



Evaluation of the Implementation and Impact of ESC in Iceland

Conducted for the Ministry of Education
and Children

2024



Ministry of Education and Children
Evaluation on Implementation and Impact of ESC

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1 Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of an evaluation that has the aim to assess the implementation and impact of **the European Solidarity Corps** programme in Iceland. It is based on information collected by document review, electronic survey, focus groups and interviews with individuals from the Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís) and three different ministries involved in the programme, i.e., the Ministry of Education and Children, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation. The evaluation emphasis for Iceland is mainly derived from the European Commission Guidance Notes.

1.1 Key Findings

Both ESC and Erasmus+ are considered to have great impact on increased awareness of globalization and by doing so contributing to shifting attitudes of local communities.

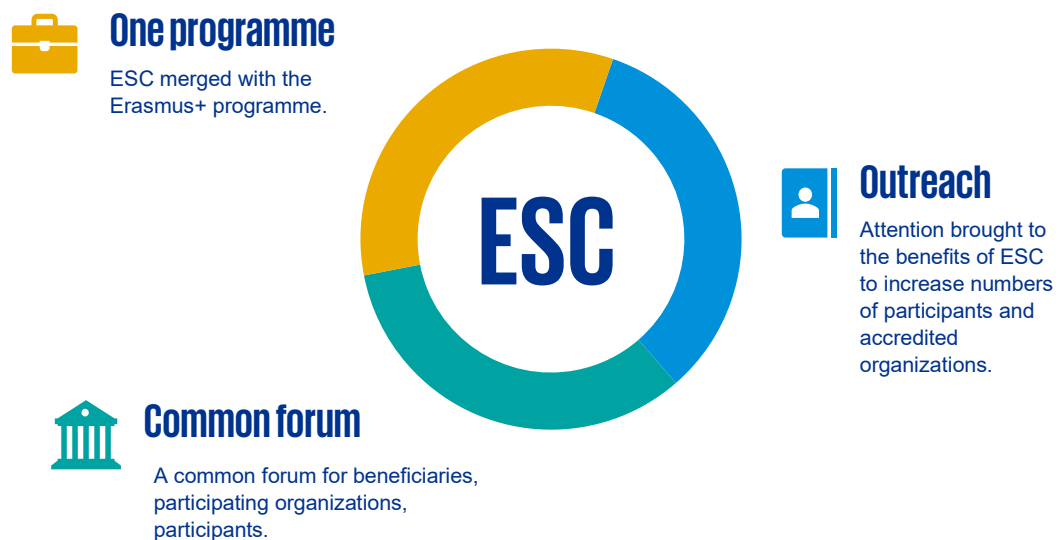
Consensus among participants in the evaluation process is that Erasmus+ and ESC should be merged into one programme, covering all the different projects and networks. The European Solidarity Corps programme is too small to have a substantial impact in the landscape in Iceland alone. The NA could serve as a gateway to all these opportunities, without having to differentiate between them.

According to interviewees and survey respondents, the NA has highly qualified staff that serves beneficiaries with excellence. Cooperation between parties in the administration and management of ESC projects is exceptional, staffs' integrity is evitable, and teamwork is efficient.

Interviewees expressed a strong wish of having a national forum for consultation and peer learning for project managers and applicants. In Iceland, the group of people who manage Erasmus+ and ESC projects is growing, and it would be a great benefit for this group to share experience with each other, exchange useful advice and solutions.

The application process is complicated. Complexity is both related to computer systems and information to be provided in the process. In many cases, applications and projects are based on individual initiatives - especially amongst first time applicants - and there is a great risk of the leading person giving up before the application is submitted.

1.2 Suggestions for Improvement



One programme

- Merge the ESC programme into the Erasmus+ programme, thus covering all the different projects and networks, is expected to have a substantial effect in Iceland.

Outreach

- To increase number of applicants as well as reach more diverse group of applicants more attention needs to be brought to the benefits of the ESC opportunities. This can be done in coordination with the Erasmus+ programme and with a closer connection between the NA and the regional associations of municipalities.



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National forum

- A national forum for those who are working on similar projects nationally as well as internationally will support beneficiaries and their project management. During focus group meetings in this evaluation process participants were exchanging email addresses to be able to compare their work and share experiences.

2 European Solidarity Corps

European Solidarity Corps is a volunteering programme funded by the European Union for young Europeans aged 18-30. Aimed at moving young people across the continent serving in voluntary projects it has, since 2017, also offered opportunities for European youth to get engaged as volunteers in their own communities in their native country.

