agreement, i.e. Project Management, Coach Costs (if applicable) as well as Exceptional Costs (if applicable). If so, you must clearly explain in writing the reasons for the participants' withdrawal and, if applicable, the shorter duration of your project. Your claim will be assessed by the UK NA who will determine whether it is justified, based on the following criteria:

- whether there was a genuine reason for the withdrawal
- whether you took reasonable steps to maintain the participant's involvement in the project
- whether the costs are genuinely non-refundable (i.e. pre-booked venue).

The ESC Team will notify you of the UK NA's decision and the next steps. If you are unable to demonstrate that reasonable steps were taken to avoid such withdrawal, the UK NA reserves the right to request repayment of the corresponding part of the grant. You should therefore ensure you retain and provide any applicable documentation and/or correspondence if possible.

Please note, in line with Article I.13 of your Grant Agreement, **you can change the composition of the group of young people,** insofar as **at least 50% of the original participants remain identical to those foreseen in Annex II** and insofar as **the group continues to comply with the initial eligibility criteria throughout the duration of the Project**.

4.1.9 Mobility Tool+

Mobility Tool+ (MT+) is an online management and reporting system all beneficiaries (a group of young people or an applicant organisation in receipt of the grant) must use to manage their project(s) under the Corps. The tool should be used to register participants and project activities information as well as to monitor your budget expenditure, manage participant evaluation reports and create and submit your final beneficiary report to the UK NA. In line with Article I.9.1 (GA), **the beneficiaries must regularly encode and update information regarding the participants and project activities**.

It is important that the MT+ is kept up to date at all stages of your project life cycle and that the information is accurate, especially regarding the conducted activities and related unit costs or real costs. This is particularly important as MT+ will automatically send out Participant Reports to all participants for them to complete at the end of the project, using the dates entered on the tool. Moreover, it is a contractual requirement for all projects to report on their project activities using MT+.

Please note that in order to log into MT+, you will need to use the EU Log-In details linked to your email address. The Contact Person and Legal Representative for your group or applicant organisation will automatically have access to the tool using the email address detailed in the application. Once you are logged in, you can then add additional contacts to assist with the reporting of the project. However, we recommend that the "edit" function in the tool is only reserved for the project coordinator.

For further information and support please refer to the [EC Online Guide for using the Mobility Tool+](#) in order to familiarise yourself with how to use the software.

4.1.10 Support for non-formal and informal learning

Non-formal learning is a key feature of the European Solidarity Corps. In addition to being embedded in the activities, from which the participants will learn, some quality and support measures aiming at supporting and reinforcing the learning development of the participants are foreseen. These include the General Online Training and Recognition of Learning Outcomes.

General Online Training

General Online Training is an open access training for registered candidates and participants selected for the project. It is provided via the European Solidarity Corps Portal. **General Online Training is an open access induction with various modules, such as the mission of the European Solidarity Corps, ethics, integrity, roles and responsibilities of the participants, European values, inter-cultural awareness, thematic training, health and safety etc.** The general objective of the training will be to support European Solidarity Corps registered candidates in their engagement in quality solidarity activities and contribute to the building of the community of the Corps. The training should become part of a non-formal learning process of participants who will be involved in specific projects and for the candidates registered in the portal, but not yet selected in order to capture their attention and stimulate their motivation.

Recognition of Learning Outcomes

It is important that all solidarity activities are either formally or informally validated. It is best practice to recognise the time spent on the project through a course of study, but less formal methods are also acceptable, such as certificates of achievement created by the beneficiaries. More formal methods of validation should be utilised as well, where possible, and these include:

Youthpass
Every young person taking part in a solidarity activity is entitled to receive a Youthpass certificate. Youthpass describes and validates the non-formal and informal learning experience acquired during the project (i.e. learning outcomes).

Youthpass can also be used during the project activities as a tool to help participants to become more aware of their learning process. For support and more information on Youthpass, please consult the publications page on Youthpass website. You can find a variety of publications that explain the key competences of Youthpass, like 'Youthpass Unfolded' and other useful information on the website, like leaflets, newsletters, games or essays.

