



European Solidarity Corps Quality Label
GUIDELINES FOR BUDGET ALLOCATION - ESC51
Call 2026 - 1 October Deadline

This document outlines guidelines based on the rules for budget allocation to Quality Label lead organisations, in line with the frameworks established in the European Solidarity Corps¹ (ESC) Programme Guide. The process presented here supplements and elaborates on the rules laid down in the programme, with due consideration to key differences relating to the nature of actions, duration of projects and number of rounds.

The National Agency may translate the information provided in this document, as appropriate.

As specified in the Programme Guide, the budget is allocated to projects after their quality has been assessed through Quality Label and therefore no qualitative assessment takes place at the budget allocation stage. All positively evaluated grant requests should receive funding, provided the applicants remain eligible under the call conditions and are not in an exclusion situation. The awarded grant amount per applicant shall depend on a number of elements, as defined for budget allocation rules in the Programme Guides:

- the total budget available for allocation
- the estimated budget required to implement the requested activities
- the minimum and maximum grant amounts established for all applicants
- the score of the Quality Label for lead organisation
- applicant's performance (progress report score, budget absorption and final report score of the last completed ESC51 project, if available)
- the quality performance, policy priorities and thematic areas addressed by the activities applied for

Linked to the above elements, the NAs should respect the principles of fairness, transparency and ensure equal treatment when defining the budget allocation rules.

¹ European Solidarity Corps Guide 2026: [Reference documents and resources](#) | [European Youth Portal](#)

The National Agency is required to publish the rules of allocation on their websites well in advance and at the latest 10 days before the relevant deadline for applications.

1. TOTAL BUDGET AVAILABLE FOR ALLOCATION

The NAs will publish the total budget available for allocation², as approved by EAC in the NA Work Programme.

Total budget available for allocation for ESC	101,905.00
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In the event when additional funds become available, a second deadline for ESC51 may be opened by the NA. In this instance, applicants who were awarded funding in the first deadline of 18 February 2026 will not be allowed to apply for additional funding in the second deadline.

Specific amounts per programme will be reserved for budget categories based on reimbursement of real costs (e.g. exceptional costs of Erasmus+ inclusion support for participants that would be calculated in addition to the unit cost for inclusion support for organisations). Beneficiaries can make requests for this type of costs during the implementation of the grant agreement, by submitting a written request to the National Agency. In case of need, the National Agency may further increase these specific reserved amounts. For ESC, if part of these reserved funds is left unused, the National Agency may distribute it in an (optional) second round.

The rest of the available budget will be apportioned between the following applicable allocation components as follows³:

Minimum grants amount	At least 51,143.00 EUR
Qualitative performance, policy priorities and thematic areas	At least 40,762.00 EUR
Exceptional costs and Inclusion support for participants	At least 10,000 EUR

At least 5% of the total budget should be allocated for the minimum grant amounts, at least 40% to qualitative performance, policy priorities and thematic areas.

² If additional funding becomes available, the National Agency may increase the available budget. The indicated amounts may be lowered if all applicants have already been allocated the maximum amounts according to the rules set out in this document.

³ Exceptionally, the specified amounts may be lowered if the budget required for exceptional costs is higher than originally foreseen; if all applicants have already been allocated the requested amounts according to the rules set out in this document; or if a minor correction is required due to rounding rules.

2. ESTIMATING THE BUDGET REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT THE REQUESTED ACTIVITIES

The National Agency will calculate the budget required to implement activities requested by each applicant, on the basis of unit costs defined in the Programme Guide and historical data on grant amounts for similar activities.

An estimation cannot be performed for all actual costs that are highly dependent on each specific case, namely exceptional costs. Requests for this type of costs will be assessed based on the description, justification and estimated amount provided by the applicant as part of the application.

In all cases, the awarded grant shall not be higher than the estimated budget required to implement all activities requested by the applicant. As an exception, real costs (exceptional costs and for Erasmus+ inclusion support for participants) will not count towards the maximum awarded grant amount.

3. BUDGET ALLOCATION RULES

3.1 GENERAL PROVISIONS

If the total budget available for allocation is not sufficient to provide each applicant with the budget required to implement their requested activities, then a competitive allocation will take place as described below. However, if the total available budget is sufficient to fully address requests of all applicants, then the budget allocation rules described in the paragraph below will not apply.