The current programme, for 2021-2027 has a dedicated budget of €1.009 billion. European Solidarity Corps programme will offer opportunities to at least 270,000 young people to help address societal and humanitarian challenges through volunteering or by setting up their own solidarity projects¹.

2.1 Key Actions of the ESC Programme

The programme finances projects to give young people a chance to take part in solidarity activities addressing societal challenges through volunteering or to set up their own solidarity projects. It provides support to young people wishing to engage in solidarity activities in a variety of areas, from helping the disadvantaged and delivering humanitarian aid to contributing to health and environmental action across the EU and beyond.

The general objective of the programme is to enhance the engagement of young people and organisations in accessible and high-quality solidarity activities, primarily volunteering, as a means to strengthen cohesion, solidarity, democracy, European identity and active citizenship in the Union and beyond.

- 1 Participation of young people in solidarity activities; volunteering and solidarity projects.
- 2 Participation of young people in humanitarian aid related solidarity activities.²

¹ Source: [European Solidarity Corps 2021-2027 launched | European Youth Portal \(europa.eu\)](#) [Ret. 15.3.2024]

² [European Solidarity Corps - Performance - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#) [ret. 18.3.2024]

2.2 ESC in Iceland

In 2017, the EU's support for volunteer work was removed from the Erasmus+ programme and a special program, the European Solidarity Corps (ESC), was created. ESC is for young people aged 18-30. The goal of the program is to strengthen cohesion, solidarity, democracy, and civic participation in Europe, as well as to respond to specific social needs to promote social integration. The aim is to enhance the participation of young people and associations in accessible and quality activities and to ensure the participation of young people with fewer opportunities through various special measures. Emphasis is placed on solidarity as a value and its importance in European cooperation.

Volunteer projects can be either in Europe or domestically. Associations and municipalities can apply to host or send individuals for 2-12 months, and it is also possible to host or send individuals with fewer opportunities for 2 weeks to 2 months. Groups can also participate for 2 weeks to 2 months as groups of 10-40 people.

Associations that want to become sending or hosting organizations for volunteers need to get accreditation from the NA, which involves meeting certain quality standards.

Iceland is not part of the European Union but takes nonetheless an active part in the ESC programme and other EU programmes for its citizens since signing the Agreement on the European Economic Area in 1994.

Iceland fully participated in the predecessor of the current programme from 2014 to 2018, and in the part that was transferred from the Erasmus+ program into the current ESC program from mid-2019 onwards. Several Icelanders have since been given an opportunity to participate in projects and broaden their horizons with cooperation with fellow Europeans.

The implementation of the ESC programme is mainly done through indirect management, meaning that the European Commission entrusts budget implementation tasks to National Agencies. Rannís hosts the ESC programme in Iceland and oversees the implementation of the programme at national level.

The ESC programme is small in Iceland in the international context. Few organisations in Iceland have been accredited and few participants arrive in Iceland annually.

However, many of the participating organisations have taken part for a long time, thus, are very familiar with the benefits of the European cooperation. Also, many of the beneficiaries have also experienced Erasmus+ programme. Despite the relatively small size of ESC in Iceland, the financial support attained plays a major role for many of the organisations as well as the projects each year.

2.2.1 Statistics for ESC in Iceland

Between 2021 and 2023, €933.621 were awarded to 31 different projects³ in Iceland based on statistics from the NA. A total of 43 applications were received during the three-year period. Of the 31 projects, eight were assigned a total of €243.418 in 2021, €463.792 to 16 projects in 2022 and €226.411 to seven projects in 2023, see figure 1 and table 1.

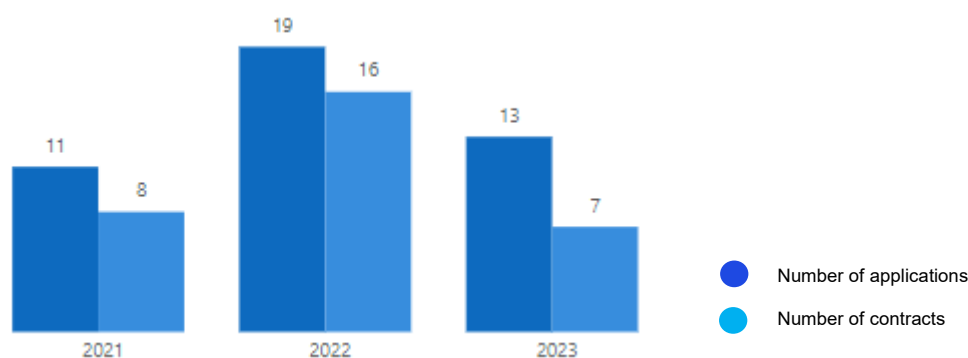


Figure 1: Number of ESC Applications and contracts 2021-2023

Statistics from the NA, shown in figure 2, showing distribution of ESC contracts suggest that they are heavily favoured to the area surrounding the capital, Reykjavik, even though some participating organizations may have establishments around the country. Vast majority of Iceland’s population lives within a 50 km radius of Reykjavik city centre, but contracts could nonetheless be better distributed to other parts of the country.

