Mapping and Analysis of Research on Youth Volunteering in Europe

Explanatory Report

SALTO
EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY CORPS

Federica Demicheli, Davide Tonon, Michelangelo Belleti, Dragan Atanasov

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Strategic National Agencies' Cooperation on Volunteering

This research is a **part of a series of studies** carried out within Strategic National Agencies' Cooperation on Volunteering (SNAC Volunteering).

The primary aim of this long-term partnership on volunteering is **strengthening the European Solidarity Corps Programme and volunteering in general** and to put solidarity at its core.

The SNAC Volunteering is the cooperation between 14 National Agencies and 2 SALTOs and is coordinated by the SALTO European Solidarity Corps from 2023 to 2027. The cooperation supports the implementation of the Council Recommendations on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the European Union.

The SNAC Volunteering provides space for knowledge exchange and networking in the Europe and its partner regions.

The main areas of activity of SNAC Volunteering are:

- Analysis (including research and publications)

- Visibility & Advocacy to improve the conditions for volunteering in the European Solidarity Corps programme (including communication work and online events)

- Knowledge exchange (including networking events)

This research contributes to the field of analysis, provides necessary data for the future development of the European Solidarity Corps programme and of the field of volunteering in general.

Other research topics:

- Mapping Study of European Civic Engagement Frameworks and Their Links with Youth Volunteering

- Exploration of the Complementarity and Synergies of the European Solidarity Corps Programme with other EU Youth Programmes

- Working Title: Explore Needs of Young People and Organisations in the Volunteering Field That Lead to New Trends in Volunteering and Solidarity Activities

- Mapping and Analysis of Research on Youth Volunteering in Europe

More research is planned in the SNAC Volunteering.

Stay tuned!

Preface

By initiating this research within the Strategic National Agencies Cooperation (SNAC) on Volunteering, the SALTO European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre (SALTO ESC) and its partners aim to develop a holistic overview and in-depth insight into the existing research on youth volunteering in Europe.

In recent years, a lot of research and studies have been carried out in the field of youth and volunteering. In order to make better use of the existing data and to make the results usable within the network, a meta-level mapping study like this one is crucial.

The aims of this research were:

- Gain a holistic overview of the research that has been carried out in recent years
- Identify the similarities and differences in existing research relevant to the European Solidarity Corps programme
- Provide an in-depth analysis of specific elements that will allow us to advocate for better conditions for ESC volunteering and engagement of young people.

The team of researchers Federica Demicheli, Davide Tonon, Michelangelo Belleti and Dragan Atanasov worked with over 40 studies and research. They brought their experience in the fields of volunteering, service learning, youth work, youth policy research at national and European level.

This explanatory report presents their findings.

For an overview of the research the team analysed, see <u>Annex 1</u>.

We wish you an inspiring reading!

Jana Randa
SALTO European Solidarity Corps

Introduction

This publication presents the findings of a mapping exercise conducted to identify and compare existing research on volunteering programmes and policies at the European and national levels. The mapping outlines the key objectives of the research, including gathering main research on volunteering, defining indicators, presenting the analysis outline, comparing existing research, conducting a peer-review, and preparing a final report. The research draws on documents, papers, and former research results related to volunteering schemes and programmes at national level, European level (e.g., European Solidarity Corps, EU AID) and broader international level.

The mapping went through several phases, starting with the development of research questions and the overall framework. The work process involved gathering studies from Europe and beyond, while primarily focusing on European and national levels. The mapping process identified relevant documents through engagement with National Agencies (NAs), SALTOs, universities, and networks of organisations involved in volunteering, as well as browsing through scientific databases available online. Studies were selected, based on predetermined criteria, and coding was conducted to analyse details, methodology, and results. The explanatory report provides an overview of research areas and their potential application in the field of European Solidarity Corps.

The mapping aimed to provide clear and comparable indicators for analysing youth volunteering programmes and policies in Europe. The team prepared a draft set of indicators, which was finalised after receiving feedback from the partners of the Strategical National Agencies´ Cooperation on Volunteering. The analysis of documents was based on these indicators, which were designed to be simple, achievable, and applicable in future stages of the mapping process.

The results are presented in an explanatory report that outlines the analysed studies, their outcomes according to the established indicators, and recommendations. The final report incorporates feedback from the SALTO European Solidarity Corps and SNAC Volunteering partners. The report also includes the research questions that guided the study and a grid for mapping existing research, specifying the title, publisher, author(s), year of publication, research type, volunteer programmes studied, geographical scope, target audience, and programme duration.

Overall, this mapping provides a comprehensive overview of existing research on youth volunteering, highlights main findings, and offers recommendations for enhancing the quality of volunteering programmes and youth engagement, particularly in the context of the European Solidarity Corps.

The mapping provides an overview of the main topics that were studied in accordance with the selected indicators, highlighting key points for each section:

1. Motivation Factors for Young Volunteers:
   - personal motivations (altruism, personal growth, learning, career development)
   - external factors (geographical differences, political/economic characteristics, societal development, social trust)

2. Framework and Policies for European Volunteering Schemes:
   - lack of unified definitions and regulations across European countries
   - need for common understanding and consistent frameworks
   - European Commission programmes (European Solidarity Corps, European Voluntary Service)

- importance of staying updated on latest legislation and adapting policies

3. Volunteering as a Learning Experience:
   - personal benefits (personal growth, skills acquisition, cultural competencies)
   - organisational benefits (contribution to activities, capacity enhancement)
   - community benefits (social connections, philanthropy, community ownership)
   - need for volunteer support, resource allocation, and responsible practices

4. Volunteering Recognition:
   - government and policy recognition (tax incentives, national service initiatives)
   - organisational recognition (dedicated programmes, recognition events, awards)
   - social recognition (highlighting success stories, positive impact on society)
   - international recognition (global development goals, cross-cultural exchange)
   - individual recognition (valuing volunteer experience in employment opportunities)
   - standardised certification for volunteer competencies

5. European Dimension of Volunteering:
   - need for research on volunteering's impact on European identity and citizenship
   - exploration of volunteering within and outside European borders
   - volunteering's contribution to active European citizenship
   - integration of European schemes into national frameworks and inclusivity

6. Volunteering and Solidarity:
   - research gaps in empathy, active participation, inclusion, and human rights
   - role of volunteering in fostering empathy and understanding different perspectives
   - political nature of volunteering and its contribution to active citizenship
   - inclusion and support for disadvantaged volunteers
   - promoting and upholding human rights through volunteering

Research design

The mapping identifies and compares the existing research results about volunteering programmes and policies on European level and national ones identified through the different networks in which the team members belong, but also by consulting relevant stakeholders. The mapping provides a set of clear comparable indicators for analysis of existing studies on youth volunteering programmes and policies in Europe. The researchers base their analysis and scanning of the research on the identified and agreed indicators. The explanatory report provides an overview about the main areas of research development and how these could be upscaled in future paths of explorations and especially how some of them could be upscaled in the field of ESC. The report provides an overview of the main outcomes and conclusions confirmed by more studies.

The research went through the following phases:

1. Developing research questions and the overall framework (in the research team and with the SALTO European Solidarity Corps): defining the structure to make the key decisions on the types of studies to be included, where to look for them; how to assess their quality; how to combine their findings, and the prior assumptions taken for granted.

2. Defining selection criteria for the review and developing the search strategy: the databases in which the data will be found and the keywords to be used.

3. Preparation of a draft set of indicators to be presented to the SNAC Volunteering partners. The final set of indicators to be created upon incorporating the received feedback.

4. Selecting the studies to be analysed, using the criteria and databases previously defined. Final list of studies to be analysed to be confirmed with the SNAC Volunteering partners.

5. Desk review and coding the studies, describing (i) details of the studies to enable mapping of the research done; (ii) how the research was done to allow assessment of the quality and relevance of the studies in addressing the review question; (iii) the results of each study according to the established indicators, so that these can be synthesised to answer the review question.

6. Creating a synthesis of the analysed research, identifying findings that may be useful in answering the research questions.

7. Peer review of the synthesis by a team member to reconfirm that the document responds to the needs and the set indicators.

8. The results are presented in an explanatory report outlining the analysed studies, the main outcomes according to the indicators and recommendations. The final report includes the feedback from the SALTO European Solidarity Corps.

Research questions

The research questions of this study were defined in consultation with the representatives of SNAC Volunteering partners. The three main questions were:

- **What research has been conducted in the last 10 years on the topic of youth volunteering at international and national level in Europe, and what are the main topics that have been studied?**

- **What are the main outcomes of existing research in the areas that are relevant for the European Solidarity Corps programme, as well as the main similarities and differences in the findings?**

- **What are the main findings from existing research that can act as a basis to advocate for increased quality (policies, approaches, actions) for ESC volunteering and youth engagement?**

Grid for mapping existing research

The first output of the research was a grid of all documents that were identified according to the established criteria and then used for analysis. The grid is attached to the final report, and it includes the following information:

- title of the study
- publisher and author(s)
- year of publishing
- type of research (qualitative, quantitative, both)
- volunteer programme(s) studied
- geographical scope of the volunteering programme(s)
- target audience of the volunteering programme(s)
- duration of the programme(s) and the volunteering activities

Areas for comparing and analysing existing research

The research team and the SNAC Volunteering partners agreed on a set of areas to be used for analysing the identified documents. These areas acted as indicators for the mapping process.

- Motivation and profiles of volunteers, and how they are changing

- Frameworks and policies of European Volunteering Programmes:
  - what are the legal frameworks and policies about volunteering that are studied in existing research?
  - who are the main stakeholders related to volunteering?

- Volunteering as a learning experience:
  - how can volunteering be an experience for learning and competence development?
  - how can volunteering support an individual's future orientation (study, work, further volunteering)?

- Impact of volunteering:
    - what kind of impact volunteering has at a:
        - personal
        - organisational and
        - community level

- European dimension of volunteering:
    - how can volunteering reinforce European identity?
    - how can volunteering reinforce European citizenship?

- Recognition of volunteering:
    - what is the overall perception of volunteering like?
    - what is the state of social recognition of volunteering?
    - what is the state of formal recognition of volunteering?

- Volunteering fostering solidarity:
    - how can/does volunteering in "programmes" foster:
        - further participation
        - further Civic engagement
        - further volunteering
        - inclusion
        - intercultural competences

The next chapter includes a summary of the main outcomes from the analysis, organised per topic according to the set indicators.

Motivation and profiles of volunteers

The main motivation factors for young people to get involved in volunteering schemes

Fourteen of the analysed studies address the question of why young people volunteer. However, this issue is most often addressed in a wider sense, considering not only the personal motivation factors of the young person, but also the external factors that can play a role.