Through the Youthpass process, the reflection on learning becomes more structured and the educational value of the project is strengthened. It makes the learning of the participants more conscious. By putting emphasis on the learning processes and its outcomes, it raises the participants' awareness of learning in a diversity of contexts and helps them to reflect on their learning wishes and needs.

Europass

The UK NA recommends using Europass to validate participants' time spent on a project. Europass is a European wide initiative that aims to help individuals to present and document their skills and qualifications in a clear and transparent way throughout Europe. Europass consists of five documents that enable potential employers to understand which subject has been studied, what training has been completed and how much experience has been gained.

4.1.11 Evaluation

Evaluation is a key process within your project as it allows you to measure to what extent you have met the aims of the project and identify where improvements can be made. You should **evaluate the performance of the project throughout its lifecycle and as soon as the project has finished** in order to guarantee an accurate recall of events.

When planning your evaluation strategy, you could start by asking yourself:

- What are you evaluating?
- What are your KPIs for the project?
- Who should be involved?
- What methods should you use to measure progress and outcomes?
- When should you evaluate?
- How should you use your findings?

To help you answer these questions, you should check your application as you will be expected to follow the evaluation plans set out there.

The following hints and tips should be of help with your evaluation strategy:

- Involve all parties who had a role in the project, such as participants and any other project partners.
- Circulate the results of the final evaluation to appropriate people and organisations in order to increase dissemination and impact of the project.

- Identify the key improvements that need to be made in subsequent project activities.
- Identify the key improvements that need to be made in subsequent funding applications as the assessors of any future application(s) would expect to see that the results of your past evaluations have been taken into account in the planning of the next project.
- In the Final Report to the UK NA explain how the different forms of evaluations received have led to changes in the project and training provision, if applicable, but if no changes have been made, please give reasons why.
- Please remember to evaluate each phase of the project lifecycle, from the usefulness of your preparatory activities right through to your dissemination techniques.

Alongside your own evaluation processes, Participant Reports sent automatically by the MT+ to the participants after the project is finished, is another way for you to evaluate the project and its impact on the individuals involved in it. More information about Participant Reports can be found in section *4.3 Participant Reports*.

4.1.12 Impact

The European Solidarity Corps Guide defines impact as **"the effect that the activity carried out and its results have on people, practices, organisations and systems".** In order to be considered as best practice and to support high quality within your project, you should place a focus on impact at all levels throughout the project lifecycle.

Why is impact important?

Hopefully making a positive impact is what has driven you to apply for European Solidarity Corps funding and you wish to improve the provisions in your local community, area and/or region. Impact is also very important because it is one of the key areas against which your project will be assessed by the UK NA, so that we are able to offer support when needed and spread the word about what can be achieved with the awarded funding. As a result, it is imperative that you are clear from the start about what impacts you want to achieve with your project and that you set up appropriate mechanisms to measure these impacts.
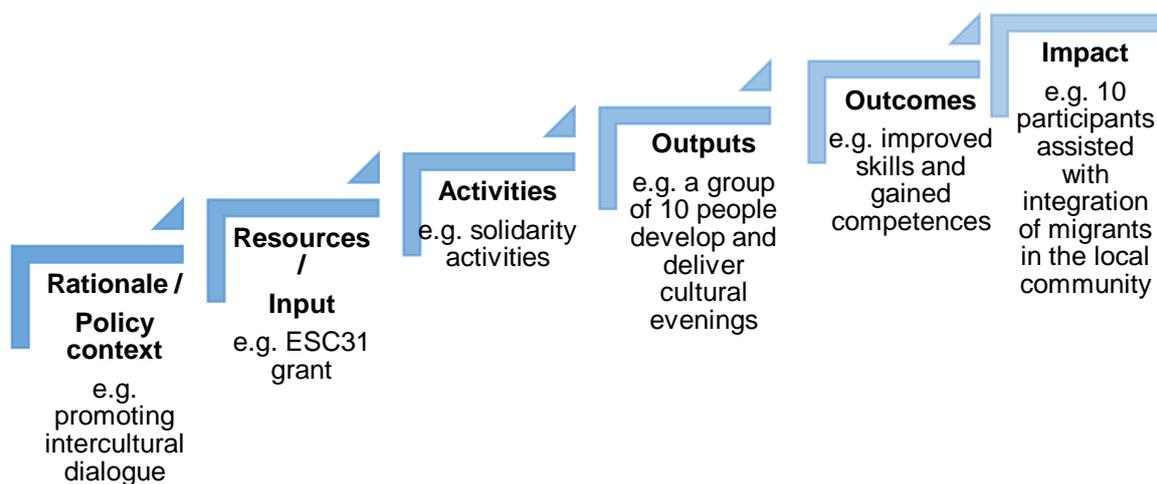
The UK NA will ask for information about your project's impact during UK NA monitoring activities, the Interim Report(s) (where applicable) and the Final Report. Whilst detailed guidance is provided before you submit your Final Report, you should understand that impact (e.g. on participants, on the community, on project target groups and on the participating organisations, if applicable) is one of the three key assessment areas of your project.

