

EUROPE TALKS SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE REPORT

18th - 20th of May 2022

Helsinki, Finland

The contents of this report are based on the inputs and discussions in the conference and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the SALTO European Solidarity Corps and National Agencies organising it.



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1. Executive summary

Europe Talks Solidarity is an event which offers an overview about solidarity in the youth field. It presents different perspectives of it by providing external experts to provoke critical thinking around the understanding of solidarity and by offering a space for open dialogue. It comes as a continuation of the discussions opened through the international study dedicated to this topic in the youth field: 4Thought for Solidarity¹. Finnish National Agency for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps - EDUFI (National Agency) together with OeAD (Austrian National Agency for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps) (National Agency) and JUGEND für Europa (German National Agency) in the coordination of SALTO European Solidarity Corps decided to create the concept of the conference and to dedicate 2 days to debate, discuss and learn about solidarity.


The discussions on the first edition of **Europe Talks Solidarity** in Helsinki 18-20 of May 2022 can be summarized as an effort from the organisers, keynote speakers and participants to debate the following topics in the attempt of shaping the narrative of solidarity at the European level:

- Why is it important to talk about solidarity?
- How can we have a better understanding of solidarity?
- How do we look at Solidarity as a European Value?
- What are the perspectives of solidarity both in theory and practice?
- What are the key possibilities in solidarity?
- How to share good practices in European Solidarity Corps projects?
- How are we to envision the future of Solidarity in the European Union?

The lessons learned from the presentations and discussions with key notes speakers and participants in the conference Europe Talks Solidarity, raises important points and also provokes further questions for debate and reflection.

Even it is challenging to define and understand solidarity inside national borders and beyond, solidarity is the unifying concept and the foundation for cohesion in the construction of the European Union. We, as European citizens and representative of institutions and civil society working in the field of solidarity need to rethink the concept of solidarity at the EU level. More space for dialog and debate around solidarity is needed, since, and it takes generations to shape the narrative on solidarity; Talking and sharing about solidarity creates a sense of community, a shared sense of belonging and unity; Solidarity was defined in many ways by the key notes speakers and participants, but for sure it was underlined many times that solidarity is a process, it involves both feelings and action, is horizontal, it has an intergenerational aspect, it can be contagious, it can work both in well-functioning and malfunctioning structures and is an opportunity for all.

¹ <https://www.talkingsolidarity.eu/publications/4thought-for-solidarity/>



Solidarity faces many challenges: lack of competencies in the field of solidarity at individual level, community and national level, interstate and even beyond EU borders. Also, competition, meritocracy, polarization and divides societies, instability, incoherent policies, bigger or smaller crisis, global environmental challenges (like climate change), all and much more have an impact on the level of solidarity manifested in our communities.

There were also solutions and key possibilities mentioned by key note speakers and participants into having solidarity as a manifested value in action: developing and support long term programs (*like European Solidarity Corp and Erasmus+*) that creates more solidarity mechanisms from policy level to grass-roots level, support local and European projects who develops more competences in the field of solidarity for all, more involvement of youth into solidarity projects.

One of the most underlined solutions was having *education for solidarity* more visible and on all levels of education, all ages and as part of a life- long learning process (*for example Service-Learning as a very successful pedagogy into learning &teaching solidarity in a coherent manner*). Solidarity can be developed by educational measures that improves the sense of recognition and respect towards each other and toward human rights, joint actions happening at the local, European level and beyond that, followed by collaborative actions across generations and celebration and dissemination of the results which will make solidarity a value which is contagious.


It was many times mentioned in the conference that: to develop interstate solidarity and even global solidarity (when considering climate change) we need to start with the development of interpersonal solidarity (community level action). Education comes first when we talk about growing interpersonal or interstate solidarity. And for *education for solidarity* to become a priority, we need to say repeatedly to the decision makers how important the work in solidarity is, have more political debates on it which in the end to lead to concrete solidarity mechanisms in place. In the end we cannot afford lack of solidarity, we can only hope for more action in solidarity.

2. Introduction and background of the Europe Talks Solidarity Conference

The event offered an overview about solidarity in the youth field and a space for open dialog. Eight keynote speakers presented different perspectives on solidarity, provoking critical thinking around the understanding of the term. A part of the program was dedicated to share the experience and expertise of participants. The event offered a platform for participating in debates on different aspects and understandings of solidarity in 2022, showcased different inspirational inputs and practices related to solidarity in the European Solidarity Corps program and beyond and fostered solidarity as a core value in Europe.