³ Source: <https://www.erasmusplus.is/um-erasmus/tolfraedi/tolfraedi-fra-2021/> [ret. 1/2/2024]

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Figure 2: Grant amount and number of contracts by location in Iceland. Circles show the distribution of applications during these years and the size of the circle represents the number of applications within the area (postal code).

Table 1: ESC Application status 2021-2023.

Application Status	2021	2022	2023	Total
Number of applications	11	19	13	43
Contracts	8	16	7	31
Solidarity projects	€14.212	€58.912	€36.515	€109.639
Volunteer projects	€229.206	€404.880	€189.896	€823.982
Grant amount	€243.418	€463.792	€226.411	€933.621

3 Evaluation

As foreseen by the Article 21.3 of the European Solidarity Corps programme Regulation (EU) 2021/888, the Member States are to submit a report on the implementation and the impact of the programme in their respective territories. In line with Article 13(2) of the same Regulation, the third countries associated to the programme have to fulfil all the obligations which this Regulation imposes on Member States. Therefore, all 31 countries participating in the European Solidarity Corps programme must submit a national implementation report.

3.1 The Purpose of the National Implementation Reports

The European Commission is responsible for the success of the European Solidarity Corps. The programme is only indirectly managed by the Commission by delegating the responsibility for management of tasks and activities to national agencies in the participating countries. This brings the programme closer to its target audience, adapting it to the different national education systems, and offers the possibility to align it with national priorities.

National agencies, appropriate ministries and their representatives can best identify national specificities in the implementation and management of the programme, as well as its impacts and success. They are also best placed to assess the impact on national policies, such as, for example, improving and properly validating young people's competences, as well as facilitating their continuous engagement as active citizens.

3.2 Methodology

In Iceland, the Erasmus+ National Agency for all sectors is hosted by Rannís accordance with an agreement between the NA and the Ministry of Education and Children.

The focus of the evaluation process is to bring forward the national view on the implementation and impact of ESC including its strengths and weaknesses, lessons learned and best practices, as well as the analysis of national results achieved.

Three categories are defined for briefing results of the evaluation process.

1. Programme in the national context
2. International Coordination
3. Programme implementation and results

3.2.1 Document and Data Review

The evaluation team reviewed documents from the European Commission and relevant documents provided by Rannís and The Ministry of Education and Children. This included e.g. previous evaluation reports of the programme, Study Inventory List and Assessment of Priorities in Icelandic ESC Applications. Also, annual reports as well as statistical annexes were inspected.

3.2.2 In-depth Interviews

Interviews were conducted with representatives of:

- the Ministry of Education and Children
- the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour
- the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation
- the Erasmus+ National Agency in Iceland
- The Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís)

Nine interviews were conducted with the total of 15 interviewees. Interviews were used to discuss both Erasmus+ and ESC programme jointly.

Each interview discussed the implementation and impact of the programmes, their strengths and weaknesses, lessons learned and best practices. Evaluation questions provided by the European Commission were used as a framework for the interviews.

However, the interviewees were given opportunities to deepen their opinions and views.

3.2.3 Focus Groups

The aim of running focus groups in evaluating Erasmus+ and ESC was to provide insight into the participants' views and experiences in the programme. The open-ended questions used in the focus groups were based on the European Commission's guidelines for evaluating the implementation and impact of Erasmus+ in Iceland.

An attempt was made to invite participants for ESC focus group only, but due to the small size of the ESC programme in Iceland too few participants representing the programme were willing to participate. Answers are therefore derived from combined focus groups for ESC programme and Erasmus+ programme. Total of nine focus groups were formed, and 77 individuals were invited to participate.

The focus groups were conducted in October and November 2023. The participants in the groups ranged from 3-8 people. The focus group discussion lasted for approximately 1.5 hours.