> **Important note**
>
> Do not just wait for the UK NA to ask about the impact of your project during regular UK NA monitoring activities. Give them a call or email them to let them know about your project successes!

Creating impact

The model below shows how you can create impact and gives examples to illustrate each step of the process. This starts from identifying the rationale for your project activities i.e., the needs of your participants and any other relevant stakeholder(s). This also establishes a baseline against which the progress can be measured. You should then make sure that all the project activities and results fit well with your rationale.

Rationale / Policy context
e.g. promoting intercultural dialogue

Resources / Input
e.g. ESC31 grant

Activities
e.g. solidarity activities

Outputs
e.g. a group of 10 people develop and deliver cultural evenings

Outcomes
e.g. improved skills and gained competences

Impact
e.g. 10 participants assisted with integration of migrants in the local community

How to effectively report on impact at the Final Report stage?

Check your application to remind yourself of the project's expected impact and the methods you planned to use in order to create and capture such impact. At the Final Report stage, you will be expected to report as a minimum on the outcomes of your planned impacts and actions, but feel free to add to your original plans any supplementary information, such as unexpected impact(s) of your project.

Avoid copying and pasting any information included in the application form into your Final Report: your report should contain meaningful details about what impacts were **actually achieved**, whether targets were met and, if not, why.

If the timeframe for submitting your Final Report does not allow you to see the medium- or long-term impact of your project, please detail how you intend to evaluate this in the future to see further impacts and if the impact of the project is sustainable.

Measuring impact - Hints and Tips

Here are some practical suggestions on how to evaluate the outcomes and impacts of your project:

- Use an **evaluation form** that participants can complete to evaluate different aspects of the project as well as the impact it has had on them. Ask participants to complete forms **at different stages of the project**, so they can better measure any developments and differences. For instance, they can fill in forms before, during and after their involvement in the project, as long as the evaluation form contains the same type of questions in order to allow you to draw any comparisons (e.g., on a scale of 1 -10, how confident do you feel?)

- You could **also interview participants** at different stages of your project, for instance, to see how they feel they have progressed.

- **Don't involve just your participants, but also other people from the local community**, e.g. the target group of the project, people from the community that benefitted from your project.

- For short periods, give participants **daily diaries**, which ask how the activities undertaken have impacted on their needs and met the aims they have set for themselves. Be clear with your participants that these diaries are not a private account and that they will be shared. A common format would help with this.

- Explore some **innovative evaluation tools** such as Blobtree. This tool uses a simple cartoon image of non-specific characters and asks you to consider which character you most identify with. It could be suitable if you are trying to elicit views from participants who may not be comfortable with expressing themselves verbally.

- Use any **existing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** within your applicant organisation (if applicable) and link them to your project, or create your own KPIs and measure your project against them.

- Although with projects the most immediate impact is likely to be on the participants, don't forget to capture the **full impact** the project has had or will have on other stakeholders and your local community as well as on people at all levels of the project, including any partners (if applicable) and yourself as a Project Manager or people indirectly involved in your project.


Important note

Given that Solidarity Projects should be directly linked to the local community the participants live in, you will have to ensure impact is measured at community level as well. However, you can also tackle regional or even national issues. As such, it is important that impact is assessed at all levels: local (community based), regional and national (if applicable).

4.1.13 Dissemination

Dissemination is the process of communicating project **results, successes, and outcomes** as widely as possible. You should aim to implement the dissemination plan outlined in your application form, while continually building on this. An effective plan encompasses *why*, *what*, *how*, *when*, *to whom* and *where*.