The competitive budget allocation will take place in multiple phases. In each phase, the available budget will be divided between eligible applicants based on their score on the relevant criterion (see section 3.4). Applicants that receive the full budget required to implement their requested activities (or that reach their maximum grant amount) will not participate in further allocations. Available funds will be allocated to applicants based on the corresponding allocation rules. All allocated amounts will be rounded to the nearest whole Euro.

3.2 SETTING THE MINIMUM GRANT AMOUNT

A minimum grant amount will be provided to each applicant. The National Agency established the minimum grant at 24,000.00 EUR taking into account funds required for an average volunteering project with one volunteer for 12 months based on unit costs established in the 2026 ESC Programme Guide.

Grant requests which are estimated to be lower than minimum grant amount will be fully awarded.

If sufficient funds are available, the National Agency may increase the minimum grant amount after the submission deadline. This information will be published on the National Agency's website.

The NA advises the applicants to ensure to request an appropriate number of activities according to what they are able to implement. Failing to use the awarded funds during the implementation of the grant agreement can lead to low past performance and therefore a lower grant amount in future calls.

3.3 SETTING THE MAXIMUM GRANT AMOUNT

The maximum grant is established at 60,000.00 EUR based on the review of grant requests by ESC51 projects between 2021 and 2025.

The National Agency may also further limit the awarded grant amount for applicants under observation in accordance with the specific decision on establishment of observation measures.

The National Agency may also limit the grant amount awarded to applicants who deviate considerably from the annual targets set in their Activity Plans.

In all cases, the awarded grant amount shall not be higher than the estimated budget required to implement all activities requested by the applicant. As an exception, cost categories 'inclusion support for participants' and 'exceptional costs' will not count towards the limits set by the rules on maximum grant amount.

The maximum grant rules may not apply only if the total demand for budget does not surpass the total available funds as outlined in section 1 of this template.

3.4 QUALITATIVE PERFORMANCE, POLICY PRIORITIES AND THEMATIC AREAS

The National Agency will allocate the budget according to the assessment of the qualitative performance, the policy priorities and thematic areas addressed by the activities applied for. The purpose of this assessment is to ensure that the budget is allocated to applicants that deliver good quality activities, while also enhancing them to gradually progress towards the objectives of their Activity Plan.

The National Agency will calculate per applicant a **total score** by taking into account the criteria below.

- the evaluation score of the applicant's **accreditation/Quality Label application** (30% of the score).
- the **policy priorities** score, calculated based on the number of policy priorities that the applicant will tackle through each activity (at least 10% of the score). The proportion of young people with fewer opportunities taking part in activities has to be factored in for this calculation. This ensures that the inclusive dimension of the programme is reflected in the budget allocation criteria.
- average or the arithmetic mean of the **progress report** score (ESC50) and the beneficiary **final report** evaluation score of the last completed project (ESC51), if available (at least 60% of the score). If neither progress report nor final report are available, the National Agency may give more weight to the evaluation score of the applicant's Quality Label application.

The **total score** for qualitative performance, policy priorities and thematic areas will be calculated per activity and averaged per project.

After this assessment, the budget will be divided among the applicants in proportion to their total score. The calculation will take into account the total estimated budget required to implement the requested activities⁴, the minimum and the maximum grant amounts available. This ensures that the calculated grant amount is proportional to the size of the budget requested by each applicant.

4. TOTAL AWARDED GRANT AND TARGETS FOR DELIVERY

For each applicant, the total awarded grant will be the sum of amounts they have received in each allocation phase. If any requests for real costs (exceptional costs) have been approved by the National Agency, these amounts will be added to the total awarded grant.

Before issuing a grant agreement, the National Agency will calculate appropriate targets for delivery. If the applicant has been awarded the full budget required to implement their requested activities, then the activities requested in the application will become the targets for delivery. If the awarded grant is lower than the full budget required to implement the requested activities, then the targets will also be lowered proportionally to ensure that the applicant is able to deliver them.

The National Agency has to ensure that the awarded grant corresponds to the number of units. In any case, at least one participant in each activity type requested by the applicant shall be maintained.

Beneficiaries are able to implement the target activities with a wide flexibility, while remaining within the scope of their approved Activity Plan and Programme Guide rules. Delivery of agreed activities and targets will be evaluated at the final report stage.

⁴ Excluding the scores that would equal zero for a specific applicant.