Participants

Europe Talks Solidarity brought together around 40 persons from various fields, interested in the topic of solidarity. The selected participants had a high interest in dialogue around solidarity,



related to the topic of solidarity and represented diverse sectors: the public sector (regions, municipalities), the civil society (volunteering organizations, cultural sector, environmental sector, health and disability organizations, youth work organizations, etc.).

European Year of Youth context

The event related to the current European initiatives dedicated to youth, like the European Year for Youth and structured dialogue process.

Team

The activity was facilitated by two experienced trainers: Annina Laaksonen and Elisabeth Einwanger and supported by a team of six people:

- Jutta Kivimäki and Kati Inkinen from Finnish National Agency for Education
- Malte Krumrey from JUGEND für Europa, German National Agency
- Anja Frohner from OeAD, Austrian National Agency
- Romina Matei – SALTO European Solidarity Corps
- Marioara Butyka - rapporteur

3. The program of the conference

Day 1

The event started on 18 of May in the afternoon with an opening session followed by the two key experts: **Dr. Teppo Eskelinen**, Senior Lecturer in Social Sciences, University of Eastern Finland which presented the topic *Solidarity in Europe: Its institutionalization, challenges, and relation to civil society* and **Dr. Ozgehan Senyuva**, Associate Professor, department of international relations, METU on the topic: *Challenging the understanding of solidarity*. The presentations were followed by questions and participants' reflections.

Day 2

Day two started with participants sharing opinions on how they define and understand concepts such as *solidarity and diversity, solidarity and inclusion, solidarity and privileges, solidarity and generations, solidarity and climate change*. The day was officially opened with the discourse of Finnish Minister of Science and Culture, Mr. Petri Honkonen and Panagiotis Chatzimichail – board member, European Youth Forum – which connected the conference with the current European objectives and youth perspective. The keynote presentations were followed by activities that established connections among participants and set a common ground of understanding on solidarity.

The discussions opened the floor for a panel discussion on the topic- *Perspectives on solidarity in 2022*. Four guests were invited to answer and debate on the following questions: key perspectives on solidarity, main challenges, key possibilities and what gives them hope in terms of solidarity.

The quest speakers where:

- **Anna Litewka-Anttolainen**, Expert on Equality and Equity, The Peace Education Institute, Finland
- **Sara Nyman**, climate activist and manager of Turku young Greens, Finland
- **Dr Jekatyerina Dunajeva**, assistant Professor at the Institute of International Studies and Political Science, Catholic University and Research Fellow at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Political Science
- **Panagiotis Chatzimichail**, board member, European Youth Forum, Connecting the conference with the current European objectives and youth perspective.

The panel discussion was followed by questions and debate with the participants and interactive questioning and answering.

After lunch, the session continued with a knowledge cafe activity, where participants had the chance to go deeper into the topics with the guests: Anna Litewka-Anttolainen, Dr Jekatyerina Dunajeva, Panagiotis Chatzimichail and the SALTO ESC representative and National Agencies (Germany, Finland and Austria).

The fourth session was dedicated to *Good practice exchange- World Café* where five participants had the chance to share their best practices in solidarity:

- **Denis Lickens**: the work of the organization about migration, solidarity and inclusion and some insights
- **Iga Kamocka**: how solidarity is present in our ESC activities and how one discusses European values with youth and insights
- **Iryna Novak**: implemented projects and the methods used in their work with volunteers
- **Lauri Heikkinen**: the initiative of Global Network of Young Persons with Disabilities and especially the mentoring system for new members and some insights
- **Leandro Sá**: the Decathlon Foundation and how social participation through sports can support solidarity
- **Nadine Schuller**: experience around Systems Thinking, the role of a Youth ambassador in European Solidarity Corps


Day 3

Day three started with the first speaker, Tommi Laitio, Inaugural Fellow at Bloomberg Centre for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins University, USA, who tackled the topic *Solidarity 2030 – thoughts about the future*, and Sophie Pornschlegel who talked about the *Future of Solidarity in the EU*. The presentations were followed by interactive discussion with the participants.

The session ended with the rapporteur conclusions and participants sharing the following: concrete outcomes from this conference, how they contribute in their organisation to increase solidarity, and how they enhance competencies in young people and messages for the future.

4. Detailed topics, conclusion, spotlights, ideas

The ideas below are extracted from the inputs of all the key notes speakers' presentations and participants inputs, and are structured on the **6 transversals topics throughout the entire conference**.