Dissemination activities should be considered throughout the project lifecycle, including during and after the funding period, and they should link into your evaluation strategy. Dissemination should consist of both **tangible outcomes** and **intangible outcomes**, such as skills and personal experiences that both project organisers and participants have gained.
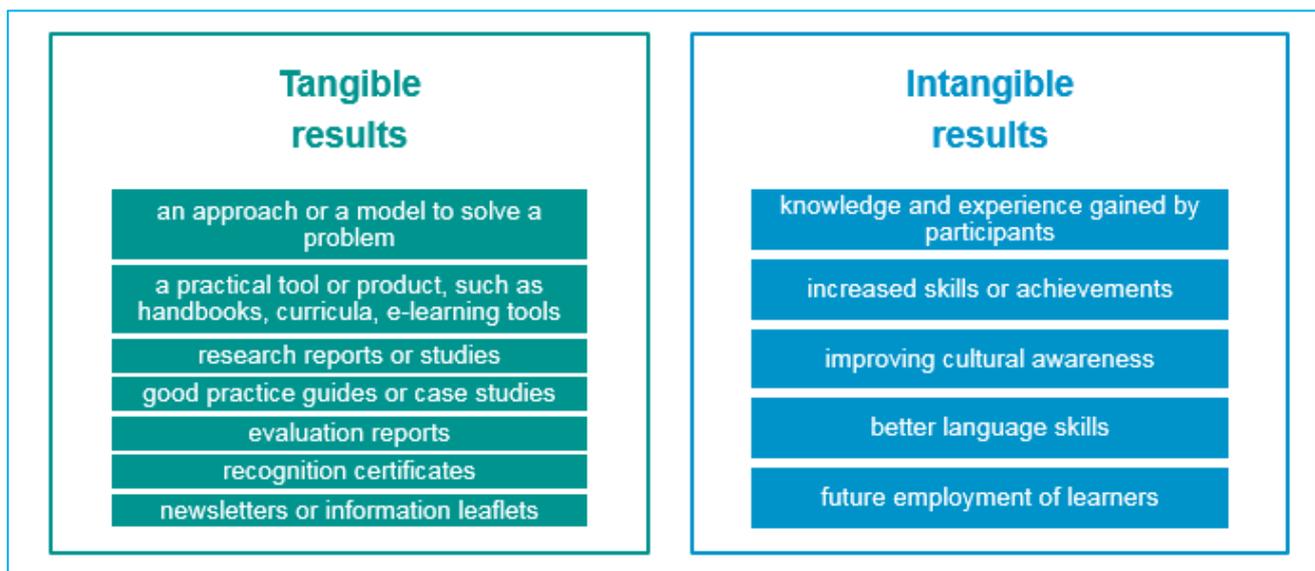
Dissemination is an integral part of all European Solidarity Corps funded projects and should raise awareness about your project as well as highlight its outcomes. Participants and beneficiaries should all be involved with the dissemination activities. Good practice and lessons learnt should be implemented through wider networks at local, regional, national and/or European levels.

Projects that have good results on a participant level and on a wider scale may be used as case studies featured on the European Solidarity Corps website and in other media, which is another way of disseminating the outcomes and impacts that your project has had on participants, involved organisations (if applicable) and the wider community. If possible, it would be beneficial to not only send to UK NA written information, but also photographic evidence and/or videos of the participants on their project at Final Report.

European Solidarity Corps Project Results Platform

The European Solidarity Corps Project Results Platform (ESCPRP) is a web-based dissemination platform which offers a comprehensive overview of all European Solidarity Corps funded projects and highlights good practice examples and success stories. It serves several different purposes:

- Transparency, as it will provide a comprehensive overview of all projects funded under the initiative (including project summaries, funding figures, URL links, etc.)
- Accountability
- Inspiration.

The tool is useful in disseminating the outcomes of your project and makes any tangible resources, products, deliverables and outputs that have resulted from projects funded under the Corps (as well as from a selection of projects funded under the previous programmes/initiatives) available to a wider audience. The platform is a potential source of information and serves as a project database and a community for sharing best practice for projects.

