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European Solidarity Corps Projects Responding to COVID-19: Implications for Future Crises

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In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world in an unprecedented way, affecting various areas of the economy and society, including nonprofits and volunteering. However, nonprofits and volunteering did not just face challenges due to the pandemic; they also played a role in dealing with it. This article focuses on the European Solidarity Corps (ESC), an EU initiative that promotes solidarity through volunteering in countries worldwide. There was a content analysis of all the ESC projects with pandemic-relevant keywords. Though the ESC requests for proposals in the first year of the pandemic did not address the pandemic, about 8% of projects explicitly named the pandemic as either a main or secondary reason for the projects. The ESC projects represent a way to relatively flexibly allocate public funding for local and international volunteer projects dealing with various humanitarian crises, such as COVID-19 or the war in Ukraine.

Keywords: Public Projects, Nonprofit Organizations, Volunteering, COVID–19 Pandemic

Introduction

The virus, commonly known as COVID-19, emerged in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 and caused a severe global public health crisis (Nanda & Sharma, 2021). In January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 crisis to be a public health emergency of international concern (Lai et al., 2020). In February and March 2020, the virus spread across the globe and affected lives and economies worldwide in an unprecedented way. WHO acknowledged this by declaring COVID-19 to be a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Alshammari et al., 2021). The COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent wave of anti-epidemic measures and restrictions changed the world as we know it.

Mandel and Veetil (2020) stated that, "never before has an economy as interlinked as the present system been subject to shocks as large as the lockdowns in the wake of COVID-19" (p. 432). Home schooling and working from home changed many people's living habits and working conditions, as non-essential businesses and activities were closed or moved to an online environment (Ferry et al., 2021). The situation was largely unexpected, and many governmental steps were criticized (Coccia, 2021; Dunlop et al., 2020; Klimovský et al., 2021). Although there was a certain heterogeneity in governmental approaches to the pandemic (Engler et al., 2021), there was an "almost simultaneous worldwide reaction of lockdowns and shutdowns" (Berrocal et al., 2021, p. 2).

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The pandemic very quickly impacted various areas of human life (Azevedo et al., 2022; Borza & Park, 2020; Stötzer et al., 2022), including businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations in terms of procedures, operations, and resources (Shi, 2022). There have been mandatory closures of businesses due to the lockdowns, and other counter-pandemic measures, with relatively slow reopening and tendencies to social distancing (Stötzer et al., 2022; Walmsley et al., 2023). Many nonprofits had to deal with increased demand for their services regarding various kinds of humanitarian assistance due to the lockdowns, shutdowns, and quarantines (Santos & Laureano, 2022).

At the same time, there have been reports of various impacts on nonprofits regarding financing (Hutton et al., 2021; Jeong & Kim, 2021; Luong et al., 2022; Meyer et al., 2021; Plaček et al., 2022; Shi, 2022). Other difficulties were related to volunteering due to lockdowns and the virus itself (Biddle & Gray, 2020; Leviten-Reid et al., 2022; Shi, 2022) or a lack of nonprofit staff (Leviten-Reid et al., 2022; Santos & Laureano; 2022). Among other consequences, studies showed reducing the quantity and quality of nonprofits services (Searing et al., 2021), disrupting the practices of nonprofits (Meyer et al., 2021) and also difficulties regarding teamwork due to limited possibilities to meet face to face (Shi, 2022), increased the stress of nonprofit workers (Leviten-Reid et al., 2022). Aside from being impacted by the pandemic, nonprofits and volunteering were also participating in dealing with the pandemic (Azevedo et al., 2022; Biddle & Gray, 2020; Jeong & Kim, 2021; Kuenzi et al., 2021; Meyer et al., 2021; Wang & Cheng, 2021).

This article deals with the European Solidarity projects, the international program providing nonprofits with funding, especially to support volunteering projects with the purpose of promoting solidarity and address societal issues. The ESC wrote that the European Solidarity Corps (ESC), the successor of the European Voluntary Service, has a history going back to the 1990s. The ESC offers funding for various kinds of organizations, primarily for volunteering projects (Jeżowski, 2021). Though the ESC is an EU initiative, it includes 55 independent countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa, plus 13 overseas countries and territories (OCTs) from various parts of the world, including the Americas and Oceania.

The ESC focuses on volunteers aged 18-30, covering various costs for them, such as accommodation, traveling, food, insurance, pocket money, etc. (Khabirova et al., 2021). There are two types of organizations in ESC projects to assist volunteers, supporting and hosting organizations. As Khabirova et al. (2021) wrote, "the supporting [organization] is based in a volunteer's home country, it helps the volunteer prepare for the experience abroad", while the host organization "receives and helps the volunteer in the destination country" (p. 75). These organizations have a special importance during the pandemic since it is up to them to "provide protection against the disease as well as psychological support and to quickly organize a new program of activities" (Khabirova et al., 2021, p. 75).

This article is focused on the European Solidarity Corps projects addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of the research was to identify the scope and scale of the ESC projects addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, regarding the number of projects and grants, with respect to the country of the applicant, the applicant's type of organization, program action and project topic, then to identify the lessons from this case study for the future crisis, using recent studies.

Material and Methods

General Methodology Information and Data Sources

A case study approach was applied, specifically a plausibility probe case study (see Levy, 2008), as such studies aim to probe "the details of a particular case in order to shed light on a broader theoretical argument" (p. 6). Mixed research methods were applied. The first part of

the study was a qualitative content analysis in order to create a sample of ESC projects chosen for funding, with COVID-19 being at least one of the reasons for the project listed in the project description.

The ESC itself has had three funding years with available lists of accepted projects: 2018, 2019, and 2020. Program documentation is also available for 2021 and 2022. Projects related to COVID-19 were found only in the funding year 2020. There was one exceptional mention of COVID-19 in the funding year 2019; however, the project description (mentioning lockdowns and other measures that started in 2020) was likely due to some sort of error. Therefore, this project was added to the 2020 sample.

There are four action types in the ESC: 1) volunteering projects, 2) solidarity projects, 3) traineeships and jobs, and 4) volunteering teams in high-priority areas, with the vast majority of projects being in the first two categories. All of the calculations were performed for each category separately and then for all categories together. The second part of the research involved evaluating the projects reacting to the COVID-19 crisis using basic descriptive statistics.

Several data sources were used. The main source was the European Youth Portal (2021), specifically the database of funded projects. This database makes it possible to sort projects by project status (ongoing or completed projects), funding years (2018, 2019, or 2020), country, topic, organization type, and action type (volunteering projects, solidarity projects, traineeships and jobs, and volunteering teams in high priority areas). A full-text search was subsequently used for the content analysis of the projects. The other data source was the project documentation for funding years 2018 to 2022. This documentation, available through the ESC guides, provided a broader framework for understanding the aim, tools, and procedures of the ESC.

The ESC report was a supplementary source. It included aggregated data for funding years 2018 and 2019. For supplementary tables showing the possible outreach in terms of the number of people living in the countries collaborating with the ESC, two country databases were used: the CIA World Factbook (2021) and, in a few cases, the Overseas Countries and Territories Association (OCTA) website (2021).

Content Analysis of COVID-Related Keywords

The aim of this part of the research was to identify which projects mentioned the COVID-19 crisis as a reason for the project. 'COVID-19 crisis' here refers to the health emergency resulting from the spread of the virus and to the impact of anti-pandemic interventions.

The European Youth Portal offers various information about the funded projects. In the first phase of the content analysis, the most intuitive keywords were used for a full-text search in the system: COVID-19, coronavirus, epidemic, and pandemic. This was subsequently expanded to include variants with alternate spellings, plural spellings, misspellings, and colloquial names. The expansion of search terms was clearly necessary as some projects were found using these variants; whenever we encountered a variant (such as a misspelling), we applied that variant in a full-text search in case it had been used multiple times.

COVID-19-related keywords can be divided into three categories: a) COVID-19 (COVID, covid19, Kovid, coronavirus, corona, corona-virus, coronacrisis); b) pandemic (epidemic, epidemics, epidemiological, pandemics); and c) lockdown (lockdowns, lock-down, lock-downs, quarantine, quarantines).

In the second phase of the content analysis, all the projects from the first phase were classified in terms of their relation to COVID-19. This was necessary to assess the context of the

keywords. There was then a control full-text search with other illness-related keywords, such as virus, disease, isolated, isolation, distancing, contagious, emergency, respirator, mask, vaccine, vaccination, SARS, and SARS-CoV-2.

Classification of the Projects Regarding Their Relation to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The projects with COVID-19-oriented keywords were divided into one of five categories: 1) COVID as a primary reason for doing the project; 2) COVID as a secondary reason for doing the project; 3) COVID as a reason for adopting the project management and organization; 4) other (e.g., mentioning COVID in the title but not explaining it in the project description; mentioning COVID with no clear significant connections); and 5) unrelated to COVID-19 (such as chimpanzee quarantine).

The projects in category 1 were having COVID-19 crisis as one of the main reasons for the projects. The projects in category 2 were having COVID-19 as an additional reason for the project. The main difference was that category 1 should include projects which would likely not be proposed without the COVID-19 crisis, or their legitimacy in terms of the necessity for the projects would be substantially limited. The projects in category 2 include the COVID-19 crisis as one of the arguments for the projects, typically saying that the COVID-19 crisis worsened the situation of their target group, but the project could likely stand on its own even without the COVID-19 crisis—there would still be a need for a project.

Categories 3, 4 and 5 were used for classifying other projects with COVID-19-related projects. However, in the sections above, they are included in the category of projects not responding to the COVID-19 crisis in terms of the project aims and goals, together with projects which did not include the COVID-19-related keywords. For classifying these categories, the following principles were applied. The projects in category 3 were mentioning possible complications or project management adaptation due to the COVID-19 crisis, and one project mentioning the mentioned positive impact of the COVID-19 crisis on project management The project in category 4 projects mentioned COVID-19 keywords in the clear COVID-19 context, but its meaning was not clear. For example, projects mentioning COVID-19 in the title but without keyword occurrence in the project descriptions. The projects in category 5 were mentioning keywords that were potentially relevant to the COVID-19 crisis, but they were mentioned in a different context.

For some calculations, the projects were divided into two groups: First, projects reacting to the COVID-19 crisis with the pandemic being at least one of the arguments for the projects (categories 1 and 2) and second, projects not reacting to the COVID-19 crisis in terms of the project's goals and impacts (categories 3, 4 and 5).

Quantitative Analysis

The projects could be divided into two basic groups for most of the calculations: one group of projects were reacting in whole or in part to the COVID-19 crisis (categories 1 and 2 above), and the second group of projects that did not mention COVID-19 as a reason for the project itself (categories 3, 4, and 5 above, and obviously any project not containing any COVID-19 related keywords).

The category relevant for the subsequent calculation, the study's main part, was the first group. This is the category for the projects that react, at least in part, to the COVID-19 crisis. Out of all 3,438 ESC projects in the funding year 2020, 275 projects (8%) met this criterion. Additional calculations were made in terms of the financial characteristics of the projects, more specifically in the descriptive statistics of each ESC action in relation to the COVID-19 crisis: median, minimal, and maximum values for the values in the analysis.