One of the main conclusions found in multiple studies is that the decision to engage in volunteering is governed not just by the wish or desire to volunteer, but also by certain factors that have to do with the individual and the wider context. The analysed papers present findings from various earlier studies and models which tackle the question from different perspectives, while still finding evidence that external factors play a major role in the decision to volunteer. Some studies are trying to explain the reasons behind geographical differences in Europe by analysing various political and economic characteristics in different countries, pointing to, for example, positive correlation between high volunteering rates and the overall development and economic growth[1], political liberties and the level of social trust[2]. The importance of societal and cultural factors is also noted, with "certain pre-existing aspects such as religious beliefs or ideologies could be playing an important role as motivators"[3]. One of the studies found that young people originally coming from a country with lower volunteer rates tend to engage more in volunteering once they move to a country with higher volunteer rates, demonstrating that "the barriers blocking the development of volunteering may not be related to the national characteristics of the public but instead to other segments of the development, such as building a good social policy and social awareness of the impact of volunteering"[4].

When exploring the personal factors that influence the decision to volunteer, most studies distinguish between altruistic motivations (helping others, making a contribution) and those aimed at own benefit, such as: "personal growth, the desire to have a personal experience (Heron, 2007), travelling or seeking an adventure (Simpson, 2004), escaping from routine (Lo & Lee, 2011), career or skills development (Jones, 2011; Jones, 2010; Tiessen, 2012)[5]". Some of the studies point out to the predominant relevance of the latter, with results that "have clearly shown that the motivations of the European young people to engage in voluntary service were mainly focused on their own needs and interests rather than traditional values such as service to others and a sense of civic duty to the community."[6]. Such factors often come on top in conducted surveys within different studies:

- three most popular motivations: "use time between school and further education in a

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1 Gil-Lacruz A., Marcuello-Servós C., and Saz-Gil M., 'Youth Volunteering in Countries in the European Union: Approximation to Differences', 2016, Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly.

2 Enjorlas B., 'Explaining the Varieties of Volunteering in Europe: A Capability Approach', 2021, *Voluntas ISTR*.

3 'OBSERVATORY OF VOLUNTARY WORK: Lessons and reflections', 2020, *Observatorio del Voluntariado - España.*

4 Ogut E., 'Youth Volunteering in Sport: A Case Study of The Benefits of the European Voluntary Service for a Sport Organisation', 2014, *Physical Culture and Sport Studies and Research*.

5 Roman M., Muresan L-M, Manafi I., and Marinescu D., 'Volunteering as International Mobility: Recent Evidence from a Post-socialist Country', 2018, *Transnational Social Review*.

6 Jardim C. and Marques da Silva S., 'Young People Engaging in Volunteering: Questioning a Generational Trend in an Individualised Society', 2018, *Societies*.

purposeful way and to grow personally" (40-50% of respondents), "Get to know a specific sector or work environment" (30%) and "Learn and experience something new (30%)"[7];

- most relevant motivations: personal growth, helping others, learning something new[8];
- most important factors: self-development (19%), helping others (18%) and new experiences (18%)[9];
- most important motivations for youth volunteers: willingness to help others (73%), to learn something new (41%), meet new people (41%) I help because I may need help myself one day (37%), volunteering is in line with my interests (31%)[10];
- main motivation factors for young people to join French civic service: gain work experience (57%), have an income (39%), to change direction or career path or to discover a new sector of activity (27%), having a part-time job that leaves time for other projects (26%), carrying out a mission of general interest (23%)[11].

Although personal benefit factors appear predominant, most studies acknowledge the importance of both types of motivations, citing previous research pointing out "that both altruism and reputational concerns are positively associated with the decision to volunteer"[12]. One study found that volunteers "find their satisfaction in both the activity itself and the impact it has on the recipients"[13]. Another study explains this with a theory that "the satisfaction of all parties in a social relationship depends on reciprocal advantages and an exchange of benefits"[14]. Some of the studies refer to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, pointing out that "volunteering is related to the top section of the pyramid"[15], since it enables volunteers to "fulfil their own needs of self-actualisation[16]" by helping others. An evaluation of the national volunteering scheme Volunteering for International Solidarity found that as many as 40% of the respondents say that "the volunteering experience is motivated primarily by a selfless commitment"[17].

There are indications that motivation could be inflicted by the type of volunteering activity, with one study finding that "among young people, therefore, the main volunteering activity is related

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7 'Final Report on the Joint Evaluation of the Law on the Federal Volunteering Service (BFDG) and the Law on the Advancement of Youth Volunteering Services (JFDG)', 2015, German Bundesministärium fur Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend - Deutschland.

8 'U_count – Shaping Society Together', 2020, Deutsche Kinder- und Jugendstiftung.

9 Lubrańska A. and Zawira E., 'Motives of Contemporary Volunteers in the Aspect of Generational Differences (Motywy współczesnych wolontariuszy w aspekcie różnic pokoleniowych)', 2017, Łódź Theological Studies Quarterly.

10 'Diagnosis of the School Volunteering in Małopolskie voivodeship (Diagnoza wolontariatu szkolnego w województwie małopolskim)', 2021, Sursum Corda Association.

11 Quentin Francou, Évaluation du service civique - résultats de l'enquête sur les parcours et les missions des volontaires, 2021, INJEP.

12 Roman M., Muresan L-M, Manafi I., and Marinescu D., 'Volunteering as International Mobility: Recent Evidence from a Post-socialist Country', 2018, *Transnational Social Review*.

13 'OBSERVATORY OF VOLUNTARY WORK: Lessons and Reflections', 2020, *Observatorio del Voluntariado - España*.

14 Ogut E., 'Youth Volunteering in Sport: A Case Study of The Benefits of the European Voluntary Service for a Sport Organisation', 2014, *Physical Culture and Sport Studies and Research.*

15 'OBSERVATORY OF VOLUNTARY WORK: Lessons and Reflections', 2020, *Observatorio del Voluntariado - España*.

16 Jeżowski M. and Poszytek P., 'Theoretical Foundations and Practical Applications of E-volunteering within the European Solidarity Corps during the Outbreak of Covid-19 Pandemic in Poland', 2022, 13th International Multi-Conference on Complexity, Informatics and Cybernetics.

17 Évaluation du dispositif - Volontariat de Solidarité Internationale (VSI), 2022, France Volontaires.

to leisure, culture, sports and free-time activities, in general."[18]. A few of the studies explore the motivations for engaging in international voluntary service, such as the former European Voluntary Service. The conducted surveys and interviews point out that:

- main motivations to go to EVS were: "relation to their interests (47%), country (47%) which usually is connected with a desire to learn the language (47%) and the possibility of acquiring new skills and knowledge (47%)"[19];
- main factors ranged from "desire to escape from routine activities and/or relationships, with no specific preference regarding the target country and/or activity, very clear objectives and a well-defined rationale, such as the wish to engage in a meaningful experience in their own field of expertise, or interest in improving language skills and getting to know another culture"[20];
- European Voluntary Service was seen as "a recreational opportunity to escape unemployment and precariousness as well as a learning opportunity to acquire skills useful for their personal and professional life."[21];
- for young people with fewer opportunities, international volunteering was "a refuge from an insecure labour market and time off for solving personal and professional uncertainties"[22];
- for volunteers involved in the French national volunteering scheme Volunteering for International Solidarity, the most important criteria for choosing an assignment included the field of the mission (54%), the location of the mission (31%), the volunteering project activities (28%) and the host organisation (28%[23]);
- main motivations for Polish volunteers, as mentioned in social and civic activity of participants of foreign volunteering projects taking part in European volunteering projects were: I wanted to go abroad (57.2%), I sought adventure (53.5%), The subject matter of the project was interesting for me (44%), I wanted to do something good for the other people (40.1%), I wanted to gain some professional experience abroad (38.2%) and I wanted to learn a foreign language (37.5%)[24];

Only two studies explored why young people do not engage in volunteering activities, with the most popular answer in one study was having a "more attractive alternative (70%)"[25]. The other study listed "lack of time, lack of knowledge, lack of contact with social surroundings and voluntary

18 Gil-Lacruz A., Marcuello-Servós C., and Saz-Gil M., 'Youth Volunteering in Countries in the European Union: Approximation to Differences', 2016, Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly.

19 Williamson H., Hoskins B. with Boetzelen P., 'Charting the Landscape of European Youth Voluntary Activities', 2006, *Council of Europe*.

20 Roman M., Muresan L-M, Manafi I., and Marinescu D., 'Volunteering as International Mobility: Recent Evidence from a Post-socialist Country', 2018, *Transnational Social Review*.

21 Jardim C. and Marques da Silva S., 'Young People Engaging in Volunteering: Questioning a Generational Trend in an Individualised Society', 2018, *Societies*.

22 Pantea M.C., 'Young People in Cross-national Volunteering: Perceptions of Unfairness', 2012, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

23 Évaluation du dispositif - Volontariat de Solidarité Internationale (VSI), 2022, France Volontaires.

24 Jeżowski M. and Tragarz M., Social and Civic Activity of Participants of Foreign Volunteering Projects (Aktywność społeczna i obywatelska uczestników projektów wolontariatu zagranicznego), 2022, *FRSE publications*.

25 'Final Report on the Joint Evaluation of the Law on the Federal Volunteering Service (BFDG) and the Law on the Advancement of Youth Volunteering Services (JFDG)', 2015, Bundesministerium für Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend - Deutschland.

action in general, along with lack of awareness of the need for this action and a perceived inability to make a difference"[26].

When it comes to the influence of others on the decision to volunteer, one of the studies has found that young people join volunteering activities "mainly on their own initiative (73.3%), partly through the encouragement of peers (23.3%) and teachers (13.3%)"[27]. Another study found that "among young people, peer pressure from individuals of the same age is more influential than the pressure older people exert"[28].

The changes in motivational factors

Eight of the analysed studies explore whether and how motivation of young people to volunteer has changed in recent years. In general, they all agree that there is a shift in motivation, which some of them interpret as a change of the nature of volunteering itself.

Studies discuss that traditional volunteering is motivated "by helping others and characterised by altruistic attitudes"[29], and as such it is differentiated from what is referred to as "modern volunteering, and mixed volunteering"[30], pointing out that "altruism and charity in Europe are rooted in shared mediaeval institutions and practices, especially religious ones (e.g., the Catholic Church)"[31]. In contrast, they find that nowadays young people opt for volunteering because of new motivations, mostly related to own personal benefits, such as "career development, personal growth, useful leisure activity, work experience, and professional improvement"[32]. A study published in 2020 found "more focus on personal growth and learning something new in comparison to similar survey in 2015"[33], leading authors to conclude that "the personal gain from volunteering service becomes more relevant for young people"[34]. Another survey found that "young people see volunteering mainly as a way of self-development and opportunity for gaining new skills and experiences that could be useful in professional life"[35], in contrast to older volunteers, who are more often than young people "motivated for being volunteers mainly because of possibility for helping other people (18% young people compared to 26% of older volunteers)"[36] Due to such changes in motivation, one of the studies talks about an intergenerational transformation where "volunteering becomes

26 'OBSERVATORY OF VOLUNTARY WORK: Lessons and Reflections', 2020, *Observatorio del Voluntariado – España*.

