

# Quality Label guidelines

## European Solidarity Corps

Version 1, January 2018

### 1. Introduction

The European Solidarity Corps Programme (2018-2020) brings together young people to build a more inclusive society, supporting vulnerable people and responding to societal challenges. It offers an inspiring and empowering experience for young people who want to help, learn and develop. Any organisation in a participating country which wishes to support or host European Solidarity Corps participants must hold the Quality Label.

This guide is intended to help interested organisations to obtain the Quality Label.

### 2. What is the Quality Label?

The European Solidarity Corps Quality Label certifies that an organisation participating in the European Solidarity Corps is able to ensure the necessary framework conditions for young people to take part in solidarity activities in compliance with the principles of the European Solidarity Corps Charter and further requirements necessary to ensure quality placements and activities in accordance with the European Solidarity Corps objectives.

It is designed to ensure consistently high standards in European Solidarity Corps activities. Applying for the Quality Label is a quality assurance process facilitating communication between the organisation and programme structures, so that all parties involved are aware of the values, objectives and rules of European Solidarity Corps. All applying organisations must show they are able to implement European Solidarity Corps projects according to the rules of the European Solidarity Corps.

The Quality Label is an organisation's entry ticket for European Solidarity Corps, and proves that it complies with the programme's quality standards. It is a prerequisite for participation, but does not automatically lead to a European Solidarity Corps project grant. The future project grant applications will be assessed based on the criteria presented in the Programme Guide and according to the quality of the specific project.

### 3. Who is the Quality Label for?

The Quality Label is for organisations that want to support or host participants. To obtain the Quality Label, the applying organisation must be clearly identified. A Quality Label application should only refer to the entirety of an organisation with its departments and/or branches in general terms<sup>1</sup>. Finally, the application cannot be submitted by any informal group or even a *de facto* association without legal personality.

Depending on the role of the organisation, and the type of participants concerned, there are different requirements in order to obtain the Quality Label. An organisation can apply to different scopes of Quality Label, depending on whether it wishes to support volunteers, trainees and/or jobs. In addition, the organisation will

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<sup>1</sup> In other words, departments within an organisation should not apply for several Quality Labels. Instead, the organisation itself should apply for a Quality Label, which is awarded at organisation level.

have to declare its role in the opportunities offered, being as a Supporting and/or Host Organisation in the case of volunteers and/or as an Occupational Quality Label organisation, for traineeships and jobs.

A Supporting Organisation supports volunteers in their activities in the Host Organisation by preparing them before departure, contributing to the follow up of the volunteers' learning and development throughout the activities and provides support after the activities. A Host Organisation hosts volunteers, is responsible for the mentoring and training of volunteers and provides the volunteers with the required learning opportunities. An organisation holding an Occupational Quality Label may either provide activities for traineeships and job seekers itself, or support placement providers in hosting participants.

The following organisations must hold a Quality Label to participate in European Solidarity Corps projects:

- All Supporting Organisations;
- Host Organisations hosting volunteers;
- Organisations applying for grants under the Occupational strand (Traineeships and Jobs placements).

In addition, an "umbrella" application can be submitted by an organisation, on behalf of organisations linked to it by statutory links, which are considered its Dependent Entities. In this case, the applicant organisation must monitor, and accept to be responsible for, the quality and safety of the placements offered by the Dependent Entities on which behalf it is applying, as well as responsible for the appropriate skill development and learning opportunities of the young participants.

It must be noted that, in order to avoid unnecessary administrative burden, the Quality Label is not necessary for organisations certified by similar quality assurance mechanisms of other European Union programmes (e.g. EU Aid Volunteers). These organisations may use the European Solidarity Corps Portal's database and other horizontal services, but shall not be eligible to request a grant in the framework of the Corps or participate in any project funded by the European Solidarity Corps.

## 4. How to apply?

The application must be submitted using the official form and parts of it (clearly identified) will be published on the European Solidarity Corps platform. Thus, submitting the form (which can be found [here](#)), entails the publication of such parts of the application. The Agency/accreditors will contact the contact person provided on the accreditation application form. They may have questions, and will arrange interviews and visits to the organisation.

Before submitting an accreditation application, a PIC number (Participant Identification Code) is needed, which can be obtained through the Participant Portal<sup>2</sup>. If your organisation already has a PIC number, it must apply for the Quality Label using that PIC number. Finally, for umbrella applications, note that all organisations intended to be covered by the application (Applicant and Dependent Entities) must have a valid PIC number.

## 5. Who processes applications for Quality Label?

The awarding of the Quality Label is carried out by:

- The EACEA in case of:
  - Europe-wide networks or platforms of organisations (umbrella applications);
  - National public authorities and services (e.g. government ministries, national civic services etc.);

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<sup>2</sup> The European Solidarity Corps Programme Guide provides information on how to register with the European Commission Participant Portal.