They represent the participants and speakers' point of view trying to answer to the following themes: *Why talk about solidarity; Perspectives: definitions and challenges of solidarity; Solidarity as a European Value; Principles and perspectives on solidarity; Key possibilities in solidarity and envisioning the future of solidarity in the European Union.*

Topic 1: Why talk about solidarity?

Solidarity is a process, and it takes time and generations to shape the narrative on solidarity. It was mentioned by the key notes speakers that there is a need to shape the narrative on solidarity at the European level, but it takes generations to have a common agreement on solidarity; it takes dialog, shared opinions and constant education on all levels about the meaning and practice of solidarity.

It is crucial to talk about the value of solidarity, to imagine communities that live in solidarity, to do the bonding inside and beyond national borders because talking about solidarity do creates a sense of community.

It was underlined that we need to focus more on the existing acts of solidarity performed by this actual generation of Europeans. So, there is a big chance that future generation will express a greater deal of solidarity in action.


Topic 2: Perspectives, definitions and challenging the understanding of solidarity

It is challenging to define solidarity because people can see it and understand it from different perspectives based on their life experience, culture, history, etc. Solidarity has different meanings in different languages but also common significance like: *leaning on each other, or something that you don't do it by yourself (e.g., Turkish); participation and belonging (e.g., Finish).*

Solidarity – a fine line between a good individual and good state structures. It was highlighted that we should start from two questions: *How do I, as an individual, know that I am doing the right thing in acting in solidarity? And second, how should the state be structured in term of just law, social security, and solidarity?*

Solidarity in malfunctioning and well-functioning states. One of the conclusions was that solidarity can exist even in malfunctioning and unjust structures and well-functioning structures can have a short sense of solidarity (see examples with citizens in many countries acting in solidarity with Ukraine).

Solidarity is a virtue of community. What makes solidarity a virtue of community is the *sense of connection, the sense of belonging, the sense of being in contact with one another.* Solidarity was defined as *common responsibilities for debts, connection, cohesion, a sense of shared destiny,*



acting on reciprocal sympathy, the sense of being bound together in a community, to belonging and participation, sense of community, shared identity, attachment, reaching to assist other, etc.

Solidarity is a feeling followed by action. Solidarity was defined as a feeling we have as a reaction for seeing people or community facing challenges - feelings, followed by actions. It's a privilege to be able to act in solidarity. We should make all feel welcomed to contribute to a cause.

Topic 3: Solidarity as a European Value and beyond

*There is a strong basis in the EU Treaties for solidarity. Solidarity exists as a unifying concept in the construction of EU. Solidarity is the foundation for cohesion within the European Union project. It's a EU ambition to create a stronger feeling of **common identity** and **stronger solidarity between the people of the member states**. At European Union level *politicians have the responsibility* to debate on solidarity and create the mechanism to solidarity to be put in place through clear objectives, strategies, programs.*


*Solidarity surpasses the national borders. Solidarity is very much based first on the national level but does not necessarily have to stay at the national level. From a European Union perspective solidarity is expected or can surpass the borders of the nation states. Questions were raised by participants: *For whom do we open borders, for whom do we close borders?* How do we look at in crisis situations which involve migrants or refugees outside EU borders?*

Topic 4. Principles and perspectives on solidarity

*Vertical versus horizontal solidarity. Questions were raised several times about how to assist others in solidarity? It was concluded that, acting in solidarity is a *horizontal approach* – meaning that solutions for those in need have to be found and implemented with those in need. We do acts of solidarity with the people in need not for the people in need. *Give a man a fish and feed him for one day, fish with him and feed him for a lifetime.* This approach explained the difference between charity and solidarity.*

Intergenerational aspect of solidarity. Solidarity has an intergenerational aspect. If we don't work with current generations of youth, we cannot talk about future generations who are going to do that! We need to act in solidarity now, so we can have future generations inspired to act.

*Contagious solidarity. Experience has shown that in crisis situations, like natural disaster or war, people tend to act either selfishly or, solidarity pops up at a high scale as an intuitive skill (see again Ukraine situation, COVID-19 pandemic or environmental crisis). To provide solidarity we need to *experience solidarity*. We need to be part of the process to understand it and then we can inspire others to act. Solidarity starts on our street, our neighborhood and is led by example.*



Climate and solidarity go hand in hand. We cannot have climate policy without solidarity. Climate change is a huge challenge for transnational solidarity. People need to be safe to participate and stand together for the environment. Environmental problems are a matter for rich and poor countries as well.