Results

European Solidarity Corps and COVID-19

Officially, the core of the EU added value of the ESC is in the cross-border character of the activities and the activities developed and carried out at national or regional levels. The ESC is intended to complement existing public policies and programs, as well as private sector policies and activities, without competing with them or replacing them. Basically, according to the official information, the ESC should "address unmet societal needs that cannot be addressed by the labour market, existing volunteering activities or other types of solidarity programmes" (European Commission, Annual Management and Performance Report for the EU Budget, Financial Year 2020, 2021, p. 87). The ESC is "one of the mechanisms of the European Union promoting solidarity as a value at the grassroots level" (Jeżowski, 2021, p. 91). It can also be seen as an "instrument for financing the Union's actions" (Moroianu-Zlătescu & Marinică, 2021, p. 132).

Not many studies focus on the impact of the pandemic on the ESC project. However, there are some that mention that the impact was significant, making some of the planned activities impossible due to the lockdowns, quarantines, and social distancing, while some of the other activities were moved to the online environment (Jeżowski & Poszytek, 2022). Volunteers who were abroad on ESC projects also faced the dilemma of whether or not to return to their home countries (Khabirova et al., 2021), while many actually decided to stay (Jeżowski, 2021).

Actors of the European Solidarity Corps

Though the ESC is known as an EU initiative, several institutions and public bodies are involved in ESC implementation. The main institution is the European Commission, which "is ultimately responsible for running the European Solidarity Corps" (European Solidarity Corps Guide, 2021, p. 13). The European Commission's responsibility for the ESC is executed directly or through the European Commission's Education and Culture Executive Agency.

Though the main responsibility for the ESC is on the European Commission and its Executive Agency, indirect management is the main method of implementation. The European Commission manages the ESC budget, though the budget implementation tasks are up to national agencies. The official rationale for this approach is the adjustment of general priorities to the needs of specific countries, with a certain level of diversity across program countries, and to align the ESC as closely as possible with the recipients of the benefits and impacts of the ESC (European Solidarity Corps Guide, 2021).

The national agencies represent "the link between the European Commission and participating organizations at local, regional and national level" (European Solidarity Corps Guide, 2021, p. 13). There is usually one national agency in each program country. The national agencies are supposed to guide users through all the ESC project phases, starting with the first contact with the ESC, then through the application process, and through the project implementation until the final evaluation (European Solidarity Corps Guide, 2021). These two groups of actors, the European Commission and its Executive Agency and the national agencies, play the main roles in managing and implementing the ESC. However, some other organizations provide complementary expertise: the SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres, the European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre, and the Eurodesk Network (European Solidarity Corps Guide, 2021, p. 14).

The Policy Contexts, Objectives and Financing of the ESC

Officially, the policy framework of the ESC is mainly set "by the 2008 Council recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers" (European Solidarity Corps Guide,

2021, p. 6). The main policy document is the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027 (Council of the European Union, 2019), which has 11 'European Youth Goals' in the fields of gender equality, mental health and wellbeing, social inclusion, quality learning and employment, sustainability, and others. According to the actual ESC 2021 program guide (European Solidarity Corps guide, 2021), the general objective of the ESC is to enhance the engagement of young people and organizations in accessible and high-quality solidarity activities, primarily volunteering. As is implied by the ESC (European Solidarity Corps guide, 2021, p. 7), the European Commission wants young people and organizations to move toward enhancing their engagement in solidarity activities, especially volunteering. The central targets for ESC are young people and their support in solidarity activities with the goal of making societal changes while improving and validating their skills and becoming active citizens. The specific objectives also state how and where the engagement of young people should be promoted.

Between funding years 2018 and 2020, there were 55,000 ESC opportunities for young people to participate in the program; 280,000 young people registered for the ESC; 39% of the participants had fewer opportunities; and 55% of the ESC program participants were satisfied with their experience (European Commission, Annual Management and Performance Report for the EU Budget—Financial Year 2020, 2021). The funding of the ESC "is provided in the form of grants, procurement and prizes" (European Commission, Annual Management and Performance Report for the EU Budget—Financial Year 2020, 2021, p. 85). The main principle of distributing financial resources to the target organization is via national agencies. According to the official sources for 2019 and 2018 (incomplete), the budget was €197 million granted through 750 projects, with 27,316 young people (volunteers, trainees, or jobholders) participating in the projects in order to "bring positive change to the communities" (European Solidarity Corps, Annual Report, 2020, p. 6). The overall indicative budget for the first program period (2018 to 2020) was €375.6 million (European Solidarity Corps Guides 2018, p. 9; 2019, p. 9; 2020, p. 9). The second program period (2021 to 2027) has an indicative financial budget of slightly over one billion EUR (European Solidarity Corps Guides, 2021).

ESC was obviously not designed to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, as its first funding year was 2018, and the worldwide COVID-19 outbreak was at the beginning of 2020. The call for projects for the funding year 2020 does not mention COVID-19, as the call was published before the pandemic. However, a certain number of projects funded by this program in 2020 clearly stated that COVID-19 was at least one of the reasons for the project. The 2021 ESC call mentioned COVID-19 three times: twice in the minor actions of volunteering teams in high-priority areas and once in the context of health, one of the five priority areas of the ESC for 2021. However, even in the 2022 call, COVID-19 was not a central topic of the ESC.

The Regional Perspective on the European Solidarity Corps and COVID-19 Pandemic

Potential Outreach of the ESC

Several potential outreach groups can be identified in the participating countries and partner countries. The program countries can be divided into countries with a full range of activities and countries with program opportunities other than traineeships and jobs. The program countries with a full range of activities are "accessible to young people legally residing in one of the EU Member States and organizations established in them" (European Solidarity Corps, Countries Covered, 2021, n.p.). The countries with a full range of activities include overseas countries and territories (OCTs) of EU member states (see below), though they themselves are not part of the EU (European Solidarity Corps Guide, 2021).

The other group of participating countries have program opportunities other than traineeship and jobs for young people and organizations from the partner countries; this includes

Table 1. Countries in the ESC by the Type of Participation

Region	Independent Countries	Population	Population/World	Area (km^2)	Area/World
Non-EU participating countries	23	494,652,345	6.36%	24,178,881	16.23%
EU program countries	27	450,085,180	5.79%	4,089,599	2.75%
Non-EU program countries	4	85,004,304	1.09%	895,475	0.60%
Ex-EU temporary program country	1	67,081,000	0.86%	241,930	0.16%
EU overseas countries and territories	0*	1,019,372	0.01%	2,197,341	1.48%
Total**	55	1,097,817,044	14.12%	31,602,888	21.22%

Based on the CIA Factbook (2021) and the Overseas Countries and Territories Association (2021).
Note: * 0 independent countries, but 13 overseas countries or territories, ** The public entities/special municipalities Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, and Saba were included both in original data for EU program countries and EU OCTs. However, they were included just once in the total row.

Iceland, North Macedonia, Turkey, and Liechtenstein (European Solidarity Corps, Countries Covered, 2021). The dominant country in this group is Turkey. Partner countries do not fully participate in the ESC. However, they may act as partners in certain actions (European Solidarity Corps Guide, 2021).

Table 1 shows the 55 countries eligible for partnering or participation in ESC projects with a total population of over one billion. Detailed information can be found in the Appendix (A5 to A9). This makes the ESC potential relevant to policymakers in various parts of the world.

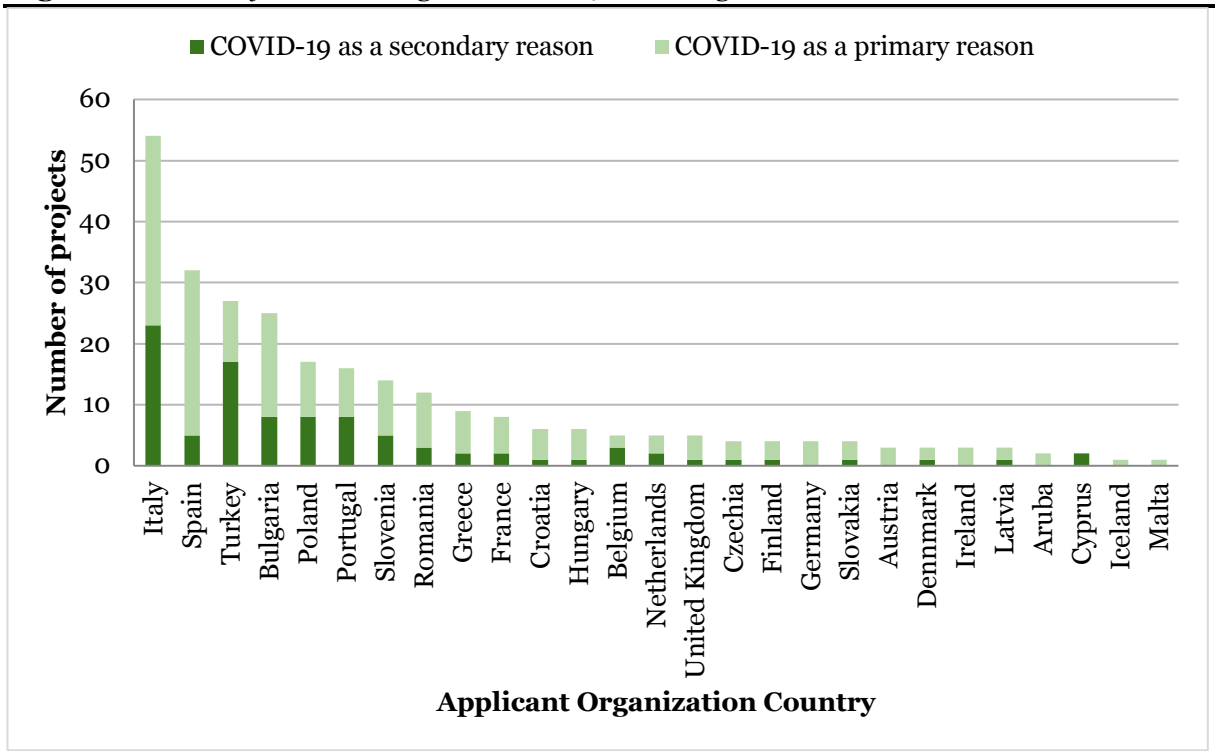
All the program and participating countries and territories have a population exceeding 600 million people, which is almost 8% of the world's population. The territory of these countries exceeds 8 million km^2, which is more than 5% of the world's surface. Due to the EU OCTs' spread across the world, and non-EU programs and participating countries from Europe, Asia, and Africa, the potential ESC outreach is literally worldwide. According to official information from June 2021 (European Commission, Annual Management and Performance Report for the EU Budget, 2021).

Projects Reacting to COVID-19 Crisis by Country

Regarding ESC projects by countries, six countries had more than 400 projects in the first program period (2018 to 2020): Spain (772), Italy (652), Germany (606), France (584), Turkey (496), and Poland (469). These six countries combined represent 50.74% of all ESC projects in this time period. More information is in appendix A14.