3.2.4 Survey

An online survey was conducted among beneficiaries in January 2024. The survey was sent to those who have been granted support for projects during 2021-2023. Quite many of the beneficiaries were repeatedly noted in the list of emails, due to participation or management of more than one project during the defined period. In these instances, only one email was sent to the beneficiary despite having managed or participated in multiple projects during the years in question. Thus, survey was sent to total of 24 participants via email and the response rate was roughly 33%.

The selection of questions was carried out in cooperation with the NA and the National Authority (NAU). A variety of questions was included in the survey but can roughly be defined by two main categories: 1) Background questions for further analysing of answers e.g., gender, age, residence (postal code), and 2) nature of current project and experience of participation in ESC e.g., how many countries involved in project, how many partners involved and how many projects the participant was managing.

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Some questions were open-ended to give the respondent an option for further explanation.

Average age of participants who answered the survey was 37 years and 63% of them were female, see figure 3 and 4. Age distribution is on average lower when compared to respondents to similar survey among Erasmus+ participants.

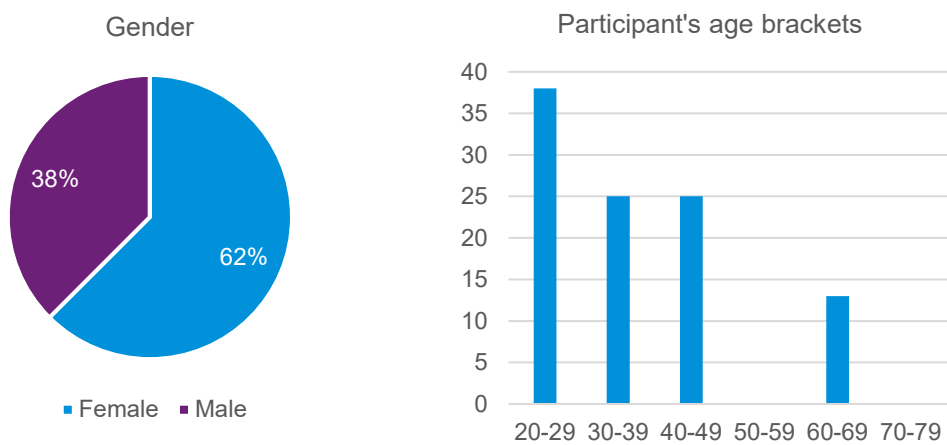


Figure 3 and 4: Gender balance in the group of applicants, according to survey results and age of participants in the survey.

All respondents were in the capital area, with postal code 101-221 and 60% of them were managing their first ESC project. Participants in survey represented an even portion of types of ESC projects, see picture 5.

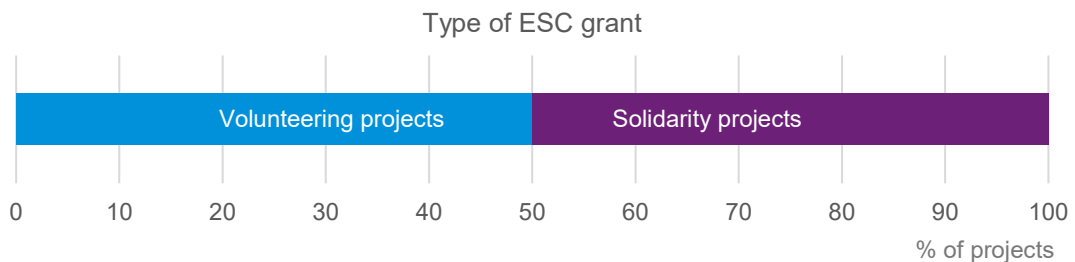


Figure 5: Participant in survey represent evenly the two different types of ESC projects, i.e. volunteering projects and solidarity projects.

4 Programme in the national context

4.1 General findings

During interviews and focus groups participants generally didn't make a notable difference between their participation in either Erasmus+ or ESC. As mentioned earlier, many beneficiaries take part in both programmes and those who manage the projects themselves have experienced both. Consensus among participants in the evaluation process is that Erasmus+ and ESC should be merged into one programme, covering all the different projects and networks. The NA could serve as a gateway to all these opportunities, without having to differentiate between them.

In interviews and focus groups it was stated that because the application process is complicated, the IT system is extensive and slow, and the whole process is complex, it is unlikely that grant applications would have become a reality if the support of the NA had not been sufficient. In many cases, applications and projects are based on individual initiatives - especially during the first projects of the applicants - and there is a great risk of the project coordinator giving up before the application is submitted.