The summary of your project, submitted with your application, will be automatically published on the platform and you are encouraged to update the platform with your project outcomes and results, where relevant, during the lifetime of your project. The platform gives more visibility and exposure to particularly high-performing projects, making it a useful tool to find new partners or projects of interest to you. You should review your contact details regularly and ensure these are regularly updated on the platform.

European Union (EU) Emblem

Whether you are directly responsible for the management of your project or promoting the available funding opportunities, **you are required to use the European Commission's emblem and associated wording** for any project outputs and promotional materials produced by your project, and to publicly acknowledge the support received from the European Union. This also applies to any events, conferences and seminars organised as part of your project.

When acknowledging the received support, there is a range of ways to display the emblem, such as those shown below:

Downloadable templates and full branding guidelines for European Solidarity Corps projects in the UK are available on our website together with a guide to using the EU emblem.

4.2 Financial Management of your Grant

Your European Solidarity Corps grant is regarded as a **contribution** to your project costs and is not intended to cover the total cost of running your project. For Solidarity Projects, you will have the following budget headings:

- Project Management
- Coaching Costs (if applicable)
- Exceptional Costs (if applicable).

Throughout the project lifecycle, you must ensure that you have in place clear financial reporting mechanisms to manage your European Solidarity Corps grant, as outlined in Annex II of your Grant Agreement. At the Final Report stage, only evidence for expenditure incurred under Exceptional Costs and Coaching Costs will need to be provided. **The evidence for the other budget headings should be kept in case of an audit or further checks**. You will be required to manage and report on your project finances via Mobility Tool+ on a regular basis.

4.2.1. Audit Arrangements

It is a requirement that you set up an appropriate accounting system which identifies all sources of funding and expenditure relating to the project and incurred during the contracted period.

The European Commission may request an external audit or wish to arrange a random inspection of your project accounts after the project has been completed. You are, therefore, required to keep all the original documents relating to the implementation and financial management of your project for **a period of three years or up to five years, if your awarded grant exceeds €60,000.00,** after the final payment has been made. However, if your project is subject to checks and audits after the final payment or there are any ongoing appeals and litigations which last longer than the periods specified above, you must keep the project-related documents until these processes have been finalised.

4.2.2. Reporting on Mobility Tool+ (budget categories)

Project Management Costs

These funds form a contribution to costs linked to the project's management and implementation (for example preparation, planning, implementation of activities, coordination and communication, evaluation, dissemination and follow-up activities). They are calculated based on the project's duration in months, with the following rate: €500.00 per month.

These amounts have been allocated automatically by the system and will appear in Mobility Tool+ without any option to amend them.

Coaching Costs

This budget heading is allocated to cover costs linked to the involvement of a coach in the project (if applicable) and it is calculated on a unit cost basis according to the venue country and the number of working days (a maximum of 12 days can be requested), with the following rate for the UK: €214.00 per day.

Exceptional Costs

This budget category covers the **actual costs** to support the participation of young people with fewer opportunities. Please ensure costs requested under this budget are not covered by any other unit cost budget category.

Up to 100% of eligible costs claimed under Exceptional Costs will be reimbursed (up to the amount awarded for this budget category), on the condition that relevant invoices and receipts are provided to the UK NA.

You can claim **COVID-19** related costs under this budget category. Please note, that any costs incurred in relation to the current pandemic will be eligible ONLY IF they are necessitated by the relevant national authorities and a pre-requisite but NOT when they are a precautionary measure in a situation where project activities can be conducted as usual. Please see section 4.1.1 for further details.

To claim Exceptional Costs, you should report the type and cost of these expenses in the Mobility Tool+, for the relevant participant, and comment on what the money was spent on. Please refer to Annex III (GA) for the information on the supporting documentation required for this budget heading.

At Final Report stage, you will be required to provide proof of payment for incurred costs, based on invoices specifying the name and address of the body issuing the invoice, the amount and currency as well as the date of the invoice. All provided invoices will have to comply to the national requirements. Please ensure your invoices are compliant as per the following source: https://www.gov.uk/invoicing-and-taking-payment-from-customers/invoices-what-they-must-include

4.2.3. Eligibility of Costs

Throughout your project, you will need to ensure that the costs you incur are in line with the budget approved by the UK NA, as shown in Annex II (GA). If you wish to make changes to your budget during the project lifetime, please double-check which procedure you need to follow:

(a) the rules set out in the Article I.3.3 (GA), or

(b) submit a Contract Amendment Request to the ESC Team at the UK NA – this will ensure that incurred costs based on your revised budget are eligible.