Topic 5. Challenges to solidarity

Solidarity is little researched at European Union level and has a weak conceptual basis. This brings a challenge in operationalizing the value in concrete programs. EU solidarity was seen as mostly transactional and interstate between EU member states which brings challenge in manifesting solidarity beyond borders.

Interpersonal solidarity is the least developed at EU level. There are funds such as Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps, but there are comparatively less funding available comparing with other programs. Funding solidarity is a major challenge. It needs to be a long-term investment.

Transborder solidarity. There is a resistance to transborder solidarity and we need to understand its existence. We need to understand that national identities should not negate transborder identity. We questioned ourselves: *How do I not lose my identity when becoming part of these new borders?* – like European borders.


Competition and meritocracy. If we are constantly living in a society prepared for competition it is hard to be prepared for solidarity. Competition is very exhausting *and leads to burnout in societies:* there is a pressure to be smarter, richer, and better, etc. A question was raised: *what kind of solidarity can be created in a society based on competition?*

Polarization / divided societies in manifesting solidarity. The point was raised several times from the participants about having double standards when manifesting solidarity beyond borders. Some countries did not open borders for Syrian refugees but opened borders for Ukrainians. Questions have been raised: *For whom are we building walls and for whom are we opening borders?* Is it possible to open borders for all?

Solidarity might seem some time as only for privileged. The programs as European Solidarity Corps open border for all to get involved in solidarity projects, not only for the privileged ones.

Topic 6. Key possibilities in solidarity and envision future

It is important to bring further our messages on solidarity and incorporate it into our way of thinking and living. Both at political level and civil society level we need to look back to the past and learn from it. How can we do better with solidarity?



We need to rethink the concept of solidarity at the EU level in such a way that the EU better supports national solidarity mechanisms in the EU member states and establishes conditions for interpersonal solidarity.

To build stronger societies we need to build two kinds of ties: a sense of solidarity and actually skills for solidarity. The EU will have to get more competences in the field of solidarity and develop solidarity mechanisms.

*Education for solidarity is the key. Is need it to teach solidarity in schools: learning, discovering our intuitive feeling of solidarity and then start serving the community while learning in a sustainable way! We need to teach solidarity in the school curriculum and universities at curricular and extracurricular level . How? Through different globally proven successful pedagogies and methodologies that tackles solidarity directly like **Experiential Education, Service-Learning, Human Right Education, etc.***

Youth as catalysts for solidarity. A solution is to see more and more youth work as catalysts for solidarity. Young people actually know intuitively what solidarity is and what they need to change. Youth don't need to be empowered because they have the power inside already – institutions and programs just need to recognize their power and create proper contexts for them to manifest solidarity.

Other three potential possibilities for increasing solidarity at European level are: growing the sense of recognition and respect towards each other no matter the differences, joint actions happening at European level between organisation involved in solidarity actions and collaborative actions across generations.

Dissemination, communication, and open access to knowledge about solidarity best practices is one of the keys which assist us to be able to take decision in challenging situations where solidarity is needed.


Expanding solidarity beyond the EU is unavoidable. We cannot separate Europe from other parts of the world – in general but especially when we talk about resources and environment.

In each European country is need it to establish the conditions for solidarity to emerge through programs like Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps. Through these programs European Commission is investing in citizens actually having exchanges across border to be able to realize that there is solidarity that goes beyond the nation state.

5. Which topics were discussed and by whom?


1. Dr. Teppo Eskelinen, Senior Lecturer in Social Sciences, University of Eastern Finland: Solidarity in Europe: Its institutionalization, challenges, and relation to civil society.

Dr. Teppo Eskelinen gave a general definition of solidarity and pointed out some ways on how solidarity could be framed in the European institutional contexts. He looked at the social




developments as seen in social sciences, elements which are relevant for the future of solidarity in Europe. The main points where:

- a) *Solidarity is not about individual good behavior* because if we look at individual good behaviors it doesn't really say much about the connection with other people. We can act in terms of charity for example without having any real connection with the recipient of the act of charity. This is the main difference between charity and solidarity. *Charity is vertical and solidarity is horizontal.* Horizontal means that we as human beings are on the same level and somehow share the same space, rather than us being in a position of power and making an act of charity downwards to some beneficiary. The challenge of solidarity is to remain horizontal.
- b) *Solidarity is a shared sense of belonging* rather than a quality of formal structures. Solidarity is not about if the government functions well. It's rather a sense or sentiment which exists and persists in a given society.
- c) *Solidarity can work in malfunctioning and well-functioning states.* There can be masses of solidarity within awful states. There can be states and governments which function in a completely disastrous manner, but yet there's a strong sense of solidarity between people in that society. And they can be well functioning social, political structures without much of a sense of solidarity in-between individuals.
- d) *Evolution of solidarity, definitions:* in ancient Rome, solidarity meant that there's a collective debtor. If one debtor fails, a group is taking a collective debt. In the mid-19th century, solidarity began to evolve into a political concept, gaining rather the meaning of a connection or cohesion which exists within the society, a sense of shared destiny in society; if one fails, that means problems for others as well. Solidarity became acting on the basis of a sense of reciprocal sympathy and of being bound together in a community; a sense of belonging and participation, a sense of community and a sense of shared faith, mutuality and some kind of benevolent action.
- e) *Solidarity - feelings and institutions.* When we talk about solidarity, we talk about two different things at the same time: feelings and institutions. Solidarity as a specific structure of feeling: how I feel, what are my emotions now or as reaction to something that just happened. Institutionalized solidarity relates to governments or state institutions. We shouldn't confuse solidarity, a structured feeling, with the functioning of states.
- f) *Solidarity in the construction of the European Union.* In the construction of the European Union, solidarity has been one of the underlying concepts. So, solidarity is seen as a European ideal easy to understand by the political left and right, by labor movements, by Christian Democrats, for whom solidarity is the sense of brotherhood or fraternity or loving your neighbor. Solidarity is a conceptual compromise which could underlie what the European Union means. If we look at any key Treaty of the European Union, it talks about solidarity in the sense of social protection, economic social cohesion as a part of the structure.
- g) *Solidarity surpasses the borders of nation states.* European Union, as we understand it, is an ideal, an attempt to expand Solidarity beyond the confines of the nation states, to somehow surpass the borders of nation states.
- h) *We cannot afford the lack of solidarity.* Solidarity makes societies stronger economically.

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- i) *It's difficult to define solidarity as an institutionalized idea.* It's very convenient to talk about solidarity in European geographical space, but it's very difficult to define solidarity in European political space.
 - j) When we get increasing inequalities in terms of other people being a lot richer than others, it becomes more difficult to feel genuine sympathy for each other and therefore even more difficult to develop solidarity on that basis. We have to have some kind of shared economic experience to be in a space of solidarity. Or even keep the sense of understanding each other's perspectives to begin with.
 - k) *Reinvent the sense of mutuality outside borders.* There's some kind of need to reinvent this sense of mutuality, to reinvent this identity-based sense of sharing a common social and political space. EU has a project of solidarity, was always about extending the sense of community beyond national borders but keeping it within the limits of Europe. This is not a bad thing, but it leads to questions about the possibility of Europe as a social space to begin with. Because why stop at European borders when you're expanding this kind of idea of mutuality. For whom are we opening borders and for whom are we closing borders?
 - l) h. *Competition society.* Today's society is a society in which we constantly have to compete with each other and somehow this is a byproduct of a very good thing, which is called meritocracy. Meritocracy means that you get to given positions because of your skills and merits, and not because of the people you know or because you're born to give a social class. But there is this uneasy by product of meritocracy, and that is constant competition as a defining feature of the social space. So, competition somehow becomes the defining feature of contemporary society. This leads to extreme individualism, and what's crucial here is that these competitive pressures are very detrimental to our attempt in creating a society based on solidarity and mutuality.
 - m) *Risk society and contagious solidarity.* Risk society refers to risks that cannot be completely controlled or even foreseen - like a crisis. There's financial, environmental, military, health and other risks which materialize into corresponding crises. If we look at any kind of crisis, we see societies that have higher chances of pulling through the crisis without that much damage when compared to others. But then, there's the level of individual solidarity which is relevant to how they emerge within a crisis. Contagious solidarity is intuitive solidarity; it is a skill we would have to develop in the risk societies' turning into a crisis society. What happens in a crisis is people either become very selfish or they become very kind towards people in need. You just need an example of a good practice in solidarity, and people get infected with the solidarity virus. And this is some kind of skill we need to really develop in the context of the risk society. It's not solidarity in the traditional sense, but it's rather an intuitive skill of preparedness.