27 Diagnosis of the School Volunteering in Małopolskie voivodeship (Diagnoza wolontariatu szkolnego w województwie małopolskim)', 2021, Sursum Corda Association.

28 Gil-Lacruz A., Marcuello-Servós C., and Saz-Gil M., 'Youth Volunteering in Countries in the European Union: Approximation to Differences', 2016, Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly.

29 Roman M., Muresan L-M, Manafi I., and Marinescu D., 'Volunteering as International Mobility: Recent Evidence from a Post-socialist Country', 2018, *Transnational Social Review*.

30 Ibid.

31 Enjorlas B., 'Explaining the Varieties of Volunteering in Europe: A Capability Approach', 2021, *Voluntas ISTR*.

32 Roman M., Muresan L-M, Manafi I., and Marinescu D., 'Volunteering as International Mobility: Recent Evidence from a Post-socialist Country', 2018, *Transnational Social Review*.

33 'U_count – Shaping Society Together', 2020, German Children and Youth Foundation.

34 Ibid.

35 Lubrańska A. and Zawira E., 'Motives of Contemporary Volunteers in the Aspect of Generational Differences (Motywy współczesnych wolontariuszy w aspekcie różnic pokoleniowych)', 2017, Łódź Theological Studies Quarterly.

36 Ibid.

less collective and more reflective or individualistic"[37], with volunteers adopting "more self-centred dispositions, they strive for both solidarity and personal development, selecting activities that maximise the personal benefits: self-realisation, social contacts, work experience and personal autonomy"[38].

Some of the studies are looking at the reasons that could potentially explain this change. Two of them draw parallels with the economic instability, job insecurity and higher unemployment rates, because of which "young people in various countries spend longer time in education and consequently take longer to establish themselves in the labour market, experiencing new forms of dependence on their families or the state for a longer time than the previous generation"[39]. The cited study finds that moving back and forth between family, school, work and unemployment in an effort to establish personal autonomy, influences the type of volunteering that young people engage in. Another study points out that, "it is likely that young people will use cross-border volunteering as a solution for dealing with employment insecurity at home"[40]. The same study adds that there are risks associated to these developments as organisations and states "may consider misusing/using volunteers as replacements for paid staff"[41], which requires an increased policy awareness.

Overall, the studies show that personal motivations for volunteering have changed over time, particularly among young people. In general, we can see a shift from altruistic and collectivist to personal benefit factors. Economic factors also play a more prominent role in the decision to engage in volunteering.

The main characteristics (education (degree), facing or not facing disadvantages, etc.) of young volunteers

Many of the studies explore the personal characteristics of volunteers and the impact of such factors on the decision to volunteer.

All analysed studies identify the same group of interconnected characteristics shared by young volunteers, mainly linked to their socioeconomic position. One study found that "on average, people who are healthy, better educated, religious, older, married, living in a larger household, or have higher incomes volunteer more frequently than others"[42], while another showed that "volunteering rates increase with education, positive valuations of health, income, economic status, frequency of contact with friends, and number of children in the household"[43]. A study that surveyed former European Voluntary Service volunteers reports that "all volunteers came from the same middle

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37   Jardim C. and Marques da Silva S., 'Young People Engaging in Volunteering: Questioning a Generational Trend in an Individualised Society', 2018, *Societies*.

38   Ibid.

39   Ibid.

40   Pantea M.C., 'Young people in Cross-national Volunteering: Perceptions of Unfairness', 2012, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

41   Ibid.

42   Plagnol A. and Huppert F., 'Happy to Help? Exploring the Factors Associated with Variations in Rates of Volunteering across Europe', 2009, *Social Indicators Research*.

43   Enjorlas B., 'Explaining the Varieties of Volunteering in Europe: A Capability Approach', 2021, *Voluntas ISTR*.

class socio-economic background, and all were graduates with the exception of 2"[44]. It should be noted that the study relied on volunteers' self-reporting on their own backgrounds, and as such it does not necessarily follow the categories of young people with fewer opportunities as established by the European Solidarity Corps Programme. Another study states that "majority of interviewed volunteers had a middle-class background and were either university graduates or about to enrol in an undergraduate programme"[45], concluding that "there is mounting evidence on the class differences involved in international volunteering"[46]. One of the studies showed that not only more volunteers come from well-off familiar, but their parents were more often employed in the public sector[47]. For one of the studies, the reason why people with a high socioeconomic status are more likely to volunteer is that "they have more verbal, writing, and social skills, which give them more confidence to reach out to others and make them more desirable as volunteers."[48]. One more study refers to the importance of self-perception, claiming that "people who feel positive about themselves report a higher frequency of formal volunteering than others"[49].

One study warns that the importance of the characteristics is so strong that even though national and international voluntary opportunities are open to all young people and do not require financial contributions, "in all countries, the majority of participants in the national as well as the international programmes are well-educated young people"[50]. On the contrary, the studies show very little involvement of young people with fewer opportunities and with special needs. In one study that surveyed volunteers, 3% of respondents had special needs, and 1% dropped out of school without a degree or visited a special school[51]. This is further supported by another finding that financial issues (such as low salary and dependence on parents) represent barriers to get involved in volunteering service[52].

Few of the studies find a positive correlation between volunteering and other forms of civic engagement. One study found that "volunteering in a specific work domain is positively influenced by being a member of a non-governmental organisation with similar aims"[53], concluding that "although an individual's socioeconomic characteristics are relevant when deciding to participate in voluntary activities, variables related to grouping in non-governmental associations and attitudes relating to

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44 Jardim C. and Marques da Silva S., 'Young People Engaging in Volunteering: Questioning a Generational Trend in an Individualised Society', 2018, *Societies*.

45 Pantea M.C., 'Young people in Cross-national Volunteering: Perceptions of Unfairness', 2012, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

46 Ibid.

47 Quentin Francou, Évaluation du service civique - résultats de l'enquête sur les parcours et les missions des volontaires, 2021, INJEP.

48 Gil-Lacruz A., Marcuello-Servós C., and Saz-Gil M., 'Youth Volunteering in Countries in the European Union: Approximation to Differences', 2016, Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly.

49 Plagnol A. and Huppert F., 'Happy to Help? Exploring the Factors Associated with Variations in Rates of Volunteering across Europe', 2009, *Social Indicators Research*.

50 Williamson H., Hoskins B. with Boetzelen P., 'Charting the Landscape of European Youth Voluntary Activities', 2006, *Council of Europe*.

51 'Final Report on the Joint Evaluation of the Law on the Federal Volunteering Service (BFDG) and the Law on the Advancement of Youth Volunteering Services (JFDG)', 2015, Bundesministerium fur Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend - Deutschland.

52 'U_count – Shaping Society Together', 2020, German Children and Youth Foundation.

53 Gil-Lacruz A., Marcuello-Servós C., and Saz-Gil M., 'Youth Volunteering in Countries in the European Union: Approximation to Differences', 2016, Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly.

different areas of life exert more pressure"[54]. This is particularly valid for international volunteering. As one study puts it, "For those familiar with volunteering in the home country, usually in an NGO framework, the wish to engage in a volunteering experience abroad came as a natural continuation and extension of activities in this field"[55]. One of the conducted surveys showed that of all respondents "23% were continuously civically involved already before the volunteering service"[56]. A link was also found between international volunteering and prior mobility, with one study reporting that as many as 71% of participants in Volunteering for International Solidarity had experienced a mobility prior to the assignment[57].

Some of the studies point to differences between genders, with women being more motivated to volunteer compared to men. This is illustrated by the demographic characteristics of conducted surveys: one survey had 60% female and 40% male respondents[58], another one had 83% responses from women[59], while all three surveys conducted in one of the studies were dominated by women (81% of women in study no. 1, 73% in study no. 3, 65% in study no. 2)[60]. Another study that found similar results proposed a possible explanation for the phenomenon, stating that it "could be explained by the nature of the assignments, which are in professional fields with a high presence of women (social work, education, socio-cultural activities, health), except for sports clubs, where the majority are men (73%)"[61].

One of the studies did a cross-factor analysis to identify nuances between the profiles of volunteers involved in different types of volunteering, producing results that can support the claim stated above. In terms of gender, this analysis found that "being male significantly and positively affects being a volunteer in leisure and professional organisations, while its significance is negative in social justice organisations"[62]. The study says that this could be because girls and young women "have demonstrated significantly higher levels of prosocial behaviour than boys and young men"[63]. The same study found that "ideological values, such as trust in religion, have a positive significance for becoming a volunteer in social justice organisations"[64].

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54 Ibid.

55 Roman M., Muresan L-M, Manafi I., and Marinescu D., 'Volunteering as International Mobility: Recent Evidence from a Post-socialist Country', 2018, *Transnational Social Review*.

56 'Final Report on the Joint Evaluation of the Law on the Federal Volunteering Service (BFDG) and the Law on the Advancement of Youth Volunteering Services (JFDG)', 2015, Bundesministerium fur Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend - Deutschland.

57 Évaluation du dispositif - Volontariat de Solidarité Internationale (VSI), 2022, France Volontaires.

58 'Final Report on the Joint Evaluation of the Law on the Federal Volunteering Service (BFDG) and the Law on the Advancement of Youth Volunteering Services (JFDG)', 2015, Bundesministerium fur Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend - Deutschland.

59 Lubrańska A. and Zawira E., 'Motives of Contemporary Volunteers in the Aspect of Generational Differences (Motywy współczesnych wolontariuszy w aspekcie różnic pokoleniowych)', 2017, Łódź Theological Studies Quarterly.

60 Jeżowski M. and Tragarz M., Social and Civic Activity of Participants of Foreign Volunteering Projects (Aktywność społeczna i obywatelska uczestników projektów wolontariatu zagranicznego), 2022, *FRSE publications*.

61 Quentin Francou, Évaluation du service civique - résultats de l'enquête sur les parcours et les missions des volontaires, 2021, INJEP.

62 Gil-Lacruz A., Marcuello-Servós C., and Saz-Gil M., 'Youth Volunteering in Countries in the European Union: Approximation to Differences', 2016, Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

Frameworks and Policies of European Volunteering Schemes

The legal frameworks and policies about volunteering that are studied in existing research

Not many studies explore the policy documents about volunteering on a national and/or European level. Those that do, focus primarily on volunteering programmes of the European Commission, analysing the legislation related to the European Solidarity Corps and its predecessor European Voluntary Service. Few of the studies analyse national laws, but considering that they are a few years old, chances are high that there is already new legislation in place.

One of the conclusions of the analysed documents was that there is no unified way of defining volunteering across different European countries. One of the studies states that at the time when it was published, "in the majority of EU Member States (16), there is no legal definition and no specific law regulating the aspects of volunteering, although there are sometimes policies or established practices that support the development of volunteering"[65]. The same study has found that "the main elements of the volunteer concept in laws and regulations adopted by EU Member States describe actions that:

- are performed with the free will of the individual;
- are developed within the framework of non-profit, non-governmental organisations;
- have no professional character;
- are unpaid; and carried out for the benefit of the community or a third party"[66].