The Grant Agreement and the European Solidarity Corps Guide provide key information regarding the eligibility of costs. The below table points you to the direction of key sections within the documents that you should review.

Topic	Location of relevant information in the Grant Agreement (GA)	Location of relevant information in the 2020 Corps Guide
eligibility of costs incurred under budget headings based on unit cost contributions	Article I.1, Annex III	N/A
eligibility of costs incurred under budget headings based on reimbursement of actual costs	Article II.1, Annex III	p. 77 – 78, 'Eligible costs'
eligibility of project activities	Article III, Annex III	p. 54, 'Eligibility criteria'
eligibility of Value Added Tax (VAT)	Article II.19.2, Annex I	p. 78, 'Value Added Tax (VAT)'
ineligible costs	Article II.19.4, Annex I	p. 78, 'Ineligible Costs'

Please note that VAT only relates to costs incurred under budget headings based on reimbursement of actual costs, i.e. Exceptional Costs.

4.2.4 Subcontracting

You are expected to complete the project management and implementation of your European Solidarity Corps project. These **core tasks cannot be sub-contracted** as outlined in Article II.11 of the General Conditions contained in Annex I (GA).

The aforementioned article also outlines the additional conditions which need to be followed if you do find that you want to subcontract tasks forming part of the project and those should be read before entering into any subcontracting arrangements.

Page 84 of the 2020 Corps Guide also provides information on sub-contracting and award of procurement contracts.

The project should be implemented by the group of young people. If your project is managed by someone who is not part of the group, then the UK NA will consider them a sub-contractor and therefore the group or applicant organisation must comply with the above articles in order for their activities to be viewed as eligible. It is important to understand that **if an organisation has applied on behalf of the group of young people, their role is mainly administrative, to support the group in the project life-cycle administrative and financial tasks. However, it can also offer support and guidance in identifying and documenting learning outcomes.**

Furthermore, **the activities that a sub-contracted organisation or individual can deliver within the project are also limited to non-core project activities**.

> **Important note**
>
> *Ineligible costs*
>
> Please note that any payments for contributions in kind from third parties are not eligible under the financial rules of the European Solidarity Corps. For example, any work carried out on your behalf to support submitting an application cannot be paid for by any part of the grant from your successful application.

4.2.5 Exchange Rates

Please note that the UK NA will make all grant payments in Euro.

You are strongly advised to set up a Euro bank account as any costs incurred because of exchange rates will not be covered by the grant.

For projects that received a pre-financing payment, to convert any costs incurred in currencies other than Euro, as per Article I.4.9 in Special Conditions (GA), you should use the monthly exchange rate established by the Commission and published on its website (https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/how-eu-funding-works/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/exchange-rate-inforeuro_en) applicable on the day you received your pre-financing payment from the UK NA. You must use this exchange rate until the date of the next pre-financing payment, where the same process applies.

For projects without any pre-financing, you should use the exchange rate based on the monthly accounting rate established by the Commission and published on its website (https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/how-eu-funding-works/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/exchange-rate-inforeuro_en) applicable on the day when the agreement is signed by the last of the two parties. You must use this rate until the end of your project.

4.3 Participant Reports

All participants undertaking a solidarity activity should complete their own individual Participant Report. Once the project has finished and the relevant information is completed on the MT+, the tool will automatically send the Participant Report via email to the young person to complete. Therefore, it is important to keep the MT+ up to date with any ongoing activities details. Participants should complete their reports as soon as possible after the project ends. Therefore, it is a good idea to schedule an event for participants to complete their reports together soon after the end of the Solidarity Project.

The automatic email from MT+, providing the link to the Participant Report, will state "*Do not reply*" in the title and may go to the participant's spam folder. It is important to advise your participants of this to ensure

that they do not delete this email. If participants do delete this email, you can resend them the link to their Participant Report via MT+. The tool will send the link overnight, so the participant should wait 24 hours for the new link to be received. Please see the EC Online Guide for using the Mobility Tool+ for more information.