Figure 1 and Appendix A4 show the projects that list COVID-19 as a primary or secondary reason for the project by country. In the funding year 2020, out of 3,438 projects, this was 275 projects (8%). These 275 projects were in 26 independent countries, mostly from Europe (24 EU

Figure 1. ESC Projects Reacting to COVID-19, Funding Year 2020



countries plus Iceland and the ex-EU United Kingdom); Turkey, from the Middle East; and Aruba, the constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, located in the Caribbean.

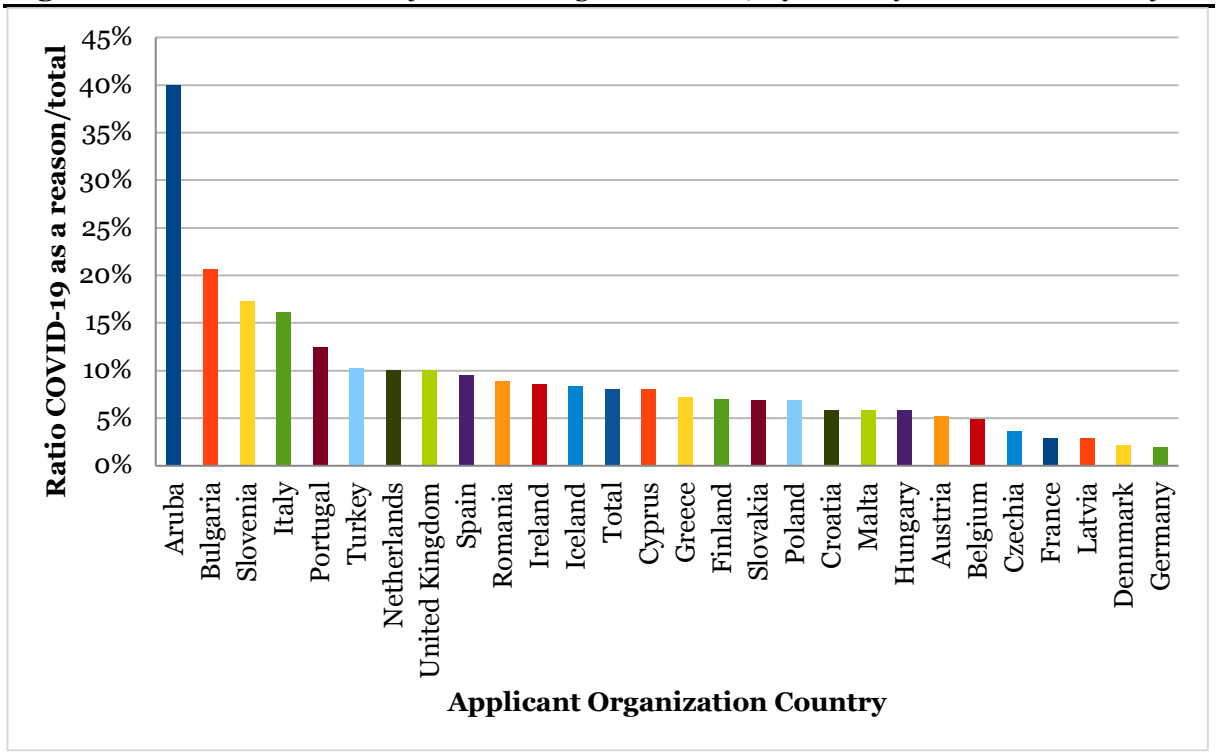
Only the countries with projects reacting partially to the COVID-19 crisis are included in Figure 1. The other countries, specifically Lithuania, Estonia, Sweden, Luxembourg, North Macedonia, Curaçao, and French Polynesia, had no projects mentioning COVID-19. Italy had by far the most projects reacting to the COVID-19 crisis. Out of the 26 countries (27 including Aruba) with projects reacting to COVID-19, four of them combined have half of the projects reacting to COVID-19: Italy (54 projects), Spain (32), Turkey (27), and Bulgaria (25), for a total of 138 out of 275.

The country with the third highest number of projects reacting to COVID-19 is Turkey. However, Turkey is not a member of the EU and joined the ESC program relatively late, in 2019 (Baikushikova et al., 2021). Turkey has 27 projects reacting to COVID-19, which is nearly 10% of all projects reacting to COVID-19. Also, Turkey is by far the most active non-EU member in this area (the United Kingdom, a former EU country, has five; Aruba, a constituent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, has two; and Iceland has one).

Figure 2 shows a ratio of projects in terms of projects reacting to COVID-19 (at least having COVID-19 as a secondary reason for the project) and projects not reacting to COVID-19. Bulgaria and Turkey have very high ratios of projects reacting to COVID-19 to the total number of projects. In Bulgaria, roughly every fifth project in ESC in the last funding year of the programs was in reaction to the COVID-19 crisis. In Italy, it was roughly every sixth project. Aruba had two out of five projects reacting to the COVID-19 crisis, the highest share of the projects reacting to COVID-19. As appendix A15 shows, there is no direct relationship between the number of projects reacting to COVID-19 and the total number of projects by country.

However, it is true that Italy and Spain had the highest numbers both of projects reacting to COVID-19 and of all projects. More specifically, Italy, where the COVID-19 crisis first struck the hardest, had the most projects reacting to COVID-19 and the second-highest numbers of

Figure 2. Share of the ESC Projects Reacting to COVID-19 by Country to All National Projects



all projects, with Spain the opposite. However, Italy even had a much higher share of all projects reacting to COVID-19 (19.64% of all projects responding to COVID-19 of all countries) than the share of the total projects of all countries (9.73%).

COVID Grants by Countries

This part presents the results in terms of the grants for the projects reacting to COVID-19 by countries. This does not mean that all this money will remain in these countries since there could be project partners from other countries.

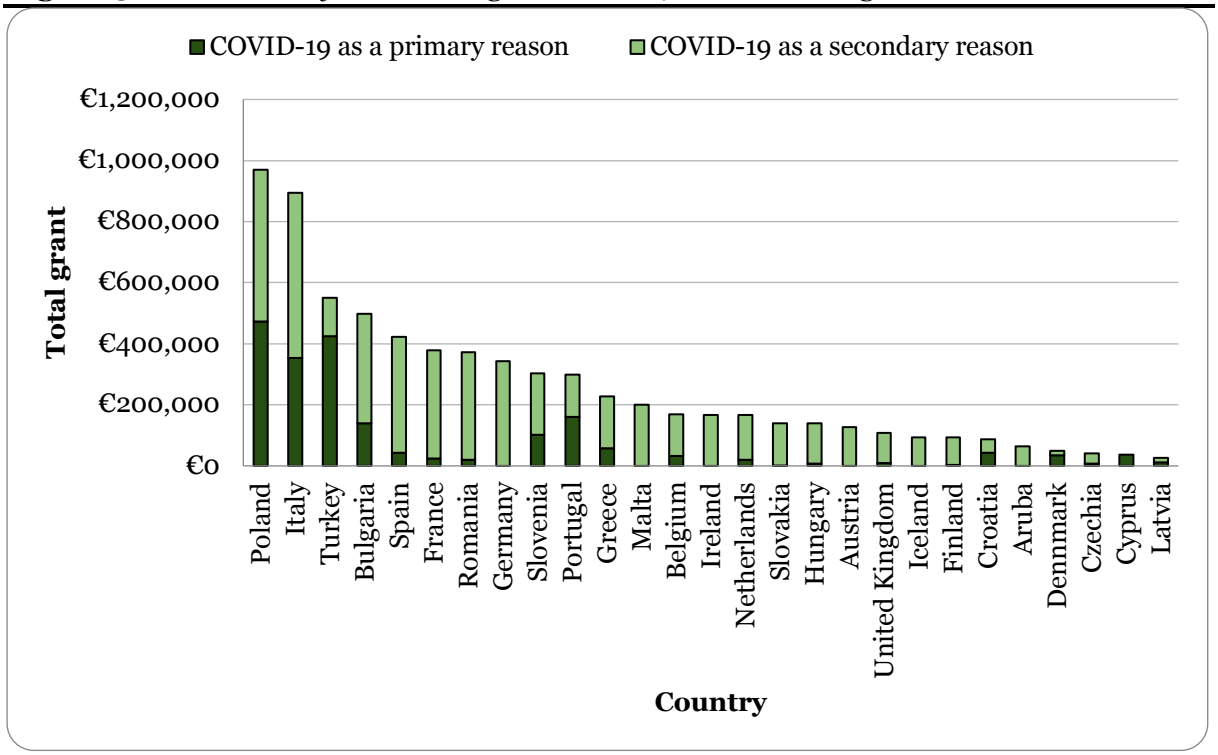
Out of €86 million granted in ESC projects in the funding year 2020, almost €6.5 million (7.47%) were dedicated to projects reacting in whole or in part to the COVID-19 crisis. Figure 3 shows the grant distribution among the countries, together with the total share of grants per country to the total grant amount of ESC projects reacting to COVID-19 in the funding year 2020.

Figure 3 shows how ESC projects financially contribute to multi-level governance in each country in terms of the two types of reactions in the COVID-19 crisis. The highest percentages of grant money allocated to projects reacting to COVID-19 were in Poland (13.91%) and Italy (12.84%). In both cases, the total grants approached a million EUR per country.

COVID-19 in ESC Projects According to the Program Actions

When the COVID-19 outbreak started, the "European Solidarity Corps continued to provide relief where possible through, for example, volunteers giving elderly people a hand with shopping for food or medicines or fighting loneliness" (European Commission, Annual Management and Performance Report for the EU Budget–Financial Year 2020, 2021, p. 86). However, the program itself was not designed to deal with the pandemic. The first three ESC program guides for funding years 2018, 2019, and 2020 did not include any mention of COVID-19, as they were all issued before the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020.

Figure 3. Grants of Projects Reacting to COVID-19 in the Funding Year 2020



ESC Projects Reacting to COVID-19 in the Program Action

The first part of this section focuses on the COVID-19 crisis and ESC projects. Table 1 shows the ESC projects in the funding year 2020 in relation to COVID-19 and types of actions. About two-thirds of the projects (179 projects) that were identified as reacting to the COVID-19 crisis listed COVID-19 as a secondary reason for the project. One-third of the projects (96 projects) described the COVID-19 crisis as a primary reason for the project. Table 2 shows the distribution of ESC projects in the funding year 2020 reacting to the COVID-19 crisis in the program action and the role of the COVID-19 crisis in the argumentation for the project.

Table 2 shows the distribution of projects reacting to the COVID-19 crisis. In terms of program activities, most of the projects reacting to the COVID-19 crisis were either volunteering projects (49%) or solidarity projects (46.2%).