2. Dr. Ozgehan Senyuva, Associate Professor, department of international relations, METU (online): *Challenging the understanding of solidarity*

Dr. Ozgehan Senyuva challenged the understanding of solidarity from a very personal and interesting perspective and provoked many questions begging for answers. Here are the main ideas stated:

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- a. *Solidarity is unique for each one of us* according to our historical experience, background, and perception. It is particularly shaped by where we are coming from.
 - b. *Solidarity is not something that you can do alone* and this brings us to the difference between charity and solidarity. Charity is vertical, solidarity is horizontal – solidarity respects the other and we can learn from each other. In a horizontal process everyone is included, everyone is part of it.
 - c. *Accountability in solidarity*. How do we measure success in solidarity?
 - d. *Action versus words*. You can talk the talk, but can you walk the walk? Where does the action lay in solidarity?
 - e. In times of difficulty, people act in solidarity with each other. When there is an external risk / crisis factor coming in, it creates forces in opposing directions. On one hand, it pushes individualism and the survival mode in people, and it also creates solidarity movements.
 - f. It is important to think global, but *solidarity starts on your street*, your neighborhood; it starts with your immediate environment.
 - g. Competition and meritocracy lead to a burnout society which is very tiring, and it reduces the solidarity actions and leads to mental health problems.
 - h. Questions: When you act in solidarity are we putting on a band aid, or are we curing; are we aiming for a remedy or just a quick fix; are we aiming for change or are we aiming for power?


3. Panagiotis Chatzimichail - board member, European Youth Forum: Connecting the conference with the current European objectives & youth perspective

Mr. Panagiotis main ideas where:

- a) Solidarity is a way to understand that people are sitting at the table equally.
- b) Solidarity is not only for the privileged, is an opportunity for all.
- c) The beauty of the European dimension is its diversity, and this is what we like. Europe isn't an A and a B; it is an entire alphabet. So is solidarity.
- d) Organizations need to provide support for youth workers, to support mental health programs for them.
- e) If us as institutions and civil society don't work with the current generation of youth, we cannot talk about future generations!
- f) A stronger future is built by acting in the present moment, with the generation we have now.
- g) Solidarity is a process – we start in the community, with our family, friends, community. The first thing we need to do is actually to start!

4. Tommi Laitio, Inaugural Fellow at Bloomberg Centre for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins University, USA: *Solidarity 2030 – thoughts about the future*


Tommi Laitio talked about what are the conditions for solidarity, what are people going through in cities and what would be the building blocks for solidarity in the future. Here are the main ideas he inspired in participants:

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- a) If we want to build an emotional connection to people, if we want to build something together with other people, we *have to start from the world where people are*, we have to recognize the pains, but also the possibilities that are in that world.
 - b) *What we are doing in our communities has a huge impact on other people's lives- but we are not very aware of this.* Cities have concentrations of very different people, and this is why miracles happen in cities like arts, different innovations, companies flourishing etc.; this is because of the potential that we have in cities. We do not have to provide for ourselves everything that we need in our lives. We can focus on being a librarian or youth worker etc because we know that someone else takes care of our different needs. We are more dependent on other people helping us.
 - c) *Losing the sense of self and sense of control.* In all this dependency on others it is hard to get a sense of who we are, what we can do. A lot of people are worrying about decisions and there are two very typical, psychological reactions in hard time: we say "*It's too much to handle. I'm just going to focus on my family, my friends, my work, my studies. I'm not going to care about other people*". Or the other psychological strategy is that we start shouting louder for our right. We see life as a battle with other people. It becomes about me and them. Both tendencies are tough from a solidarity point of view.
 - d) *Recognition and respect: every person have the right to be treated as somebody.*
 - e) *Joint actions:* importance of gatherings. Europe Unions is far along in this, but we should still invest more in people having the possibility to experience joint action across national borders. When we encounter people from different countries and different cultures, it brings clarity to our personal story, but it also helps us understand how the conditions we grew up in are different than those of other people.
 - f) *Collaborative action across generations.* It's about building coalitions between generation where we don't have to agree on everything, but we can still move forward with society.
 - g) *To build stronger societies we need two kinds of ties to build: a sense of solidarity and actual skills for solidarity.* The one part is to be seen as somebody, to have a sense of belonging, to have strong ties: family, friends, colleagues in NGOs, and people to care for. And the other part is to have a security net.
 - h) *It's a privilege to be able to act in solidarity:* to live a life where you can feel valuable to a community. We should all feel welcome to contribute to a cause.