Many participants also expressed concern that barriers in the application process itself were counterproductive to the programme's objective of increased inclusion. Computer systems are not adapted to the visually impaired, bureaucracy and barriers in getting a registration number and recognition (OID and accreditation) deterrent for those interested etc.

"The national agency was excellent and professional; some information is missing on the national Erasmus site and the application system and submission of the final report is quite complicated."

Survey respondent

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Following these opinions, participants call for a national forum for those who are working on similar projects nationally as well as internationally. According to their opinions this will support beneficiaries and their project management. During focus group meetings in this evaluation process participants were exchanging email addresses to be able to compare their work and share experiences.

“The program is well organized and implemented in principle and allows all kinds of young people to participate in educational volunteer work, get to know foreign cultures and develop in many ways. It is important that almost all the costs of the program are covered, so that the participants do not have to pay for travel, food, accommodation, or other things themselves.”

Survey respondent

Even though ESC in Iceland is considered small in international context, number of participants has been increasing. In the first and the second round, 102 participants were awarded in solidarity and volunteering projects, which means that the NA is on the way towards its target of 135 participants. 20% of those have fewer opportunities, where the aim was set at 30%. The share of activities that address climate objectives is now at 55%, which is in line with the NA’s aims (80% in volunteering and 33% in solidarity projects).⁴

To further increase number of applicants as well as reach more diverse group of applicants more attention needs to be brought to the benefits of the ESC opportunities, according to interviewees and participants in focus groups. This can be done in coordination with the Erasmus+ programme and with a closer connection between the NA and the regional associations of municipalities.

“It provides an opportunity to empower young people to actively participate, which is often the goal of organizations and institutions in Iceland, and therefore it is good to have a grant program that supports them towards that goal.”

Survey respondent

⁴ NAU October Report

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According to reports of individuals, submitted after having taken part in the ESC programme, the participation has had a positive effect on many the key competences, see fig. 6.

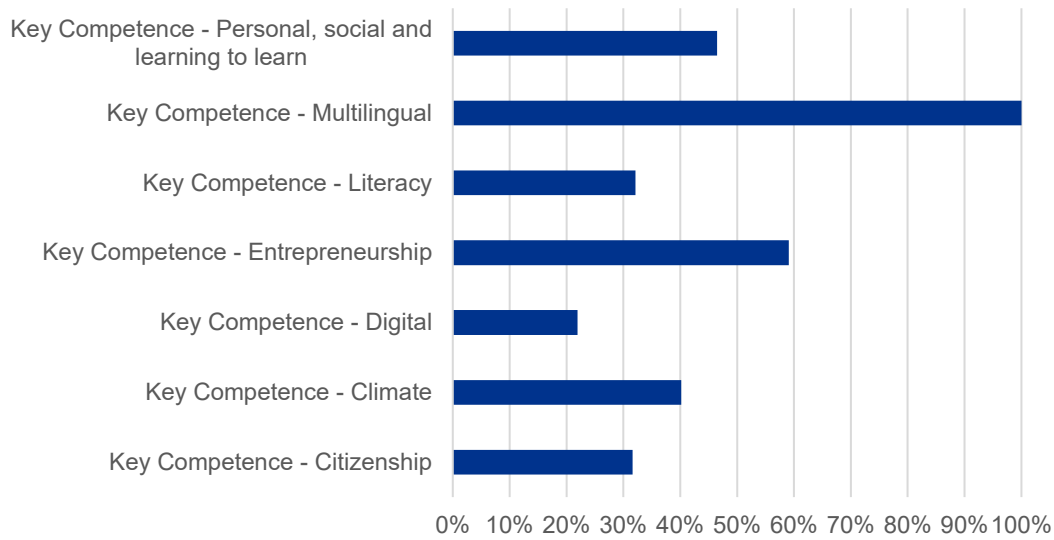


Figure 6. Participants comment on their positive improvements on different key competences of the programme. All mention how their participation has supported multilingual skills and improvements whereas much lower percentage say that their participation has increased their digital skills (22%) or awareness/knowledge on climate (40%).

The overall satisfaction rate among participants is around 88% on average. They are extremely satisfied with the participation in general (100%) but there seems to be a slight room for improvement when it comes to issues such as accommodation (90%), evaluation activities (79%) and the impact of the participation (90%), although these rates are still very high.

As for the support that participants receive, linguistic support is rated the lowest (50%), while support related to insurance (83%), visa (83%), practical assistance (80%) and tasks and training (80%) receive the highest ratings.