Few of the studies analyse the historical origin of volunteering programmes and policies in a few different countries. Three main paths have been identified:

- in some countries, such as France, Italy and Germany, the development of legal basis for youth volunteering is "inextricably linked to the suspension of compulsory military service"[67], established with the transition to a professional army. According to the study, this still has "enormous impact on the nature of the voluntary service programmes"[68].
- in other countries, like Czech Republic and Poland, the development of volunteering is "more closely linked to the development of civic society"[69], and demonstrates stronger cooperation between governments and NGOs.
- another study identifies a third direction, stating that volunteering schemes "are many times created to complement formal education paths"[70].

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65 GHK, 'Volunteering in the European Union', 2010, *EACEA & DG EAC*

66 Ibid.

67 Williamson H., Hoskins B. with Boetzelen P., 'Charting the Landscape of European Youth Voluntary Activities', 2006, *Council of Europe*.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

70 Pollok G., Henriques A. and Hind E., 'Analytical Paper Young People, Solidarity and Democracy', 2017, *EU Partnership*.

The studies point out to the diversity of the reality of volunteering in Europe, while also recognising overarching priorities, such as employability: "Governments in all five countries consider the integration of young people into the labour market as a major political priority. Volunteering has been loosely interpreted as a means of providing professional experience and training in the social or non-profit sector"[71].

Finally, one of the analysed documents includes a set of policy recommendations which could support volunteering, including adopting policies that address barriers to volunteering by marginalised groups, adopting gender-sensitive measures, investing in volunteering data and research, and other measures[72].

The main stakeholders related to volunteering

Many studies list different actors as the main stakeholders related to volunteering. The full list of mentioned stakeholders includes the European Commission, national ministries, Erasmus+/ESC National Agencies, other public authorities, municipalities, non-governmental organisations, public schools, kindergartens, hosting organisations, hosting communities and volunteers.

A more in-depth analysis of the state in a few European countries explores the role of different ministries in relation to volunteering and it concludes that "best practice is to have a lead ministry responsible for all framework legislation relating to voluntary service, both national and international"[73].

When analysing the role of organisations, studies often distinguish the difference between the sending and hosting role, with one taking over the coordinating role over the administrative and financial matters.

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71   Williamson H., Hoskins B. with Boetzelen P., 'Charting the Landscape of European Youth Voluntary Activities', 2006, *Council of Europe*.

72   '2022 State of the World's Volunteerism Report: Building Equal and Inclusive Societies', 2021, *United Nations Volunteers programme*.

73   Williamson H., Hoskins B. with Boetzelen P., 'Charting the Landscape of European Youth Voluntary Activities', 2006, *Council of Europe*.

Impact of volunteering

Personal level

Some of the analysed documents reiterate the main outcomes of existing research and studies. Claiming that the rewards of volunteering are multifaceted, one study summarises them as "social benefits (as supported in Bradbury & Kay, 2008; Clary et al., 1998; Doherty, 2009; Hoye et al., 2008; Stebbins, 2009; Surujlal and Dhurup, 2008; Wang, 2004), personal benefits (as in Bradbury & Kay, 2008; Hoye et al., 2008; Stebbins, 2009; Surujlal and Dhurup, 2008), and cultural benefits"[74]. Citing another theory, it also mentions that "fulfilling the potential, expressing the skills and knowledge, having cherished experiences and developing a valued identity are the rewards of serious leisure in which the volunteers take part"[75]. Another study refers to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, stating that "volunteering is related to the top section of the pyramid: it is an opportunity to develop oneself as a human being, which is a highly valuable reward"[76]. When focusing on international volunteering, the studies point out to some specific additional benefits for the volunteer, such as "intercultural learning and acquisition of soft skills (Musick & Wilson, 2008)"[77] and cultural benefits, since "discovering a new country and travel opportunities were evaluated by the volunteers as important advantages of the project"[78].

The surveys and interviews conducted within the analysed studies provide an extensive list of individual benefits. These include:

- learning and developing useful and valuable skills[79] and higher competences especially concerning expertise in the specific field of volunteering, self-responsibility and social competency[80];
- more confidence[81] [82], personal growth[83], self-development[84] and gaining personal auton-

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74 Ogut E., 'Youth Volunteering in Sport: A Case Study of The Benefits of the European Voluntary Service for a Sport Organisation', 2014, *Physical Culture and Sport Studies and Research*.

75 Ibid.

76 'OBSERVATORY OF VOLUNTARY WORK: Lessons and Reflections', 2020, *Observatorio del Voluntariado – España*.

77 Pantea M.C., 'Young People in Cross-national Volunteering: Perceptions of Unfairness', 2012, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

78 Ogut E., 'Youth Volunteering in Sport: A Case Study of The Benefits of the European Voluntary Service for a Sport Organisation', 2014, *Physical Culture and Sport Studies and Research*.

79 Jardim C. and Marques da Silva S., 'Young People Engaging in Volunteering: Questioning a Generational Trend in an Individualised Society', 2018, *Societies*.

80 'Final Report on the Joint Evaluation of the Law on the Federal Volunteering Service (BFDG) and the Law on the Advancement of Youth Volunteering Services (JFDG)', 2015, Bundesministerium fur Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend - Deutschland.

81 'Impact Study World Servants (Impactmeting World Servants)', 2016, Word Servants Nederland.

82 Jeżowski M. and Tragarz M., Social and Civic Activity of Participants of Foreign Volunteering Projects (Aktywność społeczna i obywatelska uczestników projektów wolontariatu zagranicznego), 2022, *FRSE publications*.

83 'Final Report on the Joint Evaluation of the Law on the Federal Volunteering Service (BFDG) and the Law on the Advancement of Youth Volunteering Services (JFDG)', 2015, Bundesministerium fur Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend - Deutschland.

84 Diagnosis of the School Volunteering in Małopolskie voivodeship (Diagnoza wolontariatu szkolnego w województwie małopolskim)', 2021, Sursum Corda association.

omy[85];
- travelling, meeting people from other cultures[86] and communication skills in a foreign language[87];
- widening their social network[88] and increasing interpersonal and social competences[89];
- escaping from unemployment and precariousness[90];
- satisfaction, joy[91];
- feeling of doing useful work[92];
- and others.

One of the studies also explores the negative impact that international volunteering can have on young people, which can be caused by "volunteers' perception of unfairness of treatment, lack of necessary level of training, and even by burnout"[93]. The study claims that "long-term volunteering makes the costs more evident, and people also feel, besides a higher level of organisational commitment and a strong role identity as volunteers, 'a higher level of emotional exhaustion'"[94], but it also admits that the impact of volunteering on young people's wellbeing has not been researched enough.

One of the studies notes that volunteering experience can have negative impact on the prospects for employability, as "it can be misinterpreted by recruiters (fear of unsuitability for a classic career, instability, etc.)[95].

Still, two of the studies show an increase of employment rates after volunteering, even though both acknowledge that the positive change "varies greatly depending on the volunteers' situation when they started their mission[96]" and that "the situation after the volunteering experience varies according to the profile of the volunteers at the beginning of their volunteering and reflects to a large extent their previous experience.[97]"

85 Jardim C. and Marques da Silva S., 'Young People Engaging in Volunteering: Questioning a Generational Trend in an Individualised Society', 2018, *Societies*.

86 Ibid.

87 Jeżowski M. and Tragarz M., Social and Civic Activity of Participants of Foreign Volunteering Projects (Aktywność społeczna i obywatelska uczestników projektów wolontariatu zagranicznego), 2022, *FRSE publications*.

88 'Final Report on the Joint Evaluation of the Law on the Federal Volunteering Service (BFDG) and the Law on the Advancement of Youth Volunteering Services (JFDG)', 2015, German Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, the Aged, Women and Youth.

89 Jeżowski M. and Tragarz M., Social and Civic Activity of Participants of Foreign Volunteering Projects (Aktywność społeczna i obywatelska uczestników projektów wolontariatu zagranicznego), 2022, *FRSE publications*.

90 Jardim C. and Marques da Silva S., 'Young People Engaging in Volunteering: Questioning a Generational Trend in an Individualised Society', 2018, *Societies*.

91 Diagnosis of the School Volunteering in Małopolskie voivodeship (Diagnoza wolontariatu szkolnego w województwie małopolskim)', 2021, Sursum Corda association.

92 Ibid.

93 Pantea M.C., 'Young People in Cross-national Volunteering: Perceptions of Unfairness', 2012, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

94 Ibid.

95 Bertrand Jarrige, Jean-Claude Jacq, Isabelle Fradin-Thirode, Évaluation de politique publique portant sur l'engagement citoyen international des jeunes, 2015, Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères and Ministère de la Ville, de la Jeunesse et des Sports.

96 Ibid.

97 Quentin Francou, Évaluation du service civique - résultats de l'enquête sur les parcours et les missions des volontaires,

Organisational level

The analysed studies generally agree that organisations benefit from involving volunteers, even though many of them also focus on the costs of volunteering. Based on that, they make recommendations on how to optimise the role of volunteers so that the benefits become greater.

Studies show that "most organisations see a benefit in having volunteers – mostly complementing other employees and on the long run in a way to generate and recruit new staff through vocational orientation"[98]. Specific examples of benefits come from interview with hosting organisations hosting international volunteers, which show that "small local organisations were able to organise larger stand-alone events and diversify their workshops"[99]; "the presence of volunteers increases the attractiveness of the offer of host organisations as it attracts new people interested in their activities"[100] and that staff of organisations became motivated to "improve the level of English and/or the language of the volunteers' country"[101]. Going beyond the implementation of activities, studies show that organisations understand that "volunteers are valuable to the development of organisations' missions"[102]. The same study even claims that "without the work of volunteers, many of the organisations' activities would not be possible. Moreover, volunteering notably increases the social impact of organisations and is one of their core values"[103].

When elaborating on the costs for the organisations, one of the studies claims that managing volunteers impacts organisational resources and the underestimation of that cost is "a very relevant problem"[104]. The same study lists a number of costs, such as "worker's time and effort required for executing the project"[105] and potential tensions that can be raised "with the organisation management and with co-workers"[106]. The reason for such tensions could be explained with various factors that have to do with the organisations, such as "controversial or unethical behaviour from the part of organisations, situations where the notion of volunteering is not clearly understood or in which they start experiencing a sense of marginality and unfairness. Instances of burnout may appear as young people do not feel rewarded for their contribution"[107].

To counter those challenges and to benefit more from volunteers' engagement, some of the studies list specific recommendations to the organisations, such as that "volunteers being viewed as

2021, INJEP.

98 'Final Report on the Joint Evaluation of the Law on the Federal Volunteering Service (BFDG) and the Law on the Advancement of Youth Volunteering Services (JFDG)', 2015, Bundesministerium fur Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend - Deutschland.