- Placements run with the support of EU programmes other than the European Solidarity Corps, providing volunteering, traineeship or job opportunities.
- Erasmus+ National Agencies:
  - Any other public or private entity not falling under the scope of the EACEA.

## 6. When should an organisation apply for the Quality Label?

Organisations can submit their applications at any time. Since organisations must have a valid accreditation at the date of the project application deadline, interested organisations are advised to submit the form well before they plan to take part in their first project.

It takes about eight weeks to process a Quality Label application. Quality Labels are, in principle, given for the whole duration of a programming period. Based on random sampling (size of the sample to be established based on risk assessment) and/or targeted checks (for instance as a result of participants' feedback), the labelled organisations are subject to periodical monitoring by the Erasmus+ National Agencies and EACEA. The result of the checks may lead to the withdrawal of the Quality label or its suspension.

## 7. Assessment procedure:

Applications shall be assessed by one or two evaluators (based on provisions which will be spelled out in the Guide for National Agencies / instructions to EACEA) who are members of EACEA's or Erasmus+ National Agency's staff or external experts hired under conditions that avoid conflict of interest.

The assessment comprises a desk check and - if deemed necessary - an on-the-spot monitoring visit of the organisation's premises.

Evaluators assess organisations on the basis of the set requirements and supporting evidence submitted. They can recommend either one or a combination of the following:

- Awarding the Quality Label;
- A Quality Label that limits the number or type of placements, or functions (when compared to the application);
- A Quality Label bound by specific conditions under which certain types of placements / functions could be accepted; or
- A Quality Label subject to specific monitoring measures.

The evaluators may also propose to refuse awarding the Quality Label.

On the basis of the evaluators' assessment, Erasmus+ National Agencies/EACEA take their decision at the appropriate level and inform applicant organisations of their decision without undue delay.

Where an application for a Quality Label does not result in an award of the Quality Label as applied for, the applicant organisation shall be informed in writing about the rejection reason(s). In case an application receives a negative decision, the organisation, based on the feedback received, can re-submit an application.

## 8. What is requested from the organisations?

Organisations, depending on which type of placement and function they apply for, will need to give assurances that they comply with the principles and requirements of the European Solidarity Corps Charter, by providing information e.g. on the following subjects:

- Purpose and activities of their organisation (extract of articles of association);

- Compliance with the concept of solidarity activities;
- Fair and transparent selection and recruitment procedures for European Solidarity Corps participants;
- The placements' potential to foster young participants' personal, socio-educational and professional development;
- Information about safety and security arrangements;
- Information on whether/ to which extent the specific needs of disadvantaged young persons can be catered for;
- Awareness of certification tools describing the learning outcomes;
- Pre- and post-placement support.

Furthermore, applications for Quality Labels covering volunteering and traineeship placements should also include specific information on measures preventing job substitution. Applying organisations should, for example:

- Describe the distinctive role of volunteers/trainees in their organisation and the approach to guiding them and supporting their learning;
- Ensure that volunteers/trainees do not replace regular job holders, are not bound to work under contractual obligations similar to those applying to workers, are not taking up essential tasks for the organisation's running operations and that the placement is not part of young person's regular studies or vocational training.

Traineeship placements should comply with the Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships, while job placements need to respect national regulatory frameworks.

Based on the provided information and depending on the type of placement/function envisaged by the organisation, Erasmus+ National Agencies/EACEA shall check the organisation's capacity to deliver quality placements in full compliance with the European Solidarity Corps Charter.

The award of a Quality Label is free of charge for all types of organisations.

## 9. Once the Quality Label has been awarded

The European Solidarity Corps Platform is the main database of organisations holding the Quality Label (as well as of the young persons wishing to participate in European Solidarity Corps activities). Information about accredited organisations, such as the description provided in English, will be published on the website of the database.

The contact person provided in the form is responsible for keeping the information up-to-date, posting placement opportunities on the European Solidarity Corps Platform and informing the Agency/EACEA if there are periods during which the organisation does not intend to be involved in any projects. The organisation shall disclose this temporary situation in the Portal.

Information in the database is published as it is formulated in the Quality Label application form. It is therefore crucial that organisations write clearly so that potential participants and partner organisations can get a good impression of the organisation and its involvement in the European Solidarity Corps.

Once the organisation receives a confirmation from the Agency/EACEA about its awarding of the Quality Label, it may take part in its first European Solidarity Corps project application!

## 10. More information

- [European Solidarity Corps Programme Guide](#)
- [National Agencies, SALTOs and the European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre](#)

- [European Solidarity Corps platform](#) (database of organisations with a Quality Label and potential participants)