Finally, just over 70% of participants consider that thanks to the ESC activity, they have clearer ideas about their further educational path or professional career.⁵

4.2 Local communities

Due to the small size of the ESC programme in Iceland participants in the evaluation process discussed the contribution of both Erasmus+ and ESC programme jointly.

The impact of these programmes is highly appreciated by beneficiaries, and they highlight the importance of participation in multinational projects in the fight against prejudice and increasing intolerance towards foreign cultures and people. Therefore, the impact of ESC and Erasmus+ is considered to have great impact on increased awareness of globalization and by doing so contributing to shifting attitudes of local communities.

Less impact is noticed on local issues or improvement of different needs of local authorities. The improvement of skills and competence is mainly related to the impact on beneficiaries themselves i.e., their ability to manage, maintain and develop international cooperation.

Finally, participation in ESC and/or Erasmus+ programme+ is considered to have major impact on the personal development of the individuals in the project and thus last a lifetime.

⁵ Aggregated data from all participant reports that ESC volunteers funded through Icelandic projects had submitted via EU survey from 2021 was provided by the National Agency on 15 February 2024.

4.3 Policy and institutional novelties

Interviewees and participants in focus groups discussed only briefly the impact of ESC and Erasmus+ programme on volunteering policy approaches. Generally, volunteering is not very common in Iceland and ESC is very small. Meeting the qualifications of ESC has been a challenge for some of the beneficiaries as well as there has been a certain mistrust towards volunteers in Iceland, and the labour movement is very cautious about volunteers taking on jobs that should be paid. Nevertheless, it was mentioned that for some of the accredited organisation the participation in ESC plays a vital part in their financing and operations. Even so that without these grants the existence of the organisations is risked.

“First and foremost, the grant helps us to carry out projects like this. Working for a non-profit organization often means we have lots of ideas we want to implement, but limited resources often mean we can't do everything we want.”

Survey respondent

4.4 Innovations introduced

Participants in the focus groups didn't provide any information on this topic. However, final reports of ESC projects⁶ give some insight, both in use of new ways or tools to reach audience and participants as well as the overall innovative objective or purpose of the project. Use of sign language interpreter to make lectures and training more inclusive and adjusting boxes for vegetable growing for wheelchair access is an example of the former whereas working with sensitive social group through musical work and increase awareness on violence by storytelling are examples of the latter.

Less innovative solutions are implemented in sustainable and environmental-friendly practices in the projects. Few mention any effort in increasing sustainability awareness and reducing their environmental impact and those who do, mention using digital tools of advertising or collaborating (social media, Trello, Slack) and reduction of paper use. Only one project promoted plant-based diets and sustainable methods of travel and provided education on climate change.

⁶ Final reports from completed volunteering and solidarity projects that received funding from the Icelandic NA from 2021 were provided by the National Agency on 15 February 2024

5 International Coordination

5.1 ESC Characteristics and added value

As mentioned earlier, ESC is quite unique in Iceland where volunteering is not rooted in the youth sector to the same extent as in many other European countries. More experience in Iceland is gained from receiving volunteers than sending. The reason for this is outside the scope of the evaluation questions, however, an important flag to raise.

“We have found difficult to find time to do the project and get volunteers from our NGO to show as much interest in it as we think it deserves. Makes it hard to see the results.”

Survey respondent

Comments were made on the difficulties in finding participants; many participants “come and go” and a continuous challenge is in getting participants to engage in the programme for longer periods than the mobility itself e.g., in promoting the programme and to get other to participate.

Many interviewees pointed out that there is a great demand from abroad to visit Iceland, as the country is a quite popular destination. More volunteers come to Iceland than leave from here.

Participants in focus groups and interviews highlighted that individuals in ESC programme can succeed without being evaluated by high grades like in the educational sector. Different qualities can be embraced, and the framework can more easily be adjusted to the needs of individuals during the project.

5.2 International partnership and networking

All interviewees emphasized that participation in European projects is one of the most important opportunities for Icelanders to promote awareness of the common European background. Today, younger generations of participants feel that it is normal to be able to move between countries within Europe to travel, to obtain education and later to work. This is mainly due to the success of the Erasmus+ and ESC programme, stated

by interviewees. It would seem a natural part of personal development to live and work abroad for some part your life.

As mentioned earlier, volunteering is not very common in Iceland and unemployment is rare among young people. Therefore, the need for being able to participate in voluntary work is not considered essential to gain experience or build a career in the eyes of young Icelanders.