99 Jeżowski M. and Tragarz M., Social and Civic Activity of Participants of Foreign Volunteering Projects (Aktywność społeczna i obywatelska uczestników projektów wolontariatu zagranicznego), 2022, *FRSE publications*.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 'OBSERVATORY OF VOLUNTARY WORK: Lessons and Reflections', 2020, *Observatorio del Voluntariado – España*.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.

107 Pantea M.C, 'Young People in Cross-national Volunteering: Perceptions of Unfairness', 2012, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

cheap labour must be completely eradicated"[108], that volunteer work "should have a prominent place in the management process"[109] and that "good intentions (of hosting organisations) need to be accompanied by knowledge and skills to act"[110].

Community level

While acknowledging that civic concerns are often not part of young volunteers' motivations and young people "do not volunteer to fight for a specific cause or a collective project or purpose"[111], the analysed studies confirm that volunteering has an impact on the wider community level. According to one study, the benefits for the community members participating in activities run by volunteers "are similar to the benefits for both the volunteers and the organisations. Social benefits, as well as learning and improvement, are the same categories that emerged from the themes and personal enjoyment is an additional category that stands for themes such as fun, happiness, and laughing"[112]. Another study also confirms that international volunteering "can have a broader indirect impact at community level"[113]. More specifically, young people who participated in a project:

- are found to speak more often about events/ factors influencing the community to others.
- are found to donate more and more often to charity.
- are more likely to feel connected to people in developing countries.
- are more likely to proclaim that they feel like they could change their community for the better[114].

At the same time, studies also show that volunteering poses costs and risks for the community. The cost for the participants in volunteer-led activities "can be outlined as their time, energy, and money required to enrol"[115]. The risks are most often related to a potential "labour force replacement"[116], and to the possibility that volunteer work "is used to fill gaps in public service provision because of a lack of government funding"[117]. Finally, a specific risk associated with international volunteering is linked to "the issues of power, paternalism, and colonialism as inherent in international volunteering, and which may situate the international volunteer in a rather ingrate status in relationship with the locals, seen as "powerless receivers" of a help they did not ask for"[118].

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108 'OBSERVATORY OF VOLUNTARY WORK: Lessons and Reflections', 2020, *Observatorio del Voluntariado – España*.

109 Ibid.

110 Pantea M.C, 'Young People in Cross-national Volunteering: Perceptions of Unfairness', 2012, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

111 Jardim C. and Marques da Silva S., 'Young People Engaging in Volunteering: Questioning a Generational Trend in an Individualised Society', 2018, *Societies*.

112 Ogut E., 'Youth Volunteering in Sport: A Case Study of The Benefits of the European Voluntary Service for a Sport Organisation', 2014, *Physical Culture and Sport Studies and Research*.

113 Pantea M.C, 'Young People in Cross-national Volunteering: Perceptions of Unfairness', 2012, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

114 'Impact Study World Servants (Impactmeting World Servants)', 2016, Word Servants Nederland.

115 Ogut E., 'Youth Volunteering in Sport: A Case Study of The Benefits of the European Voluntary Service for a Sport Organisation', 2014, *Physical Culture and Sport Studies and Research*.

116 Pantea M.C., 'Young People in Cross-national Volunteering: Perceptions of Unfairness', 2012, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

117 Pollok G., Henriques A. and Hind E., 'Analytical Paper Young People, Solidarity and Democracy', 2017, *EU Partnership*.

118 Pantea M.C, 'Young People in Cross-national Volunteering: Perceptions of Unfairness', 2012, *Journal of Social and Personal*

Volunteering as a learning experience

Many studies mentioned the importance of volunteering as a learning experience and its link to the competence model.

Examples of the learning experience include:

- skills development: volunteering exposes individuals to new environments and tasks, allowing them to acquire practical skills that can be transferred to various areas of life. For example, volunteering at a hospital can provide opportunities to learn medical terminology, basic caregiving skills, or organisational skills.
- personal and professional growth: volunteering often involves working with diverse groups of people, challenging individuals to develop their communication, empathy, and interpersonal skills. By interacting with people from different backgrounds, volunteers can enhance their cultural competence and develop a broader worldview.
- working in a group: many volunteering positions involve working in teams or assuming leadership roles. This allows volunteers to develop and strengthen their leadership skills, such as decision-making, conflict resolution, and collaboration as they work towards a common goal with fellow volunteers.
- adaptability and flexibility: volunteering often presents unique challenges and opportunities to solve problems in real-time. Volunteers may encounter unexpected situations that require them to think on their own and adapt to new circumstances, fostering critical thinking skills and resilience.
- professional development and creation of new networks: volunteering can provide valuable networking opportunities, allowing individuals to connect with professionals in their field of interest. Building relationships with professionals and other volunteers can open doors to mentorship, internships, or future job opportunities.
- increased self-awareness and confidence: volunteering can help individuals discover their strengths, interests, and passions. Through their experiences, volunteers gain a better understanding of themselves, their abilities, and their values, leading to increased self-confidence and a sense of purpose.

It is important to note that the learning and skills development potential of volunteering may vary depending on the specific volunteering opportunity, the level of engagement, and the individual's active involvement in reflecting upon and applying the lessons learned from their experiences.

As in "Volunteering as international mobility: recent evidence from a post-socialist country"[119], volunteering is beneficial for societies at large, and also for volunteers themselves. It enables them to develop new skills (Jones, 2011; Jones, 2010) and increases their wellbeing. In a study on volunteering in Germany, Meier and Stutzer (2004) found that people who volunteer frequently are more likely to have higher life satisfaction than non-volunteers. The experience is eye-opening and open-mindedness: here as an expression of developing new attitudes, revisiting one's initial values and learning to accept also other realities and values. Personal growth, mentioned in all the interviews reported in this study as an outcome of the volunteering activity abroad, reflects the development of a whole range of skills, several in the area of "intangibles" (Jones, 2011), transferable

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Relationships.

119   Roman M., Muresan L-M, Manafi I., and Marinescu D., 'Volunteering as International Mobility: Recent Evidence from a Post-socialist Country', 2018, *Transnational Social Review*.

to various other new situations (in line with those mentioned by Jones, 2010; Jones, 2011; Pantea, 2013a). Fulfilment gained by helping others refers in this study to drawing satisfaction both from being engaged in meaningful activities to the benefit of those in need in the hosting country and from developing useful solutions to help peers. The study identifies three main volunteering benefits, as reported by the Romanian youth. The first major benefits identified by most interviewees were eye-opening and developing open-mindedness, associated with revisiting one's initial values and learning to accept the existence of other realities and values than those known in the environment back home. The paper argues that international volunteering develops new and more open attitudes. Personal growth, as another positive effect of international volunteering, implies acquiring new skills, such as those related to foreign languages or communication, new professional competences, increased self-confidence or problem-solving. Also, the final part of our study proves that international volunteering creates an increased sense of satisfaction by helping others. While abroad, Romanian respondents seem to be strongly motivated and engaged in their volunteering mission, helping those in need, as reported by humanitarian volunteers, and also solving practical issues for helping their international peers in their work.

The study "The changing nature of volunteering and the cross-border mobility: where does learning come from?"[120] revisits the more conventional approaches of volunteering, by looking into the experiences of young people involved in long-term cross-border volunteering in Romania. The research argues that volunteering is more complex than previously assumed and calls for a way to overcome the inertia that positions it as inherently altruistic. It argues that hosting organisations and young people may hold different expectations and notions of volunteering. Whilst organisations seem to understand volunteering as a 'gift of time', for young people volunteering is rationally driven and instrumental for learning. The paper argues that cross-border volunteering has a silent educational potential that remains underutilised and grounded in an established rhetoric of learning as inherent when volunteering. Ultimately, the article calls for organisations to be proactive in enhancing their educational potential and to embrace deliberate strategies that support volunteer learning. The study clearly defines the importance of creating a good learning context in order to be able to foster the learning path of the youth, taking into consideration the different expectations that they have.

The article "The dilemma of mobility: on the question of youth voluntourism in times of precarity"[121] proceeds from a critical point of view to what it calls volunteering tourism, identifying the dangers inherent in this. It then uses Appadurai's concepts of aspiration to reason about how voluntary service changes the perception of one's role in the face of situations of injustice. This condition should be taken in consideration in order to create learning experiences that overcome "voluntourism" and provide specific opportunities to learn.

The study "Évaluation du dispositif - Volontariat de Solidarité Internationale (VSI)[122]" analyses the learning outcomes from training opportunities provided before, during and after the volunteer service. It showed that pre-departure training was satisfying for an overwhelming majority of volunteers (94%), while the satisfaction decreases with later trainings. In most learning opportunities,

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120   Pantea M.C., 'The Changing Nature of Volunteering and the Cross-border Mobility: Where Does Learning Come From?', 2012, *Studies in Continuing Education*.

121   Thomas-Maude J., McLennan S. and Walters V., 'Cultural Exchange during English-Language Voluntourism (EVT) in Lima, Peru: A Postcolonial Analysis', 2021, *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*.

122   Évaluation du dispositif - Volontariat de Solidarité Internationale (VSI), 2022, France Volontaires.

one of the most appreciated aspects was the exchange with peers and other volunteers.

"The impact of emotional intelligence and intercultural competence on work productivity of volunteers in respect to age and length in volunteering"[123], which is focused on emotional intelligence complements intercultural competence by strengthening its ability to recognise emotions associated with cultural differences. A logical chain is apparent: emotional intelligence - intercultural competence - productivity of volunteering activities; higher emotional intelligence influences the growth of intercultural competences and positively influences the productivity of volunteering. 74 volunteers who have been volunteering under the Erasmus + "European Voluntary Service" programme participated in the survey of this research.

"Impact beyond volunteering"[124] is investigating the competence development of the volunteers during the service. In this study, they analysed how much the volunteering experience was connected to competence development and the career path. During volunteering, a wide range of changes in understanding, knowledge and attitudes can take place. Most prevalent is an increase in awareness across a wide range of issues, including poverty, development, inequality and injustice, cultural differences, similarities, and dynamics. The acquisition of new skills and knowledge is also important and is likely to be just as significant for volunteers that already have professional skills. Many volunteers note a change in attitude, both externally in terms of how they interact with others and internally in relation to an increase in self-awareness. In these cases, volunteers become more aware of cultural sensitivities, place more emphasis on relationship building and reflect on their own previously held views. Many volunteers identify a clear link to an increase in confidence, and for some, increased resilience and adaptability are felt to be significant. Once volunteers have completed their placements, many refer to changes in career direction, how they had gone on to influence others and the ways in which they do things differently through changes in practice. In terms of career change and direction, some move into the field of international development and some experience a greater commitment to remain in the international development sector, suggesting linkages to pre-placement motivations. Others note an increased interest in the focus area of their placement and greater responsibility gained in their jobs as a result of new skills, knowledge and experience. In terms of influencing others, volunteers often use their increased awareness gained through their placements to challenge negative behaviours and stereotypes and promote positive causes through, for example, persuading people to campaign. The format of this influence is seen to be both formal and informal and to take place at the level of individuals, groups, organisations, governments, and globally. There is a significant increase in the levels of community, social and political action for volunteers after their placement, and many indicate that this shift has been directly influenced by their placement experience.