Table 2. ESC Projects Reacting to COVID-19 in the Program Action and the Role of the COVID-19 Crisis in Funding Year 2020

Program Action	COVID-19 as a Secondary Reason/Focus	COVID-19 as a Primary Reason/Focus	Total	Share
Volunteering projects	94	41	135	49.09%
Solidarity projects	76	51	127	46.18%
Traineeship and jobs	9	2	11	4.00%
Volunteering teams in high priority areas	0	2	2	0.73%
Total	179	96	275	100%
Share	65.09%	34.91%	100%	

Table 3. ESC Projects in Terms of the Action and in Relation to the COVID-19 Crisis

Project Activities	Reacting to COVID	Not Reacting to COVID	All Projects (2020)
Volunteering projects	135	1,880	2,015
Solidarity projects	127	1,164	1,291
Traineeship and jobs	11	103	114
Volunteering teams in high priority areas	2	12	14
Total	275	3,159	3,434

Projects reacting in whole or in part to the COVID-19 crisis made up 8% of all projects, as shown in absolute numbers in Table 3. Table 3 also shows the absolute numbers of projects and their distribution in terms of the program actions and their relations to COVID-19 and the number of projects that did not state that they were reacting to the COVID-19 crisis.

Each of the program actions had projects reacting to COVID-19. The distribution of projects by program actions for projects reacting to the COVID-19 crisis is not the same as the distribution of all projects by program actions.

Solidarity projects have a relatively higher share of projects reacting in whole or in part to COVID-19 to all ESC projects reacting to COVID-19 (46.18%) than their share of all projects to all program actions (37.59%). The explanation for this might be the local nature of solidarity projects, when the country of origin of volunteers is the one where they will work (European Solidarity Corps Guide, 2020). Therefore, they might be closer to the problems they want to solve, and the project reaction might be quicker than in volunteering projects. In volunteering projects, the share of the projects reacting in whole or in part to COVID-19 was 49.09% of all program actions, but the share of all volunteering projects to all projects was higher (58.68%).

The other two program actions had a relatively small share of projects, but they both had a slightly higher share of projects reacting to the COVID-19 crisis than the share of all projects.

Another interesting indicator regarding the program actions was the rate of projects reacting to the COVID-19 crisis. The first group of projects mentioned the COVID-19 crisis as at least a partial reason. The second group of projects did not mention COVID-19 as an argument for a project. However, some of them mentioned the COVID-19 crisis as a potential complication for a project or mentioned a need to adjust activities, or just mentioned the COVID-19 crisis with no clear connection.

Table 4 shows the share of ESC projects by program actions in terms of whether they claimed a reaction to the COVID-19 crisis.

Table 4. Share of ESC Projects by Program Actions in Terms of Their Reactions to COVID-19

ESC Program Actions	Reacting to COVID-19	Not Reacting to COVID-19
Volunteering projects	6.70%	93.30%
Traineeship and jobs	9.65%	90.35%
Solidarity projects	9.84%	90.16%
Volunteering teams in high priority areas	14.29%	85.71%
Total	8.01%	91.99%

Table 5. ESC Grants in Terms of the Action and in Relation to the COVID-19 Crisis in Funding Year 2020

ESC Program Action	Reacting to COVID-19 Crisis	Not Reacting to COVID-19 Crisis	All Projects
Volunteering projects	€5,134,479.52	€68,971,527.47	€74,106,006.99
Solidarity projects	€894,967.20	€7,833,915.57	€8,728,882.77
Traineeship and jobs	€203,744.40	€2,197,417.45	€2,401,161.85
Volunteering teams in high priority areas	€209,978.00	€809,149.64	€1,019,127.64
Total	€6,443,169.12	€79,812,010.13	€86,255,179.25

In future funding years, it is expected that the rate of projects reacting to COVID-19 in volunteering teams in high priority areas might be even higher, with COVID-19 stated as a primary reason for this action. The funding year 2020, shown in the tables, was announced before the COVID-19 outbreak. Also, traineeships and jobs will no longer be part of ESC. Therefore, these shares will soon change.

ESC Projects Regarding the Program Action

As Table 5 shows, €6,443,169 out of €86,255,179 (7.47%) was dedicated to the projects either directly reacting to the COVID-19 crisis or seeing COVID-19 as a secondary reason for the project. Volunteering projects had the highest rate of the aggregated grant money for all countries and projects in the funding year 2020 (85.81%), followed by solidarity projects (10.18%). These two groups have the highest share, considering the number of projects. However, the ratios to the number of total projects are different: volunteering projects had 49%, and solidarity projects had 46.2%. The Appendix (Tables A2 and A3) shows the basic descriptive statistics for identifying project sizes. The median grant in the funding year 2020 was €12,568 per project. The median grant in the funding year 2020 for projects reacting to the COVID-19 crisis was €9,601. In both cases, volunteering had the highest rate of grants in ESC.

ESC Grants by Program Actions and the Role of COVID-19

The previous part did not discuss whether the COVID-19 crisis was a primary reason for the project or a secondary reason for a project that would be needed even without the COVID-19 crisis. Table 6 specifies the distribution of these grant amounts among those two subtypes.

A total of €2,009,197 were assigned to the projects directly reacting to the COVID-19 crisis (31% of all COVID-19 related projects). These projects might not have been proposed and funded without COVID-19, though this is an assumption built on the argument that these projects list COVID-19 as one of the main reasons for the project, or even the single main reason. The other €4,437,860 (59%) were assigned to the projects that stated that COVID-19 had worsened the situation of the target group of the project and/or it was a secondary reason for the project. These projects would probably still have been proposed even without the COVID-19 crisis. More detailed results are in the Appendix (Tables A1, A2, and A3).

Types of Organizations in the ESC

ESC Projects by the Types of Organizations

Taking into account the types of organizations provides more information about the nature of organizations receiving funding from the ESC. In the three years of the first program period, the vast majority of projects were classified as NGOs or social enterprises. The European Youth

Table 6. ESC Grants by Program Actions and the Role of COVID-19 in Funding Year 2020

Projects with COVID-19 Related Keywords	COVID-19 as a Primary Reason/ Main Focus	COVID-19 as a Secondary Reason	All projects reacting to COVID-19	Share
Volunteering projects	€1,430,172.56	€3,704,306.96	€5,134 479.52	79.64%
Traineeship and jobs	€15,410.00	€188,334.40	€203,744.40	3.16%
Solidarity projects	€353,636.20	€545,219.00	€898,855.20	13.94%
Volunteering teams in high priority areas	€209,978.00	€0.00	€209,978.00	3.26%
Total	€2,009,196.76	€4,437,860.36	€6,447,057.12	100%
Share	31.16%	68.84%	100%	

Table 7. Types of Organizations in the ESC Divided into Thematic Clusters

Type of Organization (clusters)	2018	2019	2020	Total	Percent
NGO or social enterprise	668	1,923	2,417	5,008	71.47%
Sports and youth work	45	324	440	809	11.50%
Public sector organizations	45	159	177	381	5.44%
Cultural organization, regardless of legal status	44	96	88	228	3.25%
International organization regardless of legal status	29	65	85	179	2.55%
Education and research organization	19	85	75	179	2.55%
Private company	8	27	31	66	0.94%
Other	24	58	75	157	2.24%
Total	882	2,737	3,388	7,007	100%

Portal organization classification mixed two perspectives: legal entities and the sector of an organization. According to European Youth Portal, there were 61 types of organizations among ESC grantors, most quite minor. These have been arranged in the eight clusters presented in Table 7.

Some are clustered according to legal status (private nonprofits and social enterprises, private companies, public sector organizations), others by sector (sports and youth work, etc.). Details about the clusters and types of organizations are in the Appendix (Table A10).

ESC Projects by the Types of Organizations

This part focuses on the grants according to the clusters. Table 8 clearly shows that the vast majority of the grants reacting to COVID-19 are contracted to NGOs and social enterprises (91.57%, almost €6 million), followed by public sector organizations (4.14%, €262,495), education and research institutions (3.68%, €233,455), and youth work organizations and informal groups (0.61%, €38,788).

If the solidarity projects were included, the category of 'youth work organizations and informal groups' would likely be higher. Only 11 out of 61 organization categories are represented among the projects reacting to the COVID-19 crisis in 2020; private companies and international organizations are not represented here, although they were eligible.

Table 8. Legal Entities, 2020, Total, COVID Grants (Excluding Solidarity Projects)

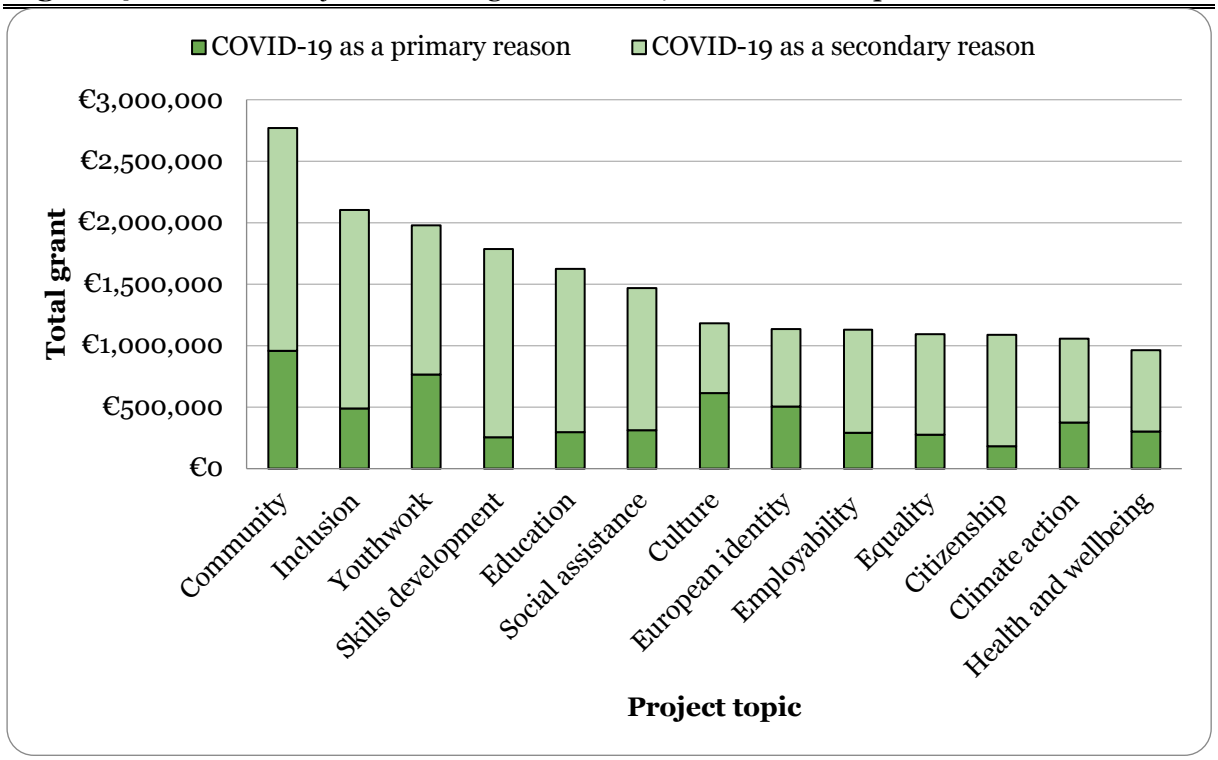
Legal Entity	COVID-19 as a Primary Reason	COVID-19 as a Secondary Reason	All projects reacting to COVID-19
NGOs and social enterprises	€1,594,959.36	€4,215,253.36	€5,810,212.72
Education and research	€182,764.00	€50,691.00	€233,455.00
Public sector organizations	€97,584.00	€164,911.00	€262,495.00
Youth work organizations and informal groups	€21,536.00	€17,252.60	€38,788.60
Total	€1,896,843.36	€4,448,107.96	€6,344,951.32

Project Topics in the ESC

The European Youth Portal has 22 topics for the ESC projects that are represented in three of its actions: volunteering, solidarity projects, and traineeships and jobs. The fourth ESC action, volunteering teams in high priority areas, does not have a topic classification since it is focused on that year's high priority areas.