However, participation in various European projects is said to be essential to promote Icelanders' awareness of globalization and the development of debate about Europe and international affairs, according to participants in the evaluation process.

In this way, the projects of the Erasmus+ and ESC programme are likely to increase openness, work against ignorance and reduce prejudice. The consensus of the interviewees was that everyone should have the opportunity, at some point during their studies or career, to participate in European cooperation.

6 Programme implementation and results

6.1 Planning and communication

Overall, interviewees and participants in focus groups had more knowledge and experience of Erasmus+ programme and participation than the ESC programme. According to comments from them, there is less awareness regarding ESC programme. Only few had direct experience of ESC programme and the majority of participants in the evaluation process hadn't considered applying for projects in the programme.

According to representatives from NA and those who have participated in ESC programme, understanding of the nature of the projects and their qualities is not common. Sharing of success stories could influence participation and increase awareness of the opportunities within the programme.

Some also mentioned, that enabling more organisations to gain accreditation could multiply the number of participating organisations as well as participants. From the NA point of view, there is room for improvement in quality of applications. Today, high ratio of applications is accepted for grant.

6.2 Monitoring and evaluation

According to those who have participated in ESC programme and took active part in the evaluation process there is a lack of information flow e.g., regarding meetings, availability, and vacancies. General sharing of information on social media and internet isn't reaching the target group sufficiently. Most of them had had "one-on-one" discussions with participating youth to increase engagement and awareness of the ESC programme.

Finally, interviewees expressed a strong wish of having forum for consultation and peer learning for project managers and applicants. In Iceland, the group of people who manage Erasmus+ and ESC projects is growing, and it would be a great benefit for this

group to share experience with each other, exchange useful advice and solutions. Such a forum could be across project categories because, according to interviewees, if a positive experience is obtained from the first project, it turns out to be easier to apply for more grants for different projects within the Erasmus+ programme.

6.3 External factors and their effects

6.3.1 Covid-19

In 2022, Europe was still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a series of extreme weather events and natural disasters in 2021 (e.g., floods, large-scale forest fires in a number of countries), with many supported projects addressing their consequences.

Current programme was launched in different environment due to Covid-19. This had a significant effect on many European projects in Iceland. Almost half of the funding was designated to mobility, which was set on hold due to the pandemic. Flexibility on behalf of the NA was much appreciated; extension of projects, postponed starts etc. This affected both Erasmus+ and ESC programme in Iceland.

According to both interviewees and respondents in survey this was essential for many projects, making it possible for them to succeed despite the challenges of the pandemic, on a different timeline than applications stated. Nevertheless, few projects were halted or cancelled due to the pandemic.

6.3.2 Other major external factors and events

The importance of solidarity among individuals and communities, within or across borders, became even more apparent on mainland Europe in 2022 following the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the resulting big inflow of refugees into the EU. This has been of less concern on the Icelandic beneficiaries, both in Erasmus+ and ESC programme according to participants in focus groups and interviewees. General conclusions should not be taken from these comments.

7 Results

Participants in focus groups and interviews both stated that despite the feasibility of grants and the valuable support of the NA the general complexity of application and management IT systems provided plays a major role in the risk of not taking part. This applies to both ESC and Erasmus+ programme.

Similarly, as for the Erasmus+ programme, participants in the evaluation process state that a common forum, where experience and best practices could be shared, would be highly appreciated by beneficiaries. This is considered to increase qualities of applications, ease the application process for applicants, support the network of expertise within NGO's and other applicant bodies and strengthen the likelihood of positive experience of all participants.

Throughout discussions with interviewees and participants in focus groups, it was mentioned that one programme and the policy networks supported by the programme should be integrated in one Contribution Agreement between the European Commission and the NA. This means that the ESC should be merged with the Erasmus+ programme.

Both ESC and Erasmus+ are considered to have great impact on increased awareness of globalization and by doing so contributing to shifting attitudes of local communities.

8 Appendix I: Report Questions

Questions being addressed in the report, as recommended by guidelines.

8.1 Programme in the national Context

8.1.1 Local communities

- Based on your observations, to what extent has the programme addressed local issues or developed local opportunities since its inception? In what ways (if any) it has been beneficial for individuals, organisations, and public policy development?
- In your view, does ESC overall contribute to improving the local communities' capacities to address societal challenges? What changes have you observed over time?
- To what extent would you say that the programme has shifted the attitudes of your local communities towards more solidarity? What changes have you observed over time?
- How would you evaluate the extent to which the ESC has been effective in adjusting to the differing needs of local authorities, organisations and communities? Could you provide some examples?