A Participant Report is a very simple online questionnaire completed through EUSurvey and it covers the following areas:

- Identification of the Participant and General Information
- General Satisfaction
- Quality of the Corps Activity
- Assessing Impact (overall evaluation)
- Learning Outcomes (including competences developed by participants and professional development)
- Future Prospects
- Linguistic Skills
- Certification and Formal Recognition
- General Comments and Recommendations
- Publication and Usage Rights of the Information and of the Email Address.

4.4 Payment Arrangements

Each project will have a different payment structure. A typical payment structure will be as follows:

Payment Structure	First Payment	Second Payment	Final Payment
Standard Structure (for the majority of European Solidarity Corps projects)	70% of the total grant amount	N/A	up to 30% of total grant amount and upon the approval of the Final Report

Organisations that have a weaker financial capacity, poor liquidity, poor track record in terms of repayment of refunds, late reporting and/or loss of financial documents may be subject to a different payment structure at the discretion of the UK NA.

You have been notified of your payment structure when you received your Grant Agreement, details of which will be contained within.

The first pre-financing payment will be made automatically and no later than 30 days after the contract has been signed by both the UK NA and the beneficiary. The final payment will be made no later than 60 days after submission of a satisfactory Final Report and associated documentation to the UK NA.

Please note that the UK NA will make all grant payments in Euros. You must ensure that your bank account can receive the funds in Euros as the UK NA is not responsible for any delay caused because of the bank

account's inability to receive such payment(s). **It is advisable to set up a Euro bank account as costs incurred because of exchange rates or bank transfers will not be covered by the UK NA or your European Solidarity Corps grant.**

If your payment structure is subject to a second and/or third pre-financing payment, you will be required to submit an Interim Report(s) to the UK NA by the date specified within Article I.4.3 (GA). Any further pre-financing payments will be made no later than 60 days after submission of a satisfactory Interim Report **and** if you have spent at least 70% of your first pre-financing payment. If 70% of your first pre-financing payment has not been spent, your second and/or third pre-financing payments will be made once this condition has been met.

4.5 Beneficiary Reports

4.5.1 Interim Reports

Some beneficiaries will be asked to complete (an) Interim Report(s) due halfway through the project lifecycle, as detailed in Article I.4.3 (GA). **For beneficiaries who receive less than 70% of the total grant amount as their first payment, an Interim Report will need to be submitted in order to request the next pre-financing instalment of your grant.**

The Interim Report is a document that asks you to provide **a comprehensive overview** of how the project has been implemented and to provide budget information detailing how the grant has been spent to date, including relevant evidence where applicable.

At present, the Interim Reports are in a Word document format, the template of which will be sent by the UK NA to you for completion, along with comprehensive Beneficiary Guidance. However, the European Commission is currently planning to integrate this into the MT+, so please be aware that you may be asked to complete and submit this report in the same way as your Final Report, i.e. via the Mobility Tool+.

4.5.2 Final Reports

All beneficiaries are required to submit a Final Report via MT+ within 60 days following the end of their contracted project end date, as specified in Article I.4.4 (GA). The period for payment of the balance can therefore only start **after** the project end date, and whilst you are able to view and edit the narrative part of the report, **your Final Report** must not be submitted **prior to the end of the project's contracted period as specified in Article I.2.2 (GA)**. Although the main activity(ies) may be completed in advance of the project end date, other activities are also included in your project, such as the full evaluation of activities and dissemination, and those are expected to take place until the end of your project's contracted period. **Failure to carry out these other activities in full up to the contracted end date of your project may lead to the early submission of your Final Report to be treated as a termination of the project.** It may also result in the quality

assessment of your Final Report identifying that your project has been poorly and/or partially implemented, which could result in a reduction to the final grant amount, as detailed below and in Article II.25 of Annex I (GA).

Under the 2020 Call, the beneficiary Final Report must be submitted via the Mobility Tool+. For more technical guidance on how to access your Final Report, please refer to the comprehensive EC Online Guide for using the Mobility Tool+.

All beneficiaries must also gather and retain all necessary information and supporting documentary evidence for expenditure for certain aspects of your grant. Supporting documentation relating to Exceptional Costs (if applicable) needs to be sent to the UK NA electronically. Failure to produce supporting documentation may result in a given cost being deemed ineligible for funding. Information about the supporting documentation required for the Final Report can be found in Annex III (GA). You should review the documents required before the start of your project.