This part presents the results for project grants reacting to COVID-19 by topic in terms of the grants. One project could have up to three topics; with a few exceptions, this was the case. Figure 4 presents information about the grant distribution of the projects reacting to COVID-19 according to the project topics.

Figure 4. Grants of Projects Reacting to COVID-19 in Terms of Topics



The most frequent topic connected with mentioning COVID-19 as a reason for the project was community development, at 39.4%. Grants for projects related to community development and reacting to COVID-19 totalled €2,769,577, with €957,061 going to community development projects having COVID-19 as a primary reason for the project. The second most frequent topic of projects reacting to COVID-19 was inclusion, with 29.9% of project grant shares (€2,101,880); €487,846 went to inclusion projects having COVID-19 as a primary reason for the project. The third most frequent category was youth work, with 28.2% of the grant money (€1,980,675) going to projects reacting to the COVID-19 crisis; €765,984 went to youth work projects having COVID-19 as a primary reason for the project. Other topics among projects receiving grants while reacting in whole or in part to COVID-19 were skills development (25.4%), education and training (23.1%), and social assistance and welfare (20.9%). The complete information is in the Appendix (Table A11).

Discussion

The Regional Significance of the European Solidarity Corps for Unexpected Crises

The pandemic was a challenging time for international solidarity in the European Union and other parts of the world as well. On the one hand, there was cross-country cooperation on hospital care and patient transfers, but on the other hand, there were border closures, and the situation was also difficult regarding exports pf protective medical equipment (Berrocal et al., 2021; Chopin et al., 2020). At the time of this paradox, ESC offered a platform practically promoting solidarity not only in the EU but also in EU Overseas countries and territories and other partner countries.

This pandemic was not the last international crisis, e.g., the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 displaced millions of people, the majority of them women, the elderly, children or people with severe health conditions (Maternik et al., 2023; Elliott, 2022).

This means the war in Ukraine in 2022 caused a refugee crisis with several impacts on the individual and societal needs that the ESC is addressing. Moreover, of the countries with the highest numbers of refugees per capita, all are involved in the ESC. The vast majority are program countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Germany, Austria and Ireland), while Moldova and Montenegro are partner countries (Elliott, 2022). Though further research is needed, the ESC, due to its regional and thematic focus, has the potential to diminish the negative impact of international crises of a humanitarian nature.

ESC Volunteering and International Crises

As Morawski & Szczegielniak (2021) wrote, volunteering is an instrument to help minimise the negative effects of the pandemic. With the exception of Traineeship and jobs action, the ESC focused on volunteering. Therefore, ESC projects provide the potential for organizations to obtain additional funding for volunteering projects, which can minimize the negative impact of the pandemic.

What makes ESC volunteering relatively unique is the centralised database of projects and volunteering opportunities, which served as a basis for this research. This information is publicly available, not just for researchers or volunteering organizations but also for volunteers themselves. As Almeida (2021) wrote, “a common point among them is the need to centralize access to this information for those in need and volunteers,” while this “approach intends to increase the coordination and impact of these initiatives” (p. 49).

What makes this centralised online marketplace for international volunteering opportunities even more important is that the ESC program and partner countries comprise 55 independent

countries (including Kosovo and Palestine with disputed status) and 13 OCTs with a population exceeding one billion (14% of the world population). This potentially enables efficient allocation of volunteer resources internationally, in this way forming local and international partnerships with various types of organizations to create synergies and increase efficiency of dealing with crises like the pandemic.

Another issue is the qualitative impact of volunteering, both on volunteer well-being and on the volunteering performed. With regard to the research studies on ESC volunteering during the pandemic, such studies are not very common. Jeżowski & Poszytek (2022) mentioned e-volunteering in the case of the European Solidarity Corps volunteering in Poland, such as online shopping for the elderly, foreign language classes for young people and coaching and online psychological support online.

Volunteering can also be an instrument contributing to dealing with other crises, such as the refugee crisis resulting from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as volunteers often help the refugees (Maternik et al., 2023; Shmidt & Jaworsky, 2022; Šveda & Štefková, 2022; Kyriazi, 2022).

Volunteering is a tool enabling citizens to participate in dealing with crises, including humanitarian ones. The ESC is focused on volunteering projects, offering various kinds of organizations, especially nonprofits, financial support for organized volunteering. Therefore, the ESC has the potential to contribute to dealing with the crises through its support to volunteering projects.

ESC Project Topics and Global Crisis

The pandemic has caused challenges for elderly care, childcare, and home schooling (Stötzer et al., 2022), while many people lost part of their income or even their jobs (Santos & Laureano, 2022). There were also challenges regarding older LGBTQ+ adults during the pandemic (Perone, 2021).

The ESC proved to be a natural funding source for COVID-19-oriented volunteer projects, even though the 2020 request for proposals was issued before the pandemic and did not explicitly mention it. Though the rate of the ESC projects in the funding year 2020 was 6%, the share of the projects reacting to COVID-19 will likely be higher due to the thematic overlaps between the impact of the pandemic and the focus of the ESC, and also due to the fact that some ESC projects were submitted before the pandemic started, and therefore could not include pandemic related keywords. The reason for that is the focus of the ESC program on promoting solidarity, dealing with social issues, supporting communities, inclusion, etc. Studies on the impact of the pandemic will likely continue, but based on the current literature, it seems that the pandemic has been impacting the ESC program target groups. There are also some studies, such as Khabirova et al. (2021), who wrote about the European Solidarity Corps projects during the pandemic, that "volunteers participate in projects that are highly useful, such as working with disabled people or for various NGOs" (p. 74).

In summary, the literature shows various impacts of the pandemic on various vulnerable target groups. It also seems very likely that the war in Ukraine and the refugee crisis will also impact these groups of people. The ESC's aim is to address these target groups. Therefore, it supports solidarity, social protection, inclusion, education, communities, and protecting the health and the environment via volunteering projects. The ESC seems to be a natural public funding tool diminishing the impact of the international crisis worsening the situation in the areas addressed by the ESC.

Nonprofits in the ESC and Implications for Future Crises

Although various legal entities can apply for ESC projects, nonprofits are the dominant type of organization applying. Nonprofits usually both participate in dealing with crises like pandemics, wars and humanitarian crises, and are also impacted by them. However, as Azevedo et al. (2022) wrote, "governments cannot adequately respond to this crisis without the support of the private and nonprofit sectors, particularly in aiding the most vulnerable populations" (p. 476), specifically mentioning natural disasters, terrorism, pandemics, and other humanitarian crises that require collaborative responses and relief efforts.

The majority of ESC project applicants in the ESC were nonprofits, and as a result, the ESC is providing the nonprofits, together with other actors, funding opportunities to deal with the crises through volunteering projects. The benefit of the ESC is that this can be done even without a request for proposals, which would specifically be focused on a crisis, as discussed above. Regarding specific types of challenges for nonprofits during the COVID-19 pandemic, the literature mentions diminishing financial donations due to the financial pressures donors were facing (Tandon & Aravind, 2021), returning the public funds due to unrealized projects, (Plaček et al., 2022), financial losses and increased expenditures due to the lockdowns (Meyer et al., 2021), and cancelled fundraising events (Shi, 2022). This analysis showed that the ESC offers financial resources to fund volunteering projects promoting solidarity, with various thematic overlaps with the impact of the health and humanitarian crises, and can therefore, potentially be a partial solution for these challenges, though more research is needed. Also, "seeking new funding streams," both public and private, was also reported in the literature (Hutton et al., 2021, p. 17).

Another issue of nonprofits during international crises is their resilience and preparedness for crises. Searing et al. (2021) wrote that "the pandemic will likely not be the last extended crisis nonprofits face," while resources should be dedicated to nonprofit resilience now (p. 193). Therefore, the ESC can potentially diminish the negative impact of the pandemic or other crises on nonprofits, through public funding for volunteering projects, though further research is needed. Hutton et al. (2021) wrote that their study suggests that financial resources such as multi-year operating grants and staff and volunteer retention are especially important for the nonprofit resilience. Since ESC is offering multi-year grants, including the finances for a volunteer coordinator, volunteering expenses, etc., it can potentially support resilience, though more research is needed.

The research shows that various types of organizations submitted projects. The ESC grantees with projects reacting to the COVID-19 crisis have target groups that existed before the crisis, but their mission was affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Without such a massive pandemic, these organizations would probably not have submitted projects dealing with infectious viruses. This is indicated by how few organizations in previous years had projects on health topics. However, when such a massive pandemic happens, it crosses their activity fields. This is not a new principle; a similar principle was recorded by Mareš et al. (2013) during massive flooding in the Czech Republic. That study showed that in addition to prominent humanitarian organizations regularly participating in flood management, many other nonprofits from various fields participated in recovery after the flood.

Nonprofits are both negatively impacted by crises and participate in dealing with them. Providing multi-year grants for volunteering projects on topics related to crises, the ESC has the potential to help nonprofits with both, though further research is needed.

Research Limitations

The research has several limitations. First, only the projects submitted after March 2020 have COVID-19-related keywords. No project mentioned pandemics in general before the COVID-

19 crisis started. Most likely, this was because even most professionals did not see something like this as very likely. Therefore, there will likely be more COVID-19-related projects because projects were already aimed at problems that were worsened by the COVID-19 crisis, such as elderly isolation, social exclusion, and education.

The second research limitation is that the content analysis works only with the project descriptions of successful projects. This means that applicants submitted arguments and connections to COVID-19. On the other hand, these projects were approved by national public agencies and succeeded in competing with other projects. Therefore, the acceptance for funding can be seen, with some limitations, as a validation from the national agencies.