8.1.2 Policy and institutional novelties

- Has there been any development in national youth and volunteering policy approaches since the inception of the ESC programme, such as an update to the national youth policy or the introduction of a national volunteering scheme? Please, refer to any documents, strategic plans, official mandates, laws, reform plans, etc. and provide relevant links/documents.
- To what extent are the objectives and horizontal priorities of the ESC programme relevant to the national context, current challenges, and needs? Please explain and provide examples.

8.1.3 Innovations introduced

- Has there been any innovative approaches (such as guidelines and tools) adopted/being institutionalised on national level since the start of the ESC? If yes, please provide examples.
- To what extent would you say the activities of the ESC have built the capacity of national institutions and staff in terms of strengthening skills, knowledge, and resources?

8.2 International Coordination

8.2.1 ESC Characteristics and added value

- Could you outline areas where the ESC Programme has added value to youth and volunteering actions implemented on the national, European, or international level?
- What in your view is unique to ESC and what is similar in comparison with your national programmes?
- In the absence of the ESC scheme, approximately what share of the funded international cooperation projects would not have happened?
- Are there national schemes that could effectively replace the European Solidarity Corps if no funding were allocated in the future?
- How do you ensure compliance of the operations of the National Agency with both EU and national requirements? Has there been any challenges in this matter since the inception of the programme? If yes, please provide examples.
- Have you observed any differences in programme management and implementation requirements between the different ESC programming periods: 2016-2020 and 2021-2027?
- Based on your assessment, on the national level, is the ESC perceived as a programme about the learning dimension of individual young people or a programme for addressing wider societal goals (such as increasing social solidarity)? Which perception is more pronounced and why?

8.2.2 International partnerships and networking

- Has the participation in the programme influenced your network in terms of increased cooperation and mutual learning between different EU Member States and third countries associated to the programme?
- Are there any challenges that you have observed to a more intense or smooth international cooperation and coordination (e.g. with other National Authorities or Agencies) in the context of the ESC?
- Do you have any best practices in mind that you have established in implementing the ESC, which could be streamlined or upscaled throughout the programme, in other national programmes, and in other countries?

8.3 Programme implementation and results

8.3.1 Planning and communication

- What steps have you taken to inform the potential participants of the ESC programme? How did you ensure accessibility of the programme to people with fewer opportunities?
- Do you think that the programme and opportunities it provides are sufficiently known by both individuals and organisations in your country?
- What could be done to further improve the awareness about the programme on the national level?

8.3.2 Monitoring and evaluation

- How has the organisation of the project follow-up evolved? What are the key lessons learnt? How could project monitoring system be further improved?
- Have you used this information to raise awareness about the programme and its results on the national level? What ways of raising awareness have proved to be most and least effective?
- Do you think there are adequate connections within the programme to ensure that it can be adjusted or transformed based on the results obtained from national reporting and monitoring activities? How could these links be further improved to ensure that the programme is flexible and meets the needs of citizens and organisations at the national level?

8.3.3 External factors and their effects

1) Covid-19

- Has the Covid-19 pandemic affected participation in the programme and the management of projects? If yes, in what ways?
- How would you evaluate the support provided by the European Commission/EACEA in response to the Covid-19 pandemic? E.g., financial support, informational support, provision of other tools, resources and advice.

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- What support did you provide to organisations/individuals in response to the Covid-19 pandemic? Where you sufficiently equipped (in terms of capacities, tools, knowledge, and finances) to provide such support?

2) Other major external factors and events

- Has there been any other international or national-level challenges that have significantly affected the management of the programme on the national level? If yes, please elaborate what challenges and how have they been addressed.
- How would you evaluate the flexibility and adaptability of the programme in reacting to unforeseen events and crises such as described above? What could be some areas for improvement if any?

8.3.4 Results

- Regarding the inclusion priority, how successful do you think the participating organisations are in involving people with fewer opportunities? Provide the estimated percentage of people with fewer opportunities involved.
- What could be done to make this programme more accessible to people with fewer opportunities?
- To what extent would you say the activities of the programme have built the capacity of the national organisations in terms of strengthening their skills, knowledge, and resources over time? Please provide examples.
- To what extent would you say participation in the programme impacted individuals' personal and/or professional development? E.g., would you say that their skills and competences for personal, educational, and professional development have improved as a result of participation in ESC?
- Have there been any unintended effects that the programme inflicted on the national level since its inception? Please provide examples.



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