The UK NA will notify you when your Final Report is due and provide you with a comprehensive Final Report Beneficiary Guidance in good time for you to complete and submit your report by the deadline date.

Important note

Final Report must be submitted online and on time for the final payment to be released (upon a successful assessment of the report). Failure to report or report correctly will result in some of the European Solidarity Corps funding being withdrawn and/or a request for recovery being issued.

Final Report content

Your Final Report will be made up of a qualitative and financial sections which will be used to assess the extent to which your project was completed in line with your initial application. Once the UK NA has assessed your Final Report, you will receive a Final Report outcome letter with the score, along with the amount of the final grant instalment.

Final Report Sections	Solidarity Projects (ESC31)
General Information	✓
Context	✓
Project Summary	✓
Participants of the Group	✓

Description of the Project	✓
Project Implementation	✓
Impact and Dissemination	✓
Budget	✓
Annexes	✓

How will my Final Report be assessed?

Your Final Report will be assessed by expert assessors on the basis of quality criteria and scored out of a maximum total of 100 points. If the Final Report scores less than 50 points in total, the UK NA will reduce the final grant amount on the basis of poor, partial or late implementation of the project, even if all activities reported were eligible and actually took place. **Your Final Report should therefore be detailed and provide examples of best practice and achievements**, where possible, and explain any issues experienced and how you tried to overcome them to meet the original aims and objectives of the project.

The Final Report will be assessed using a common set of quality criteria focusing on:

- the extent to which the action was implemented in line with the approved grant application
- the quality of the learning outcomes and impact on participants
- the impact on the local community
- the extent to which the learning process in the project was reflected upon
- the quality of the practical arrangements provided, in terms of preparation, monitoring and support offered to participants during the project
- the quality of evaluation and dissemination processes.

In accordance with Annex I and Annex III (GA and Annex VI to FA), your final grant amount will be subject to reductions for poor, partial or late implementation of the project, which will be applied to the final grant amount for Project Management and may be of:

- 25% if the Final Report scores between 40 and 49 points (both included)
- 50% if the Final Report scores between 25 and 39 points (both included)
- 75% if the Final Report scores between 0 and 24 points (both included).

Poor, partial or late implementation of the project may also be established by the UK NA on the basis of the reports from individual participants taking part in the project activities.

Desk Checks

Some projects will be selected randomly to receive a Desk Check which will be undertaken after the Final Report is received by the UK NA. If your project is selected for a Desk Check, the UK NA will request original copies of supporting documentation (i.e. invoices, receipts, bank statements, etc.) to evidence the 'triggering event' and the eligibility of costs claimed in the Final Report, in order to establish the final approved grant amount. The UK NA will provide you with guidance on the documentation required if you have been selected for a Desk Check.

5. More Help and Advice

Please remember that this Handbook only covers the main areas of the project lifecycle and that the guidance is supplementary to your Grant Agreement and Annexes, which you should always refer to first when checking any contractual requirements. Please continue to refer to the 2020 European Solidarity Corps Guide during your project to ensure that you are managing your grant in accordance with the Corps rules. The ESC Team is on hand to help you with any queries you may have regarding your project. You are advised to contact them directly and in the first instance, via the contact details that have been provided to you with your countersigned Grant Agreement. Please quote your project reference number in all correspondence with the UK NA.

You can also contact the wider European Solidarity Corps Team by:

Helpline email: eusolidaritycorps@ecorys.com

Office working hours (excluding public holidays):

Monday – Thursday   09:00 – 17:30
Friday   09:00 – 17:00

You can expect a response to your email(s) within two working days.

Social Media

No further activity will take place on our social media platforms. Nonetheless, you can find further information about the European Solidarity Corps by following these channels:

Sign up to our newsletter - https://eusolidaritycorps.us18.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=5432ce516969b56fd6ea361cc&id=38f50add9f

Follow us on Twitter - @eucorps_UK / https://twitter.com/eucorps_UK

Like us on Facebook - https://www.facebook.com/EUSolidarityCorpsUK

View our European Solidarity Corps UK YouTube channel