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123   Vinickytė I., Vveinhardt J. and Bendaravičienė R., 'The Impact of Emotional Intelligence and Intercultural Competence on Work Productivity of Volunteers with Respect to Age and Volunteering Term', 2020, *Verslas Teorija ir Praktika*.

124   'Impact on Volunteering and Beyond', 2017, *VSO - Voluntary Service Overseas*

Recognition of volunteering

Volunteering is recognised as playing a crucial role in addressing social issues, supporting communities, and contributing to the well-being of individuals and organisations.

In this framework, recognition of volunteering comes from different stakeholders and actors as we can find in mapping several studies:

1. **Government and policy recognition:** many governments and policy frameworks acknowledge the importance of volunteering: incentives to support and promote volunteerism, such as tax incentives for volunteers, recognition programmes, and national service initiatives.

2. **Organisations:** organisations and community groups greatly value the contributions of volunteers. They often have dedicated volunteer programmes, recognition events, and awards to honour the efforts of volunteers. These organisations understand that volunteers are vital to achieving their missions and express their gratitude through various means.

3. **Social recognition:** volunteering is often celebrated and appreciated in the media, local communities, and public discourse. News outlets, social media, and community platforms often highlight the positive impact of volunteers, share success stories, and recognise their dedication. This recognition helps raise awareness about volunteering and inspire others to get involved.

4. **International recognition:** volunteering is recognised and promoted at the international level. Organisations like the United Nations and the World Health Organisation acknowledge the significance of volunteering in achieving global development goals. International volunteer programmes and initiatives, such as the Peace Corps, highlight the value of cross-cultural exchange and volunteer contributions worldwide.

5. **Personal and professional recognition:** volunteering is also recognised on an individual level. Many employers value volunteer experience and view it as a positive attribute when considering candidates for job opportunities. Volunteering can demonstrate a person's commitment, skills, and dedication to making a difference in society.

While volunteering is widely recognised, it is important to note that the level and extent of recognition may vary across different contexts and cultures.

This wider recognition aspect is important and reflected in the recognition of the competences and the role of the professional experience for the volunteers.

"Patterns of Recognition of the Competences Acquired through Volunteering. Romania-Republic of Moldova Comparative Study"[125] presents a comparative study as regards the system of recognition of the competences acquired through volunteering in Romania and in The Republic of Moldova.

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125   Sleahtiţchi M. and Neacşu M.G., 'Patterns of Recognition of the Competences Acquired through Volunteering. Romania-Republic of Moldova Comparative Study', 2013, *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences*.

The chief legislative documents as regards volunteering are analysed and the best-known patterns of recognition of the competences acquired through volunteering are presented. The conclusions of the survey highlight the need of immediate implementation of a unitary and consensual system which can certify the competences acquired through volunteering, a system which will bring benefits for volunteers, for the organisations which work with volunteers, and for the employers. Although in Europe there is a large diversity of traditions and manners of organising volunteering, certain impediments in practising volunteering continue persisting because volunteering is recognised too little or not adequately recognised. The study draws attention on recognising the competences acquired through voluntary activities as vocational experience and non-formal and informal learning experience. Also, the authors recommend the coagulation of the volunteering movement in the 2 countries in a cross-border network joining volunteer organisations in Romania and beyond the Prut River wishing to support the assertion and consolidation of a common strategy for promoting and multiplying voluntary activities based on common projects and programmes stimulating volunteers' mobility, the exchange of good practices and the transfer of competences, supporting the recognition of the competences acquired through volunteering for all the volunteer categories (young and adults) and sensitising educational policy decision makers for implementing the mechanism of recognising the competences acquired through volunteering. This study also draws the attention on the risks of implementing a standardised system for recognising the competences acquired through volunteering: an increased degree of bureaucratising the voluntary activity, which can transform volunteering into an instrument exclusively[126] destined to the development of skills and settlement of labour problems".

The study "Évaluation du dispositif - Volontariat de Solidarité Internationale (VSI)" found that upon return from volunteering, young people face difficulties linked to lack of recognition. 45% of of the respondents had difficulties in finding opportunities outside of the international cooperation, 35% reported lack of recognition of the professional skills developed during service, and 32% had difficulting in giving value to the professional skills developed during volunteering[127].

The dimension of volunteer recognition cuts across other items that were identified in the research. This recognition of volunteering falls back upon the tools dedicated to the skills acquired, as well as the dimension of national policies and also the access to specific forms of funding.

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126 Ibid.

127 Évaluation du dispositif - Volontariat de Solidarité Internationale (VSI), 2022, France Volontaires.

European dimension of volunteering

Existing research on volunteering in Europe does not consider the impact of volunteering on European identity. In fact, only 1 out of the 21 texts analysed mentions aspects connected to European identity. Considering the emphasis that all the European schemes and programmes put on fostering European identity, the question is: why does it happen that existing research does not see and/or does not analyse the impact of volunteering on European identity?

A possible answer to this question could be that the 'European identity' can be perceived as an ethereal dimension within a very specific activity of volunteering. If I am volunteering in a community, doing specific activities for people living in a specific area, probably when I go back to my place, I will be able to adapt those activities to my environment, to my people. Is this fact enough to increase my perception of European identity? Or is this identity nurtured by other elements, other facts?

The mentioned research that tackles the dimension of European identity suggests that you feel you are belonging to Europe, to its values and identity, when you confront yourself with communities and people out of Europe. And, according to the words of a project volunteer, it helped to identify as Europeans, it created a positive shock, an interest for fostering active participation in Europe: "Once, the sphere of politics seemed very boring to me, it was foreign to me. This changed when I was in Russia - there I tried to keep up with what was happening in Poland, and it stayed that way. During the trip, my awareness as a European, as a representative of the European Union, strengthened. I have always identified its western part with Europe, but when I talked to the Russians, I kept hearing: "Poland is Europe." It was a shock to me, because all the time I thought that we were rather heading towards Europe, but we still have a long way to go. Then it changed, I really felt that the European Union is us. Since then, I have become more interested in politics, such as the elections to the European Parliament - before that it was a completely unimportant issue for me"[128].

To reinforce this concept, a quick sharing of experiences within the team of the current research confirmed that the feeling of belonging to a wider European community for us was present in projects where we had contact with people/ practitioners coming from realities totally different from the European ones (mainly Asia, Africa, and partially Latin America).

There are not many more insights from the analysis of the impact of volunteering on European citizenship: 3 out of the 21 texts analysed, are touching aspects connected to European citizenship.

A relevant finding, from a paper on young people solidarity and democracy[129], is that "For individuals to participate fully in civic life, research suggests that they must be equipped with the right knowledge, skills, and competences grounded in understandings of social values, political concepts and structures. Such knowledge, skills, and attitudes are important in forming future citizens. In the context of European civic participation, countries and institutions are placing increasing emphasis on educational and training activities concerning the promotion of active citizenship, equity, and social cohesion". And, going even further from European citizenship, another research underlines that "At a broader scale, volunteering has been linked with the notion of global citizenship"[130].

128   Jeżowski M. and Tragarz M., Social and Civic Activity of Participants of Foreign Volunteering Projects (Aktywność społeczna i obywatelska uczestników projektów wolontariatu zagranicznego), 2022, *FRSE publications*.

129   Pollok G., Henriques A. and Hind E., 'Analytical Paper Young People, Solidarity and Democracy', 2017, *EU Partnership*.

130   Pantea M.C., 'Young People in Cross-national Volunteering: Perceptions of Unfairness', 2012, *Journal of Social and Personal*

This shows that volunteering is seen as a powerful tool to reach the goal of empowering young people with the needed competences to be an active European (and even global) citizen.

Another research[131] strikes a specific aspect: in most of the analysed countries' legislations, there is no integration of the European schemes into their national volunteering frameworks, all of which, however, promote international voluntary service. And the access to national volunteering programmes is often limited to European citizens (at least in France and Italy). This fact does not allow the participation of third country citizens legally living in the country. What does it mean in terms of European citizenship? For some European countries, is European citizenship something totally separated from national citizenship? Is it a sort of barrier for the ones that are not from the 'club'?

As a conclusion, we can say that both the impact of volunteering on European identity and European citizenship would require further investigation.

Relationships.

131 Williamson H., Hoskins B. with Boetzelen P., 'Charting the Landscape of European Youth Voluntary Activities', 2006, *Council of Europe*.

Volunteering - fostering solidarity

One third of the existing research (7, out of the 21 texts analysed) is tackling topics related to solidarity. It could seem a good percentage, but unfortunately the analysis is not particularly deep and, moreover, there is quite an imbalance in the attention given by research to the different dimensions of solidarity[132]: only active participation is touched by several works, while empathy and inclusion only by one research each; human rights is out of the radar.

One paper[133] (before "4Thoughts for solidarity" report) is generically mentioning the fact that "volunteering facilitates a 'gift' mentality where the return is not monetary nor a direct or immediate benefit to self. Volunteering is promoting active citizenship, equity, and social cohesion".

Examining one by one the cornerstone concepts of solidarity we can detect:

Empathy

Only one research about a national Polish project (Szlachetna Paczka, Noble Gift)[134], is underlining the importance of volunteering to foster the dimension of empathy. Volunteers are in direct contact with supported families before and after the volunteering action, which creates connections and helps volunteers to get to know different situations and points of view. In the words of a young volunteer, "It is worth taking the time to learn more about the life of a person willing to share their experiences with us. Volunteering teaches that every person is different, we never know someone's whole situation and you cannot judge anyone by appearances".

It is sorrowful that no research on European schemes/ programmes mentions the impact of volunteering on developing empathy: in the experience of the team of this research, empathy is one of the most valuable aspects of an experience of volunteering in general and of an experience within a volunteering scheme/ programme in particular.

Active participation

Research exploring solidarity seems more focused on the dimension of active participation (we can count 5 of them, 3 international and 2 national). It seems interesting to us that the material examined focuses on active citizenship according to 2 main meanings.

On one hand, it is stressed that volunteering is one of the means that – apart from benefiting others - can respond to the need of contributing to the community through a specific action, which is perceived both by the volunteer and by society as a political experience in the informal sense, taken up by one of the studies[135]: "young people seem to prefer more informal or unconventional forms

132 By 'dimensions' of solidarity we refer here to the 4 four cornerstone concepts elaborated in "4Thought for Solidarity", the report elaborated by the European Solidarity Corps SALTO Resource Centre: https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-4046/4TDS%20Study%2020200421.pdf

133 Analytical Paper: Young People, Solidarity and Democracy.

134 Lubrańska A. and Zawira E., 'Motives of Contemporary Volunteers in the Aspect of Generational Differences (Motywy współczesnych wolontariuszy w aspekcie różnic pokoleniowych)', 2017, Łódź Theological Studies Quarterly.