5. Sophie Porschlegel, Future of Solidarity in the EU

Sophie Porschlegel's presentation was focused on the policy aspects of the European Union policies. She was researching EU solidarity especially in the COVID-19 crisis. The main ideas she underlined were:

- a) Solidarity is more than just a call to action. *Solidarity is the foundation for cohesion within the European Union project.*
- b) *Solidarity can be built policies* and it is something that politicians have major responsibilities about it.
- c) *Solidarity is very much based first on the national level* but does not necessarily have to stay at the national level. The big conclusions that Sophie had from her research is that we do have *national solidarity that remains first order*. The welfare state, with pension systems, with taxes (which is a solidarity mechanism because we are all agreeing to pay income tax to have a health system), pensions and common schools means that we are in solidarity with our common peers and that we also have common rights to vote together.

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- d) *There is a strong basis in the EU treaties for solidarity.* Solidarity is mentioned as a value, it is mentioned as a principle of solidarity and fair sharing responsibility, and finally, it is also as a clause.
 - e) *There is a lot of interstate solidarity.*
 - f) *Interpersonal solidarity is the least developed at EU level.* There are funds such as Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps, but there is comparatively little money when you look at the next generation of EU funds.
 - g) *The EU will have to develop solidarity mechanisms.* There is a movement where you cannot get rid of solidarity mechanisms because if you think of the Green Deal (for example), there will be social consequences of reaching climate neutrality and that's why we need transition funds where we need to help those who have more challenging starting conditions to deal with climate change.
 - h) *We need to develop more interpersonal solidarity so we can grow interstate solidarity.* For now, what we see is that we have a lot of Interstate compensation mechanisms. For example, Poland is very reliant on coal so, we need to give them more money so that they can build more renewables, for instance. But these interstate compensation mechanisms we have at the moment can create problems. For instance, Dutch citizens will not be happy that their government will give money to the Polish government to build more energy efficient buildings. Because they do not have that sense of solidarity amongst each other yet. And that's why we need to develop more interpersonal solidarity.
 - i) *It might be easier to develop interpersonal solidarity if we have European taxes* rather than only national taxes that have been put together. But it's a very sensitive political topic once again.
 - j) *Developing interstate solidarity and interpersonal citizen centered solidarity* can be a future point to make in growing solidarity.
 - k) *EU solidarity is mostly transactional.* It's based on this kind of trade-off between Member States saying: *I will give you money if you give me this.* It's not really based on a sense of belonging, probably because there are no clear ties between the new citizens yet (interpersonal solidarity).
 - l) *If we don't see the EU as a legitimate body to develop solidarity, then it's not going to work out.* It's also a question of the legitimacy of the political system if we have solidarity between EU citizens.
 - m) *EU institutions and national governments should really rethink their concept of solidarity* They talk about it, there is a call for action, you see it a lot of speeches, but in the end when it comes to policy, there is much more to be done.
 - n) *We need to establish the conditions for solidarity to emerge through programs like Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps.* We need to invest in citizens having cross-border exchanges to be able to realize that there is solidarity that goes beyond the nation state.
 - o) *We need to think of solidarity closer to the cohesion agenda,* because that's quite strong in the EU. You have cohesion funds that exist for many, many years now, and if we integrate more solidarity in those cohesion funds, it might be a good idea.
 - p) *EU solidarity is not in contradiction with national solidarity,* we can have both and the pandemic showed that.
 - q) *It is important to say to the decision makers how important the work in solidarity is and have more political debates around it.*
 - r) The EU policies are not only made in Brussels; it is also very much made in the national capitals so it is important to *push at a national level.* If we don't make sure that cities, or municipalities understand the importance of civil society work in the field of solidarity, it is very difficult to make that case on a national level.

6. Participants reflections and conclusions

At the end of the conference participants reflected in groups on the key threats to solidarity, key actions to mitigate the risks on solidarity, concrete outcomes from the conference, key competencies that individuals will need in the near future to grow solidarity, how they enhance these competencies, how they can contribute to future developments and finally, a message for the future. Below is the summary of their reflections extracted from the reflection tools.


Key threats to solidarity: misconception on solidarity, discrimination, conflict of interests, lack of trust in each other and institutions, corruption when using the national, regional, limited worldwide resources, limited connection between society and politics, improperly organized solidarity acts, lack of solidarity skills, inequality, racism, prejudice, bias, greed, lack of freedom of speech, cultural differences, unequal treatment, lack of respect for institutions and towards individuals, competitive societies, negative media narrative, and labeling groups of people.