The third research limitation is that the analysis focuses on the information in the project description and does not consider the projects' real impact, along with the impact on volunteers' well-being, volunteering patterns or the efficiency of international volunteering programs. Evaluation of the projects should be one of the next steps, but this was usually not yet possible, as most of the COVID-19-related projects are still running. Also, such analysis would be much more demanding in terms of financial, personnel, and analytical costs. A possible solution might be to start with a limited segment or include some data that are not publicly available, such as project reports from the ESC. Considering all of the above, this analysis aims to provide material for further evaluation in COVID-19 public policy evaluation.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 crisis has been an unprecedented challenge for societies and economies. The virus itself and the anti-pandemic measures and restrictions have had a significant societal and economic impact. Nonprofits and volunteering were impacted by the pandemic but were also a tool for recovery. This research addressed the European Solidarity Corps projects in the funding year 2020; the main method was content analysis using COVID-19 pandemic-related keywords for searches in the ESC project database. In the funding year 2020, 275 out of 3,434 ESC projects (8%) listed the COVID-19 crisis as a reason for the project. Out of these 275 projects, 96 (35%) said the COVID-19 crisis was a primary reason for the project, and 179 projects (65%) stated the COVID-19 crisis was a secondary reason. In the funding year 2020, the total sum of ESC grants was €86.26 million. From that amount, €79.81 million (92.5%) went to projects that did not mention COVID-19 as a reason or rationale for the project. This does not mean that they are not actually dealing with the consequences of the pandemic, as some of them were submitted before the COVID-19 outbreak and have some thematic overlaps. However, €6.44 million (7.5%) went to projects mentioning the COVID-19 crisis as a primary or secondary reason or rationale for the project. This number of projects and grant amounts represent money at least partially relevant for evaluating and assessing the anti-pandemic policies.

The applications of projects reacting to the COVID-19 pandemic came from 27 countries; 24 EU member countries; Aruba, one of the Overseas countries and territories which is not part of the EU; the United Kingdom, which is no longer part of the EU; and Turkey, an EU candidate country. The project distribution among countries was highly disproportionate. Half of the projects were in Italy, Spain, Turkey, and Bulgaria. The countries with the highest percentages of grant money allocated to projects reacting to COVID-19 were by far Poland and Italy, followed by Bulgaria and Spain.

Most projects reacting to COVID-19 were classified as community development projects, followed by inclusion, youth work, skills development, education and training, and social assistance and welfare. This is likely a result of an overlap between the focus of the ESC program and the areas of life and society impacted by the pandemic. Similarly other

international humanitarian crises, such as the war in Ukraine and the refugee crisis, will likely have similar overlaps and effects.

The vast majority of grants for projects reacting to the COVID-19 crisis went to organizations classified as nonprofits and social enterprises: €5.8 million out of €6.4 million (92%). However, other organizations were represented as well, including public sector bodies and educational institutions. Considering the volunteering focus of the ESC, it is natural that nonprofits play such a significant role in the projects reacting to COVID-19, as they do in the ESC. This is, however, also significant because nonprofits are not usually sufficiently prepared for crises, which can interrupt their funding, supply of volunteers, etc. Therefore, the ESC serves as a tool for nonprofits to apply for funding for volunteering projects right after the crises happen, if the crises impact key areas of the ESC, such as inclusion, community development, solidarity, education, environmental protection, human rights, etc.

As a result, nonprofits and other organizations do not have to wait until governments or other organizations issue requests for proposals related to particular issues such as pandemics, war, etc. For organizations new to the ESC, this is a two-step process because they need a quality label first to apply for the grant, but it is possible they already have it. Therefore, ESC can potentially help nonprofits to obtain some additional funding in times of crisis, as well as additional volunteering help. In this way, it can help them with the two challenges in crises, to survive and to participate in dealing with the crisis.

Some impacts will probably be long-term and therefore are not yet proven. In light of its focus, the ESC programs seem to be a way to provide funds for improving the situation for the one billion people within the area of the ESC program and participating countries.

The study is based on the project descriptions, which can be considered a study limitation. Projects with thematic overlaps with the impact of COVID-19 that were submitted before the COVID-19 crisis were not classified as reacting to the COVID-19 crisis; they might have been if they had been submitted sometime later. Also, the connections to COVID-19 were declared by the project grantees; it was not possible to evaluate the projects themselves. However, only projects approved by national agencies and funded were analyzed. The results are linked to the ESC program and may not apply to other public programs. However, the results and implications of this study can be further investigated in other public programs, as the principle of the results is relatively universal. The ESC thematic focus appears to overlap with the health and humanitarian crises and their impact. Some of the pandemic's impact is on the vulnerable population, which is also one of the ESC target groups. Therefore, the ESC has the potential to participate in dealing with the consequences of health and humanitarian crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the related refugee crisis, and others.

Therefore, future research should address the actual impact of the ESC projects that address the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, another study could replicate this approach regarding the ESC projects and the war in Ukraine and the resulting refugee crisis, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Another interesting idea for research is how many of the activities in the ESC projects reacting to the COVID-19 pandemic would have been done even without ESC funding, and if so, whether they had an impact on quality. A final research idea is to look at how many volunteers would actually have volunteered without support from the ESC, and in which form and to what extent.

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Appendix

Table A1. Descriptive Statistics, All ESC Projects, Funding Year 2020

Statistic	Volunteering Projects	Solidarity Projects	Traineeships and Jobs	Volunteer Teams in High Priority Areas	Total
Median	€25,581.00	€6,888.00	€11,977.40	€55,617.50	€12.568.00
Average	€37,257.92	€6,766.58	€21,062.82	€72,794.83	€25,603.59
Mode	€11,143.00	€6,888.00	€3,731.00	#N/A	€6,888.00
Min	€0.00	€0.00	€1,305.60	€37,905.00	€0.00
Max	€391,359.00	€25,568.00	€268,950.00	€146,748.00	€980,830.00
Total	€74,106,006.99	€8,728,882.77	€2,401,161.85	€1,019,127.64	€86,255,179.25

Table A2 Descriptive Statistics, COVID-19 as Primary or Secondary Reason for the Project, Funding Year 2020

Statistic	Volunteering Projects	Solidarity Projects	Traineeships and Jobs	Volunteer Teams in High Priority Areas	Total
Median	€30,349.00	€6.888.00	€12,152.80	€104,989.00	€9,601.00
Average	€43,884.44	€7,102.91	€18,522.22	€104,989.00	€25,168.63
Mode	€66,944.00	€6.888.00	#N/A	#N/A	€6,888.00
Min	€3,692.00	€1,000.00	€2,787.00	€63,230.00	€1,000.00
Max	€281,318.00	€14,382.00	€61,272.00	€146,748.00	€281,318.00
Total	€5,134,479.52	€894,967.20	€203,744.40	€209,978.00	€6,443,169.12

Table A3. Descriptive Statistics, Not Reacting to COVID, Funding Year 2020

Statistic	Volunteering Projects	Solidarity Projects	Traineeships and Jobs	Volunteer Teams in High Priority Areas	Total
Median	€25,130.60	€6,888.00	€11,802.00	€51,136.50	€12,772.00
Average	€36,843.76	€6,730.17	€21,334.15	€67,429.14	€25,329.11
Mode	€11,143.00	€6,888.00	€3,731.00	#N/A	€6,888.00
Min	€0.00	€0.00	€1,305.60	€37,905.00	€0.00
Max	€391,359.00	€25,568.00	€268,950.00	€143,620.00	€391,359.00
Total	€68,971,527.47	€7,833,915.57	€2,197,417.45	€809,149.64	€79,812,010.13

Table A4. ESC Projects in the Funding Year 2020 According to Countries and Relations to COVID-19

Applicant Organization Country	COVID-19 as a Primary Reason	COVID-19 as a Secondary Reason	All projects reacting to COVID-19	Share
Italy	23	31	54	19.64%
Spain	5	27	32	11.64%
Turkey	17	10	27	9.82%
Bulgaria	8	17	25	9.09%
Poland	8	9	17	6.18%
Portugal	8	8	16	5.82%
Slovenia	5	9	14	5.09%
Romania	3	9	12	4.36%
Greece	2	7	9	3.27%
France	2	6	8	2.91%
Hungary	1	5	6	2.18%
Croatia	1	5	6	2.18%
Belgium	3	2	5	1.82%
Netherlands	2	3	5	1.82%
United Kingdom	1	4	5	1.82%
Germany	0	4	4	1.45%
Czechia	1	3	4	1.45%
Slovakia	1	3	4	1.45%
Finland	1	3	4	1.45%
Denmark	1	2	3	1.09%
Latvia	1	2	3	1.09%
Austria	0	3	3	1.09%
Ireland	0	3	3	1.09%
Cyprus	2	0	2	0.73%
Aruba	0	2	2	0.73%
Malta	0	1	1	0.36%
Iceland	0	1	1	0.36%
Total	96	179	275	100%

Table A5. EU Members ESC Program Countries

	Country	Population	Population/World	Land Area (km^2)	Region
1	Germany	79,90,481	1.03%	348,672	Central Europe
2	France*	68,084,217	0.88%	640,427	Western Europe (Metropolitan France), Northern South America (French Guiana), Caribbean (Guadeloupe, Martinique), Southern Indian Ocean (Mayotte), Southern Africa (Reunion)
3	Italy	62,390,364	0.80%	294,140	Southern Europe
4	Spain	47,260,584	0.61%	498,980	Southwestern Europe, North Africa (Ceuta and Melilla), other islands close to the African coast (Canary Islands, Islas Chafarinas, Penon de Alhucemas, and Penon de Velez de la Gomera)
5	Poland	38,185,913	0.49%	304,255	Central Europe
6	Romania	21,230,362	0.27%	229,891	Southeastern Europe
7	Netherlands**	17,337,403	0.22%	33,893	Western Europe
8	Belgium	11,778,842	0.15%	30,278	Western Europe
9	Czechia	10,702,596	0.14%	77,247	Central Europe
10	Greece	10,569,703	0.14%	130,647	Southern Europe
11	Portugal	10,263,850	0.13%	91,470	Southwestern Europe
12	Sweden	10,261,767	0.13%	410,335	Northern Europe
13	Hungary	9,728,337	0.13%	89,608	Central Europe
14	Austria	8,884,864	0.11%	82,445	Central Europe
15	Bulgaria	6,919,180	0.09%	108,489	Southeastern Europe
16	Denmark	5,894,687	0.08%	42,434	Northern Europe
17	Finland	5,540,720	0.07%	303,815	Northern Europe
18	Slovakia	5,436,066	0.07%	48,105	Central Europe
19	Ireland	5,224,884	0.07%	68,883	Western Europe
20	Croatia	4,208,973	0.05%	55,974	Southeastern Europe
21	Lithuania	2,711,566	0.03%	62,680	Eastern Europe
22	Slovenia	2,102,106	0.03%	20,151	south Central Europe
23	Latvia	1,862,687	0.02%	62,249	Eastern Europe
24	Cyprus	1,281,506	0.02%	9,241	Middle East/Europe
25	Estonia	1,220,042	0.02%	42,388	Eastern Europe
26	Luxembourg	639,589	0.01%	2,586	Western Europe
27	Malta	460,891	0.01%	316	Southern Europe
	Total	378,172,180	5.80%	4,089,599	

Based on CIA World Factbook (2021).
*Data for France includes Metropolitan France and overseas regions French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte and Reunion.
**The Netherlands is one of the constituent countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Table A6. Former EU Member State, ESC Program Country

	Country	Population	Population/World	Area (km^2)	Region
1	UK*	67,081,000	0.86%	241,930	Western Europe
	Total	67,081,000	0.86%	241,930	

Based on CIA World Factbook (2021).
Note: *Until the closure of the projects financed under the MFF 2014–2020.