135 Jardim C. and Marques da Silva S., 'Young People Engaging in Volunteering: Questioning a Generational Trend in an Individualised Society', 2018, *Societies*.

of civic and political participation that best suit their interests and needs. Their participation is generally divorced from any political affiliation and from the electoral politics of the formal democratic system, though it may still be political: civic participation is now more broadly defined, overcoming the barriers of the formal political space in a way which includes engagement in volunteering, social movements, and local organisations". Concluding with the observation that "volunteering is a planned, pro-social and sustained behaviour that benefits others and occurs over time and within an organisational environment: it is therefore an expression of values like altruism, solidarity, generosity and social responsibility".

On the other, active participation is seen as a special capacity/ responsibility/ ownership that volunteers have in order to contribute to others and communities: "In all cases, voluntary workers are more willing to contribute than the rest of the population. It is possible to hypothesise that being a volunteer makes a difference with respect to assuming responsibilities in order to move towards a more just and sustainable future"[136]. On the same track also the State of the world's volunteerism[137]: "Volunteers have the capacity, through collaboration, to reconfigure unequal power relationships between ordinary citizens and state authorities. With appropriate support, all groups can take up more active roles as volunteers, claiming their rightful place in decision-making spaces. In this way, volunteerism allows people not only to shape the development agenda but also to own it, creating spaces for people-centred discussions. Adopting an inclusive and participatory approach to public governance can promote people's understanding of, and interest in, equality and shared social responsibility".

An interesting observation from national research in Poland[138] is that 60% of respondents declared engagement in social activities after the completion of volunteering projects, which is a bigger rate than in general in Polish society (40%).

This is going in the same direction of the result of a German report[139], which is considering attitudes towards political participation, inclusion and anti-discrimination topics: it is registering slightly positive changes comparing surveys before and after voluntary service.

Interesting data comes from a study conducted in France, which found that even though the rate of young people involved in volunteering remains almost the same before and after volunteering, 44% of those that engaged in volunteering stated that the experience had a positive effect on their involvement in volunteering[140].

Even if there is not a wide exploration on this point, it seems that research recognises - and the experience of the team of the current research confirms - that volunteers, after the end of their volunteering project, show more solidaristic attitudes and are more eager to engage and participate

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136 'OBSERVATORY OF VOLUNTARY WORK: Lessons and Reflections', 2020, *Observatorio del Voluntariado – España*.

137 '2022 State of the World's Volunteerism Report: Building Equal and Inclusive Societies', 2021, *United Nations Volunteers programme*.

138 Jeżowski M. and Tragarz M., Social and Civic Activity of Participants of Foreign Volunteering Projects (Aktywność społeczna i obywatelska uczestników projektów wolontariatu zagranicznego), 2022, *FRSE publications*.

139 'Final Report on the Joint Evaluation of the Law on the Federal Volunteering Service (BFDG) and the Law on the Advancement of Youth Volunteering Services (JFDG)', 2015, Bundesministerium fur Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend - Deutschland.

140 Quentin Francou, Évaluation du service civique - résultats de l'enquête sur les parcours et les missions des volontaires, 2021, INJEP.

in civil society.

Inclusion

Only one research[141] reasons about the solidarity component of inclusion. It underlines that where there are gaps in the way local policies are implemented, volunteers work with local government officials to make public services more relevant and responsive to their needs and those of their communities. Their sense of solidarity propels them to participate in deliberation, co-implementing government programmes and sharing innovative ideas. Volunteers, volunteering organisations and state institutions often have different priorities, agendas and focuses. Still, the desire for better governance, coupled with a community's commitment to help make that happen through volunteerism, helps to build a culture not only of accountability, but also of participatory, collaborative decision-making and, in the end, inclusion.

On the contrary, the research analyses a 'neglected aspect': the situations faced by disadvantaged young people while volunteering (fragile participants who need extended support and monitoring in a transnational experience): based on the limited qualitative data available, the research seems to indicate that young people in a disadvantaged position seem to pay higher costs when faced with challenges. While some organisations are making efforts to respond to the particular needs of disadvantaged volunteers, in other circumstances, there is rather poor sensitivity with regard to their particular situations.

Another study found that inclusion volunteers have a more positive perception than the average, as they are generally more satisfied and feel less often exploited. However, the same study also found that 6 months after the of volunteering, 45% of former volunteers are still unemployed and when they are in employment, they are more often employed in the public sector[142].

Human Rights

As said, the human rights dimension is not targeted in any available research.

As a conclusion, we can say that the concept of solidarity and the dimensions connected to it are vast to be deeply explored by research. The researchers' suggestion is that a broader and deeper investigation should be conducted on the effects and impact of volunteering on solidarity, especially for what concerns human rights, inclusion and empathy.

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141   State of the World's Volunteerism. '2022 State of the World's Volunteerism Report: Building Equal and Inclusive Societies', 2021, *United Nations Volunteers programme*.

142   Quentin Francou, Évaluation du service civique - résultats de l'enquête sur les parcours et les missions des volontaires, 2021, INJEP.

Conclusions

Considering the outcomes of the mapping we can draw some conclusions and support some further recommendations for the development of international volunteering.

The text highlights the motivations, policies, learning experiences, recognition, European dimension, and solidarity aspect of volunteering. It emphasises the evolving motivations of young volunteers, the need for unified definitions and regulations, the benefits and challenges at personal, organisational, and community levels, and the importance of recognition and its impact on individuals, organisations, and societies. The text also calls for further research on the effects of volunteering on European identity, citizenship, and solidarity, including empathy, active participation, inclusion, and human rights, as it recognises that very little or no research has been done in those areas. It concludes by emphasising the need for comprehensive research and the development of effective strategies and policies to promote volunteering and its positive impact.

Motivation

The main motivation factors for young people to engage in volunteering schemes include a combination of personal and external influences. Personal motivations range from altruism to self-oriented factors like personal growth, learning, and career development. External factors include geographical differences, political and economic characteristics, societal development, and social trust.

Recent studies indicate a shift in motivations, with young people increasingly valuing personal benefits over traditional altruistic motives. This change is attributed to economic instability, job insecurity, and a desire for self-development in the face of longer education and delayed entry into the job market.

Volunteers often possess characteristics associated with higher socioeconomic status, such as higher education levels, better health, and stable family backgrounds. However, there is a need to ensure inclusivity and support for individuals facing disadvantages.

Overall, understanding the evolving motivations of young volunteers and addressing barriers to participation can enhance volunteering initiatives and promote positive social impact.

It is important to recognise the changing motivations of young volunteers, shifting towards personal benefits like career development and personal growth. Awareness is needed of the potential risks, such as organisations misusing volunteers as replacements for paid staff. Meanwhile, more specific measures should be developed that can support the involvement of young people that do not possess characteristics associated with higher socioeconomic status.

Frameworks and policies of European volunteering schemes

The existing research highlights the need for concerted efforts in shaping legal frameworks and policies for volunteering at both national and European levels. Currently, there is a lack of unified definitions and regulations across European countries, leading to varying interpretations and practices of volunteering. It is crucial to establish a common understanding of volunteering and develop

consistent frameworks to ensure its smooth functioning.

The analysis primarily focuses on volunteering programmes initiated by the European Commission, such as the European Solidarity Corps and the European Voluntary Service. While these programmes have been studied extensively, there is a gap in exploring national laws and policies, which may have evolved since the time of the studies. Therefore, it is essential to stay updated on the latest legislation and adapt policies accordingly.

The studies analysed in the mapping emphasise that volunteering holds diverse meanings and origins across different countries. In some nations, the legal basis for youth volunteering emerged alongside the suspension of compulsory military service, impacting the nature of voluntary service programmes. Other countries have witnessed the development of volunteering closely intertwined with the growth of civil society, showcasing strong collaboration between governments and non-governmental organisations. Additionally, volunteering schemes have been designed to complement formal education paths in certain contexts.

While acknowledging the diversity of volunteering experiences in Europe, there are overarching priorities that policymakers should address. Enhancing employability for young people by providing professional experience and training in the social or non-profit sector is crucial. Moreover, it is essential to recognise and address barriers faced by marginalised groups, adopt gender-sensitive measures, and invest in comprehensive data collection and research on volunteering.

To facilitate effective governance and coordination, it is recommended identifying a lead ministry responsible for overarching legislation on voluntary service at the national and international levels. This ensures a coherent and streamlined approach to volunteering policies. Engaging a wide range of stakeholders is also vital for the success of volunteering initiatives. These stakeholders include the European Commission, national ministries, Erasmus+/ESC National Agencies, NGOs, public authorities, municipalities, hosting organisations, communities, and volunteers.

By implementing these recommendations, European countries can foster an enabling environment for volunteering, enhance its impact, and create meaningful opportunities for individuals to contribute to their communities while gaining valuable skills and experiences.

Volunteering as a learning experience

Volunteering has a profound impact at various levels, including personal, organisational, and community levels. To maximise the benefits and mitigate potential challenges, the following recommendations are proposed.

At the personal level, volunteering offers a multitude of rewards. It provides opportunities for personal growth, self-development, and the acquisition of valuable skills. Volunteers gain confidence, broaden their social networks, and develop cultural competencies through interactions with diverse communities. It is crucial to support volunteers in their journey, ensuring their well-being and addressing any negative impact, such as burnout.

Organisations greatly benefit from engaging volunteers. They contribute to the organisation's activities, support existing staff, and even serve as a catalyst for attracting new members. Volunteers bring fresh perspectives, diverse skills, and enthusiasm, enhancing the overall capacity and effectiveness of the organisation. However, it is important to recognise the costs associated with managing volunteers and ensure proper resource allocation. Addressing tensions within the organisation and promoting volunteer-friendly policies will optimise the volunteer-organisation relationship. Existing studies generally look at the impact of volunteering on organisations, not necessarily taking into consideration that organisations operate within the wider community.

However, some studies also show that volunteering extends its impact beyond individuals and organisations to the wider community. While young volunteers may not always have explicit civic motivations, their involvement can still foster positive change. It enhances social connections, encourages philanthropy, and promotes a sense of community ownership. However, it is essential to be mindful of potential costs and risks, such as overreliance on volunteers to fill gaps in public services. Additionally, in the context of international volunteering, it is crucial to adopt responsible practices that empower local communities and avoid perpetuating power imbalances or paternalistic attitudes.

In summary, by prioritising volunteer support, recognising their value, and promoting responsible practices, the impact of volunteering can be optimised at both the personal and societal levels. Through a collective effort, volunteers, organisations, and communities can work together to create meaningful change and foster a culture of service and engagement.

Volunteering offers transformative learning experiences for personal and professional growth. To make the most of it, consider these recommendations:

1. embrace skill development through practical experiences.
2. foster personal and professional growth through diverse teamwork.
3. cultivate leadership skills within volunteer groups.
4. encourage adaptability and problem-solving in real-time.
5. facilitate professional development and networking opportunities.
6. ignite self-awareness and confidence through volunteering.
7. create an enriching learning environment for volunteers.
8. address "voluntourism" concerns by prioritising meaningful experiences.