Key actions to mitigate the risks: understanding different types of diversity and solidarity, responsibility of our actions, better communication between citizens and politicians: not only talk about solidarity, but experience it, have values-based education, create a more transparent welfare system, organize more social projects, grow empathy through education, create contexts for free media, free speech, good governances, more exchanges and good practices in the solidarity field, more funding available for solidarity projects, being more active and flexible at an individual level, more clear pedagogies on how to teach or empower solidarity on all educational levels: like Service-Learning, Human Rights Education, etc

Concrete outcomes from the conference: more clarity on what solidarity, how solidarity is understood by different countries and individuals, new connections with new people, more clarity on that fact that all have to work together on the EU level to grow solidarity at a national and European level. Solidarity is a process: we need to be active and activate others, we need to multiply solidarity conversations, we need to lead by example.

Key competencies that individuals will need in the near future for solidarity: positive attitudes towards solidarity, empathy, inclusion, willingness to take responsibility and take action, intercultural competencies, acceptance, tolerance, sense of belonging, free speech, digital skills, project management, financial management and project planning, soft skills, social and civic competencies, and openness, how to lead solidarity project, what pedagogies are helpful to practice solidarity.

How we enhance these competencies: through discussing about positive cases of solidarity, through social projects, exchanges, formal, non- formal learning and unlearning, perform in solidarity and inspire others too, teach non-violent communication, promoting the concept of solidarity in education, apply Service-Learning pedagogy, creating nice community spaces for engagement and participation, reform the educational system so solidarity is inspired from kindergarten to university and lifelong learning processes.



What other things are needed: solidarity can be a collective and individual process, so all actors in the field of solidarity need to get involved, to be proactive, talk more about solidarity in formal and informal education, to have solidarity education, to have common goals, specific funding for education and supporting projects, capacity and more civic education, nice and welcoming spaces for all, accessible funding, outreach to less privileged groups who are opened to the idea of solidarity, be active and motivate others at national and regional level, share what we are doing at local level, support, advocate, network, empower youth, create circumstances to recognize youth as key and viral assets for solidarity.


Message for the future: solidarity is universal value not only a European one; we need to act more at a European level, national level; think global - act local; solidarity is hope; solidarity is a process we are part of.

General conclusions

Even if it's challenging to define and understand solidarity, it is important to know that solidarity is little researched and discussed and needs more space at a European level and beyond for dialog, debate, action and funding. It will take generations to shape the narrative of solidarity in Europe. As one of the major conditions for success in growing solidarity at national and EU level is for institutions, civil societies to get more competences in the field of solidarity, develop solidarity mechanisms and spaces for citizens to be integrated, to feel as somebody (valued) and act in solidarity. We need to start first with dialog, conversations and sharing of good practices and we need to continue with educating children, youth and adults in formal, informal, and non-formal contexts on how to act in solidarity. We need the right pedagogical tools and approaches to both serve and educate our communities in solidarity. This needs to go hand in hand with the right policies.

Solidarity is a process, it takes time, we are part of it and it is contagious. Solidarity starts in our family, neighborhood, in our community and one major challenge of solidarity is to remain horizontal while acting positively. Solidarity faces lots of risks and challenges like: competition, meritocracy, burnout societies, inequality, discrimination, lack of trust, limited resources, corruption, lack of consistent political measures, risks societies, etc. But solidarity is also hope, vision for the future; it is a key concept in the construction of the European Union and it is a unifying concept.

Solidarity is the foundation for cohesion within the European Union project and beyond the European Union. To be able to reach this future prospect on solidarity we need to recognize youth power to act in solidarity and create more contexts for manifestation and ripple effects, we need to grow interpersonal solidarity through education so we can attain interstate solidarity and functional social mechanisms at European level. We need to keep saying to the decision makers in our community and country how important the work in solidarity is and have more political debates around it. We need to establish the conditions for solidarity to emerge through community and educational programs like Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps and other regional, national and local programs. We need to invest in citizens actually having cross-border exchanges to be able to realize that there is solidarity that goes beyond the nation state.



Many challenges and questions were also raised both by participants and key notes speakers requiring further dialog and thus relevant actors to debate-including: how we measure the success of solidarity, to whom are we responsible to in solidarity, how do we expand our moral circle to have everyday consideration for our fellow human beings and environment, how can we better connect civil society, education and politics in solidarity, how we make solidarity sustainable, and finally which are the more successful tools, pedagogies, methodologies, and mechanism that generate solidarity.

Participants, key notes speakers and organizers are hoping and aiming for new contexts to be co-created so the debate on solidarity will continues and answers to the above questions be found in time.