Table A7. Non-EU ESC Program Countries

	Country	Population	Population/World	Area (km^2)	Region
1	Turkey	82,482,383	1.06%	769,632	Southeastern Europe, Southwestern Asia
2	North Macedonia	2,128,262	0.03%	25,433	Southeastern Europe
3	Iceland	354,234	0.00%	100,250	Northern Europe
4	Liechtenstein	39,425	0.00%	160	Central Europe
	Total	85,004,304	1.09%	895,475	

Based on CIA World Factbook (2021).

Table A8. ESC Partner Countries

	Country	Population	Population/World	Area (km^2)	Region
1	Russia	142,320,790	1.83%	16,377,742	North Asia, Eastern Europe
2	Egypt	106,437,241	1.37%	995,450	Northern Africa, Asia (Sinai Peninsula)
3	Ukraine	43,745,640	0.56%	579,330	Eastern Europe
4	Algeria	43,576,691	0.56%	2,381,740	Northern Africa
5	Morocco**	36,561,813	0.47%	716,300	Northern Africa
6	Syria	20,384,316	0.26%	185,887	Middle East
7	Tunisia	11,811,335	0.15%	155,360	Northern Africa
8	Jordan	10,909,567	0.14%	88,802	Middle East
9	Azerbaijan*	10,282,283	0.13%	82,629	Southwestern Asia, Europe (small European portion north of the Caucasus range)
10	Belarus	9,441,842	0.12%	202,900	Eastern Europe
11	Israel	8,787,045	0.11%	21,497	Middle East
12	Libya	7,017,224	0.09%	1,759,540	Northern Africa
13	Serbia***	6,974,289	0.09%	77,474	Southeastern Europe
14	Norway	5,509,591	0.07%	304,282	Northern Europe
15	Lebanon	5,261,372	0.07%	10,230	Middle East
16	Georgia	4,933,674	0.06%	69,700	Southwestern Asia, Europe (a sliver of land north of the Caucasus)
17	Palestine	4,906,308	0.00%	6,000	Middle East
18	Bosnia and Herzegovina	3,824,782	0.05%	51,187	Southeastern Europe
19	Moldova	3,323,875	0.04%	32,891	Eastern Europe
20	Albania	3,088,385	0.04%	27,398	Southeastern Europe
21	Armenia	3,011,609	0.04%	28,203	Southwestern Asia (possibly Europe or the Middle East)
22	Kosovo	1,935,259	0.02%	10,887	Southeast Europe
23	Montenegro	607,414	0.01%	13,452	Southeastern Europe
	Total	494,652,345	6.30%	24,178,881	

Based on CIA World Factbook (2021).

Note: *including the exclave of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic and the Nagorno-Karabakh region; ** Including Western Sahara; *** excluding Kosovo; **** Including Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

Table A9. Overseas Countries and Territories of EU

	Country or Territory	Country	Relationship to the EU state	Region	Population	Share to all OCTs	Land Area (km^2)
1	French Polynesia	France	Overseas collectivity (often referred as an overseas country)	Oceania	297,154	29.15%	3,827
2	New Caledonia	France	Special collectivity (or a sui generis collectivity)	Oceania	293,608	28.80%	18,275
3	Curaçao	Kingdom of the Netherlands	Constituent country of the kingdom*	Caribbean	151,885	14.90%	444
4	Aruba	Kingdom of the Netherlands	Constituent country of the kingdom*	Caribbean	120,917	11.86%	180
5	Greenland	Kingdom of Denmark	Self-governing part of the kingdom	Northern North America	57,799	5.67%	2,166,086
6	Sint Maarten	Kingdom of the Netherlands	Constituent country of the kingdom*	Caribbean	44,564	4.37%	34
7	Bonaire	Netherlands	Public entity (special municipality) of Netherlands**	Caribbean	20,104	1.97%	294
8	Wallis and Futuna Island	France	Overseas collectivity	Oceania	15,851	1.55%	142
9	Saint Barthélemy	France	Overseas collectivity	Caribbean	7,116	0.70%	25
10	St. Pierre and Miquelon	France	Overseas collectivity	Northern North America	5,321	0.52%	242
11	Sint Eustatius	Netherlands	Special municipality of Netherlands**	Caribbean	3,138	0.31%	31
12	Saba	Netherlands	Public entity (special municipality) of Netherlands**	Caribbean	1,915	0.19%	13
13	French Southern and Antarctic Territories***	France	Overseas territory	Southern Indian Ocean; Antarctic region	0	0.00%	7,747
	Total				1,019,372	100%	2,197,341

Based on CIA World Factbook (2021) and Overseas Countries and Territories Association (2021).

Note: * Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten are constituent countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, together with the Netherlands. **Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba are part of the Netherlands, one of the constituent countries of the Kingdom of Netherlands. ***French Southern and Antarctic Territories has no permanent local population. The land area size does not include Adélie Land (about 500,000 km^2) in Antarctica.

Table A10. 5.4 ESC Projects by Types of Organizations and Cluster

Cluster	Type of Organization	2018	2019	2020	Total	Share
NGO or Social enterprise	Non-governmental organization/association/social enterprise	593	1,698	2,162	4,453	63.03%
	Foundation	52	148	171	371	5.25%
	Civil society organization	16	50	48	114	1.61%
	Social enterprise	7	25	34	66	0.93%
	Civil society organizations for European remembrance	0	2	2	4	0.06%
	Total	668	1,923	2,417	5,008	70.88%
Sport and youth work	Group of young people active in youth work	20	206	279	505	7.15%
	Youth organization	16	82	120	218	3.09%
	Sport club	5	12	19	36	0.51%
	National Youth Council	3	12	7	22	0.31%
	organization or association representing the sport sector	0	7	6	13	0.18%
	Sport federation	1	5	9	15	0.21%
	Sport league	0	0	0	0	0.00%
	Total	45	324	440	809	11.45%
Public sector organizations	Local public body	37	114	124	275	3.89%
	Public service provider	2	22	21	45	0.64%
	Regional public body	2	11	19	32	0.45%
	National public body	4	11	12	27	0.38%
	Association of twinned towns	0	1	1	2	0.03%
	Total	45	159	177	381	5.39%
Cultural organization, regardless of legal entity	Non-Profit making cultural organizations	31	64	63	158	2.24%
	Non-publicly funded cultural organizations	3	7	5	15	0.21%
	Publicly funded cultural organizations	1	5	6	12	0.17%
	Music Centre	1	3	1	5	0.07%
	Music producers	1	3	1	5	0.07%
	Theatre	0	3	3	6	0.08%
	Opera	1	2	2	5	0.07%
	Film fund or foundation	0	0	1	1	0.01%
	Film market organization	0	2	0	2	0.03%
	Film school	0	1	0	1	0.01%

	Art Agents	0	1	1	2	0.03%
	Concert hall	1	1	1	3	0.04%
	Publisher association	0	1	0	1	0.01%
	Art gallery	0	1	0	1	0.01%
	Video Games Developer/Producers	0	0	1	1	0.01%
	organization active in the organization of Audiovisual Archives	0	1	1	2	0.03%
	Television broadcaster	1	1	1	3	0.04%
	organization active in the organization of Audiovisual Events	1	0	0	1	0.01%
	Artists Agents	1	0	1	2	0.03%
	Audiovisual Operators	1	0	0	1	0.01%
	Dance Company	1	0	0	1	0.01%
	Total	44	96	88	228	3.23%
	European NGO	24	57	68	149	2.11%
	Civil society organizations working at European level	1	6	3	10	0.14%
International organization regardless legal form	EU-wide network	2	1	8	11	0.16%
	International agencies and organizations	1	1	1	3	0.04%
	European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation	0	0	0	0	0.00%
	European or international public body	0	0	1	1	0.01%
	International organization under public law	0	0	2	2	0.03%
	Pan European network active in the culture sector	1	0	2	3	0.04%
	Total	29	65	85	179	2.53%
Education and research organization	Higher education institution (tertiary level)	1	25	28	54	0.76%
	School/Institute/Educational center – General education – primary level	2	13	0	15	0.21%
	School/Institute/Educational center – Vocational Training – secondary level	3	10	7	20	0.28%
	School/Institute/Educational center – Adult education	4	8	10	22	0.31%
	School/Institute/Educational center – General education – pre-primary level	2	9	9	20	0.28%
	School/Institute/Educational center – General education – secondary level	2	8	6	16	0.23%

	School/Institute/Educational center – Vocational Training – tertiary level	2	8	7	17	0.24%
	Research institute/center	3	4	8	15	0.21%
	Total	19	85	75	179	2.53%
	Small and medium sized enterprise	5	14	30	49	0.69%
Private companies	Large enterprise	3	13	1	17	0.24%
	Total	8	27	31	66	0.93%
	Other	17	38	61	116	1.64%
	Accreditation, certification or qualification body	5	15	9	29	0.41%
	Organizations active in the field of humanitarian aid	1	3	5	9	0.13%
Other	Counselling body	0	1	0	1	0.01%
	Social partner or other representative of working life (chambers of commerce, trade union, trade association	1	1	0	2	0.03%
	Total	24	58	75	157	2.22%

Based on the European Youth Portal (2021).

Table A11. ESC Project Grants by Topic, The Funding Year 2020

	Project Topic	COVID as a Primary Reason	COVID as a Secondary Reason	Total	Share
1	Community development	€957,061.00	€1,812,516.00	€2,769,577.00	39.38%
2	Inclusion	€487,846.80	€1,614,033.36	€2,101,880.16	29.88%
3	Youthwork	€765,984.56	€1,214,691.40	€1,980,675.96	28.16%
4	Skills development	€255,362.76	€1,528,343.40	€1,783,706.16	25.36%
5	Education and training	€298,623.00	€1,327,517.60	€1,626,140.60	23.12%
6	Social assistance and welfare	€312,385.00	€1,154,903.96	€1,467,288.96	20.86%
7	Culture	€613,774.00	€570,486.00	€1,184,260.00	16.84%
8	European identity and values	€506,272.00	€629,057.20	€1,135,348.20	16.14%
9	Employability and entrepreneurship	€290,407.80	€837,511.00	€1,127,918.80	16.04%
10	Equality and non-discrimination	€274,225.00	€821,451.20	€1,095,676.20	15.58%
11	Citizenship and democratic participation	€182,821.00	€907,296.60	€1,090,117.60	15.50%
12	Climate action, environment and nature protection	€377,218.80	€680,871.20	€1,058,090.00	15.04%
13	Health and wellbeing	€302,739.20	€658,899.76	€961,638.96	13.67%
14	Rural development and urban regeneration	€70,400.00	€274,293.40	€344,693.40	4.90%
15	Physical education and sport	€145,536.00	€96,725.00	€242,261.00	3.44%
16	Human rights	€91,419.00	€107,220.00	€198,639.00	2.82%
17	Reception and integration of third-country nationals	€0.00	€193,075.00	€193,075.00	2.74%
18	Territorial cooperation and cohesion	€22,136.00	€85,710.60	€107,846.60	1.53%
19	Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	€0.00	€97,214.00	€97,214.00	1.38%
20	Research and innovation	€23,710.00	€23,600.00	€47,310.00	0.67%
21	Disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery	€44,276.00	€0.00	€44,276.00	0.63%
22	Transport and mobility	€10,927.56	€0.00	€10,927.56	0.16%
	Total	€2,040,501.56	€4,993,326.96	€7,033,828.52	100%