By following these recommendations, volunteers can unlock their potential while making a positive impact.

Volunteering recognition

Volunteer recognition plays a crucial role in acknowledging the significance of volunteering and its positive impact on individuals, communities, and organisations. To foster greater recognition, several recommendations can be implemented across different stakeholders.

Firstly, government and policy recognition are important in creating a supportive environment for volunteerism. Governments can incentivise and promote volunteerism through tax incentives for volunteers, recognition programmes, and national service initiatives. By officially recognising and endorsing volunteering, governments send a strong message about its value and encourage great-

er participation.

Secondly, organisations should actively recognise and appreciate the contributions of volunteers. Establishing dedicated volunteer programmes, organising recognition events, and presenting awards are effective ways to honour volunteers' efforts. Recognising the vital role volunteers play in achieving an organisation's mission fosters a sense of belonging and motivates volunteers to continue their impactful work.

Social recognition is equally important for promoting volunteering within communities. News outlets, social media platforms, and community networks can highlight success stories and the positive impact volunteers have on society. By celebrating the achievements of volunteers and sharing their stories, social recognition not only raises awareness but also inspires others to get involved in volunteering.

At the international level, recognising volunteering as a valuable contribution to global development goals is crucial. Organisations like the United Nations and the World Health Organisation recognise and promote the significance of volunteering in creating positive change worldwide. International volunteer programmes, such as the Peace Corps, emphasise the value of cross-cultural exchange and the impact of volunteers in diverse communities.

On an individual level, volunteer recognition can enhance personal and professional development. Employers should value volunteer experience as it demonstrates a person's commitment, skills, and dedication to making a positive difference. Recognising volunteer work as a valuable attribute when considering job candidates can lead to increased opportunities and career growth for volunteers.

While recognition of volunteering is important, it is essential to establish a unified system for certifying the competencies gained through volunteering. By recognising and validating the skills acquired through volunteering, volunteers can receive proper acknowledgment for their efforts, and this can benefit them in future educational or employment opportunities. Creating a standardised system for recognising competences should be done with caution to avoid excessive bureaucracy that may undermine the essence of volunteering.

Additionally, attention should be given to addressing declining support for skills acquisition, national policies related to volunteering, and ensuring access to specific forms of funding. These factors can significantly impact the recognition and sustainability of volunteer efforts.

By implementing these recommendations, we can foster a culture of recognition that empowers volunteers, strengthens organisations, and encourages broader participation in volunteering. Recognising the value and impact of volunteering will ultimately lead to a more engaged and vibrant society.

European dimension of volunteering

Based on the analysis of existing research on volunteering and its impact on European identity and citizenship, it is evident that further investigation is needed to gain a deeper understanding of these dimensions. The current research indicates a lack of emphasis on European identity, with only a minimal mention of its connection to volunteering. Similarly, the exploration of European

citizenship in relation to volunteering is limited.

To address this gap, it is recommended conducting broader and more comprehensive research on the effects and impact of volunteering on European identity. This research should explore how engaging in volunteering activities within and outside European borders influences individuals' perception of European identity. It should investigate whether volunteering in diverse cultural contexts fosters a stronger sense of European identity and whether volunteering solely within Europe has a similar effect.

Furthermore, the impact of volunteering on European citizenship should be examined in greater detail. Research should focus on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competences through volunteering that contribute to active European citizenship. This includes understanding how volunteering can empower young people with the necessary tools to become active citizens at both the European and global levels.

Additionally, it is important to evaluate the integration of European schemes and programmes into national volunteering frameworks. The accessibility of national volunteering programmes for third-country citizens residing legally in European countries should be considered to ensure inclusivity and examine any potential barriers that may exist in relation to European citizenship.

By conducting comprehensive research in these areas, we can gain valuable insights into the impact of volunteering on European identity and citizenship. This knowledge will contribute to the development of effective strategies and policies that promote active citizenship, social cohesion, and a stronger European identity among volunteers.

Volunteering and solidarity

Based on the analysis of existing research on volunteering and its relationship to solidarity, it is evident that there is a need for further investigation into the various dimensions of solidarity. The current research lacks depth and balance in its exploration of empathy, active participation, inclusion, and human rights within the context of volunteering.

To address this gap, it is recommended conducting a broader and more comprehensive investigation on the effects and impact of volunteering on solidarity. Specifically, there should be a focus on exploring the role of volunteering in fostering empathy. Understanding how volunteering experiences contribute to the development of empathy and the ability to understand different perspectives is crucial. Research should examine how volunteers build connections with individuals and communities they support, emphasising the importance of empathy in volunteerism.

Furthermore, the dimension of active participation in volunteering should be thoroughly examined. This includes investigating the political nature of volunteering and how it contributes to active citizenship. Research should explore how volunteering enables individuals to contribute to their communities through specific actions and informal political experiences. Additionally, it is important to understand the special capacity, responsibility, and ownership that volunteers possess in contributing to a more just and sustainable future.

The aspect of inclusion in volunteering should also be explored in greater detail. Research should examine how volunteers work with local government officials to address gaps in the implementa-

tion of local policies, making public services more relevant and responsive. Furthermore, the experiences of disadvantaged volunteers should be given special attention, focusing on their specific needs and the support they require during transnational volunteering experiences.

Lastly, the dimension of human rights within the context of volunteering has been overlooked in the available research. It is recommended investigating the role of volunteering in promoting and upholding human rights, highlighting the potential impact volunteers can have in advocating and protecting human rights.

In conclusion, there is a need for broader and deeper research on the effects and impact of volunteering on solidarity. A comprehensive investigation into the dimensions of empathy, active participation, inclusion, and human rights will provide valuable insights and contribute to a better understanding of the role of volunteering in fostering solidarity. This knowledge will inform the development of effective strategies and policies that promote solidarity through volunteerism.

Recommendations to the European Solidarity Corps

The analysed studies show that there is a clear shift in the importance of motivation factors for volunteering among young people, with the traditional altruistic values losing importance and own benefit factors becoming more prevalent. It should be analysed how this is affecting the European Solidarity Corps Programme and how the volunteering opportunities it offers should be promoted to respond to the contemporary motivation factors of young people in Europe.

Studies point out to various external factors that may impact young people's decision to volunteer, related to the overall development of the country, its economic growth, various societal and cultural factors, awareness of volunteering, etc. However, there is no comparative analysis of how those external factors play out in different European countries and how they affect young people's willingness to join European Solidarity Corps activities. A better understanding of those contextual factors could help plan more targeted measures for supporting the engagement of young people from different countries.

Existing research shows that for many young people volunteering serves as an instrument for learning and it has a clear purpose in their developmental and career path. A reflection is needed on how this is impacting the European Solidarity Corps, as a programme where the focus is on the service dimension. Organisations involved in hosting volunteers should be supported to enhance their educational potential, develop strategies to support volunteer learning, and create supportive learning contexts.

The mapping conducted within this study found very little research related to the European Solidarity Corps programme. Most of the analysed studies tackling international volunteering in Europe were related to its predecessor, the European Voluntary Service. We recommend that the network of National Agencies and SALTO resource centres support research focusing on the implementation, impact and effectiveness of ESC.

While existing research focuses primarily on the motivation factors for volunteering, there is very little analysis on what prevents young people from volunteering. To engage more young people in the European Solidarity Corps, it would be helpful if there is more information about what is preventing young people from volunteering and how those obstacles could be overcome.

Despite all the efforts of the European Solidarity Corps and European Voluntary Service to support young people with fewer opportunities to engage in volunteering, studies show that an overwhelming majority of young volunteers share the same demographic characteristics associated with higher socioeconomic status, such as higher education levels, better health, and stable family backgrounds. The European Solidarity Corps programme should develop more effective tools and measures to support the involvement of disadvantaged, less privileged and young people with fewer opportunities.

There is very little research conducted about the negative consequences and costs of volunteering on the individual volunteer and on the hosting organisation. This question needs to be further explored, particularly in relation to the potential negative impact of (international) volunteering on disadvantaged young people, who seem to be paying a higher cost compared to others according to available research. The European Solidarity Corps programme should develop measures to provide adequate support to volunteers and organisations to mitigate these costs.

The analysed studies show a potential connection between membership in an organisation, and a higher chance to engage in international volunteering, particularly in the same field of work. The European Solidarity Corps could utilise this to promote volunteering among young people that are part of organisations.

The analysis showed a gap between national volunteering policies and programmes and European ones. Stakeholders should explore the potential for better connecting and complementing the two levels.

"Voluntourism" is a trend that might have an impact on how young people perceive and engage in volunteering. However, there is not enough data about it, and it is something to be considered.

There is a clear need for greater recognition of volunteering on national and European levels, though caution should be exercised because of the complexity of the issue and the various circumstances in different countries. The possibilities should be explored for the European Solidarity Corps programme to make an impact on recognition processes.

The analysis found a major gap in research in two key aspects of the European Solidarity Corps programme – European dimension and solidarity. The network of National Agencies and SALTO resource centres are advised to invest in research that would assess the impact of ESC on European identity and European citizenship, as well as to the main aspects of solidarity, particularly inclusion, empathy and human rights.

Annex 1: List of analysed studies

All studies that were identified and analysed within this mapping are listed in a document that is provided as an annex to this report. The list includes basic information about the studies (title, year of publication and author), as well as a matrix that shows which of the topics covered by the mapping are tackled by each document. The last two columns show if the study has also addressed questions related to European Solidarity Corps and/or European Voluntary Service.

The studies themselves are not provided as annexes, but all of them can be found online either on the web pages of the publishing institutions/ organisations, or in academic research databases.

Link to access the list of analysed studies: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1fqTFQicYyG-2sI8TLH1LzDB3SrU6ds-Jp0jLjcj7L02A/edit?usp=sharing

Editorial info

VOLUNTEERING CONFERENCE **Shaping volunteering in Europe and beyond** **4-6 October 2023** **Podgorica, Montenegro**

The Volunteering Conference is one of the activities within the framework of the long-term Strategic National Agencies' Cooperation on Volunteering.

The aim of the conference is in line with the SNAC Volunteering aim to strengthen the European Solidarity Corps Programme and volunteering in general.

Objectives of the conference:

- support the implementation of the Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU;

- create a space for networking and exchange between the different stakeholders of the programme;

- influence the mid-term evaluation of the programme and the forthcoming shaping of the new programme;

- celebrate the 5th anniversary of the first deadline of the European Solidarity Corps.

The location of the conference, Podgorica, reflects the objective of SNAC Volunteering to give visibility to the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps in the partner regions of the EU.

The participants invited to the conference are representatives of the NAs dealing with European Solidarity Corps, practitioners from organisations involved in European Solidarity Corps, young people involved with European Solidarity Corps, experts/trainers within European Solidarity Corps. All of them are invited to discuss the results of the SNAC Volunteering research and the current and possible future implementation of the Council Recommendations on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the European Union.