Table A12. ESC Project 2018-2019 by Topics and Program Actions

	Project Topic (*)	Total	Volunteering	Solidarity Projects	Traineeships and Jobs
1	Inclusion	1,235	916	296	23
2	Youthwork	1,003	782	193	28
3	Community development	946	525	401	20
4	Education and training	885	633	218	34
5	Citizenship and democratic participation	823	600	214	9
6	Culture	789	612	166	11
7	Equality and non-discrimination	764	528	224	12
8	Skills development	681	433	225	23
9	Climate action, environment and nature protection	555	369	178	8
10	European identity and values	553	430	90	13
11	Employability and entrepreneurship	383	245	103	35
12	Health and well-being	347	208	137	2
13	Social assistance and welfare	326	259	62	5
14	Rural development and urban regeneration	263	194	66	3
15	Human rights	207	143	64	0
16	Physical education and sport	116	59	55	2
17	Reception and integration of third-country nationals	113	69	39	5
18	Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	96	75	21	0
19	Territorial cooperation and cohesion	68	45	21	2
20	Research and innovation	32	23	9	0
21	Disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery	20	9	11	0
22	Transport and mobility	11	2	8	1
	Not Applicable	233	233	0	0
	Total	3,750	2,685	984	81

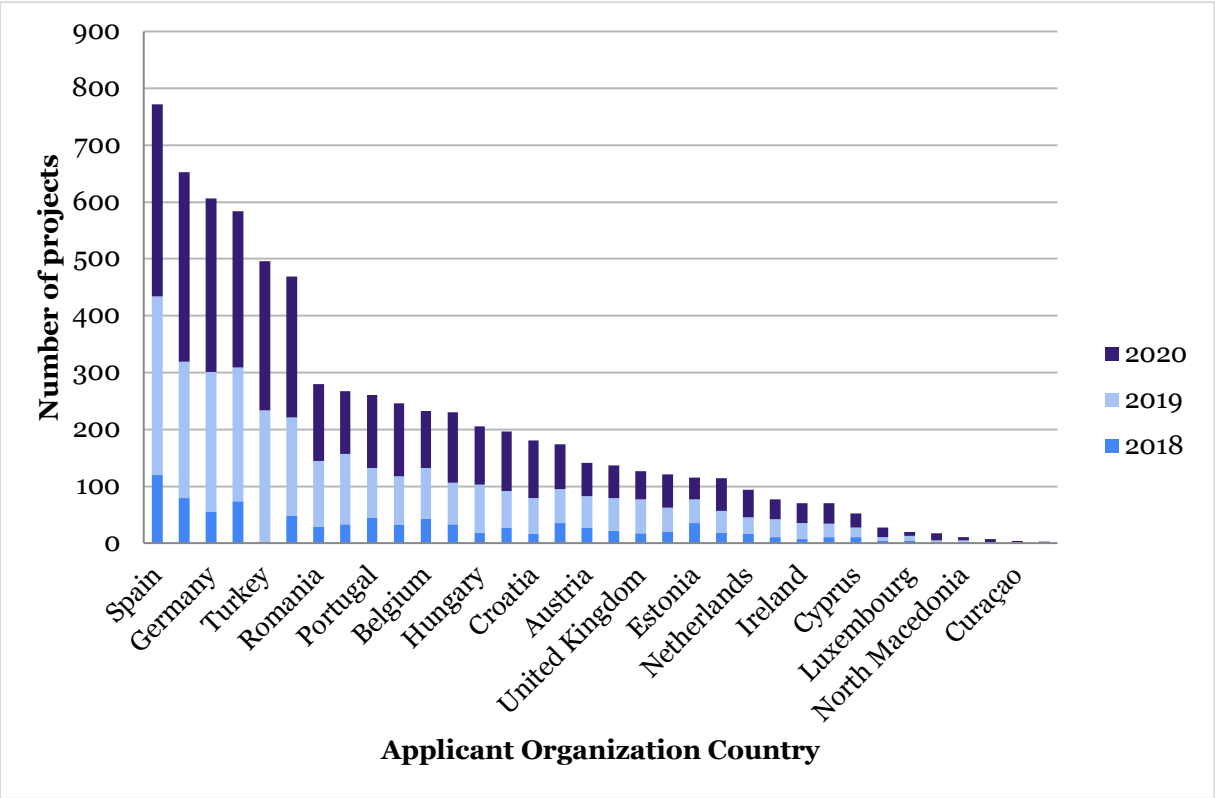
Source: European Commission, European Solidarity Corps report, 2018 and 2019 (2020).

Table A13. ESC Share of Projects 2018-2019 by Topics and Program Actions

	Project Topic (*)	Total	Volunteering	Solidarity Projects	Traineeships and Jobs
1	Inclusion	32.93%	34.12%	30.08%	28.40%
2	Youthwork	26.75%	29.12%	19.61%	34.57%
3	Community development	25.23%	19.55%	40.75%	24.69%
4	Education and training	23.60%	23.58%	22.15%	41.98%
5	Citizenship and democratic participation	21.95%	22.35%	21.75%	11.11%
6	Culture	21.04%	22.79%	16.87%	13.58%
7	Equality and non-discrimination	20.37%	19.66%	22.76%	14.81%
8	Skills development	18.16%	16.13%	22.87%	28.40%
9	Climate action, environment and nature protection	14.80%	13.74%	18.09%	9.88%
10	European identity and values	14.75%	16.01%	9.15%	16.05%
11	Employability and entrepreneurship	10.21%	9.12%	10.47%	43.21%
12	Health and wellbeing	9.25%	7.75%	13.92%	2.47%
13	Social assistance and welfare	8.69%	9.65%	6.30%	6.17%
14	Rural development and urban regeneration	7.01%	7.23%	6.71%	3.70%
15	Human rights	5.52%	5.33%	6.50%	0.00%
16	Physical education and sport	3.09%	2.20%	5.59%	2.47%
17	Reception and integration of third-country nationals	3.01%	2.57%	3.96%	6.17%
18	Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	2.56%	2.79%	2.13%	0.00%
19	Territorial cooperation and cohesion	1.81%	1.68%	2.13%	2.47%
20	Research and innovation	0.85%	0.86%	0.91%	0.00%
21	Disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery	0.53%	0.34%	1.12%	0.00%
22	Transport and mobility	0.29%	0.07%	0.81%	1.23%
	Not Applicable	6.21%	8.68%	0.00%	0.00%

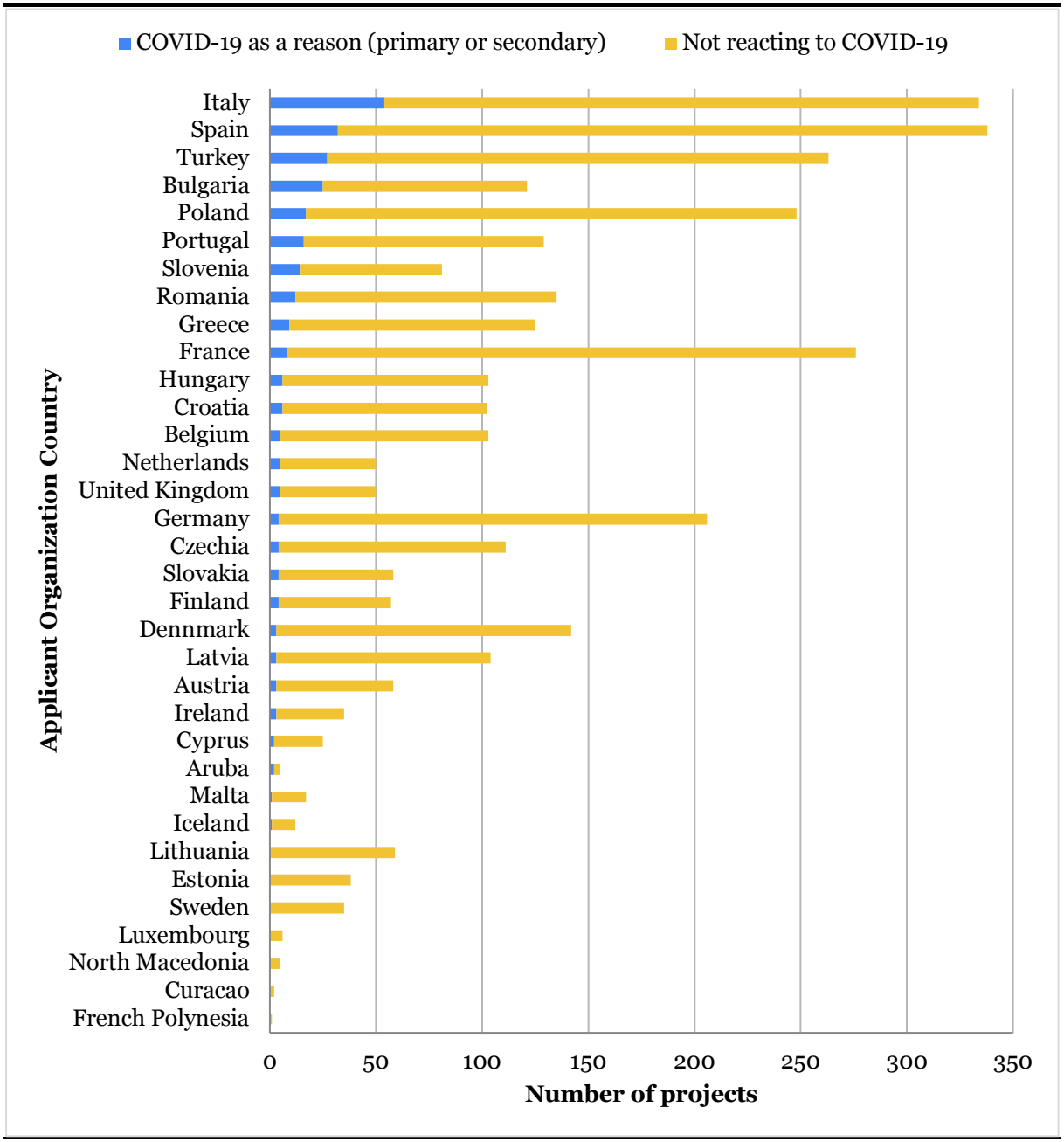
Based on European Solidarity Corps Report, 2018 and 2019 (2020).

Figure A14. Projects by Country, Funding Years 2018 to 2020



Based on the European Youth Portal (2021).

Figure A15. Countries Ranked by the Number of Projects Reacting to COVID-19 in Funding Year 2020



Based on the European Youth Portal (2021).