



Questions and Answers on the European Solidarity Corps

Brussels, 15 September 2016

The Commission is proposing today to set up a European Solidarity Corps. Young people across the EU will be able to volunteer their help where it is needed most, to respond to crisis situations. I want this European Solidarity Corps up and running as soon as possible.

What is the European Solidarity Corps about?

It was announced by **President Juncker** during his State of the Union speech on 14 September 2016: *"The European Union can also contribute to helping create opportunities for young people. There are many young, socially-minded people in Europe willing to make a meaningful contribution to society and help show solidarity. [...] I am convinced much more solidarity is needed. But I also know that solidarity must be given voluntarily. It must come from the heart. It cannot be forced. [...] In the same spirit, the Commission is proposing today to set up a European Solidarity Corps. Young people across the EU will be able to volunteer their help where it is needed most, to respond to crisis situations, like the refugee crisis or the recent earthquakes in Italy. I want this European Solidarity Corps up and running as soon as possible. And by 2020, to see the first 100,000 young Europeans taking part. By voluntarily joining the European Solidarity Corps, these young people will be able to develop their skills and get not only work but also invaluable human experience."*

The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) is conceived to offer people under 30 in Europe the chance to support a non-governmental organisation (NGO), local authority or private company active in addressing challenging situations across the European Union – for instance: rebuilding communities following natural disasters; addressing social challenges such as social exclusion, poverty, health and demographic challenges; or working on the reception and integration of refugees.

The Corps will develop its own distinct identity, rooted in the core EU values of engagement and solidarity. By joining the Corps, participants will express their commitment and willingness to devote a period of their lives to helping others. By supporting others, including the most vulnerable in our societies and communities, young people will not only put the core EU value of solidarity into practice, but also acquire skills and experience, including language skills, that can be valuable when looking for a job or considering further education and training.

How will this work and when will it be set up?

The Corps will build on existing EU professional and volunteering programmes for youth, as well as the mobilisation of established networks of employment, education and civil society actors across Europe. We will develop the scheme in close partnership with Member States, local authorities and NGO's.

Candidates wanting to join the Corps, and entities willing to call on members, will be able to do so via one single entry point: a dedicated European Solidarity Corps web-portal.

Placements will last between two months and a year. For a job placement, the minimum period will be four months.

The European Solidarity Corps will be set up as soon as possible, and will start with making the web-portal operational. The objective is to get 100,000 young people signed up to the Corps by 2020.

Who can join and what are the criteria?

Any person in Europe under 30, regardless of their backgrounds and whether currently in education, training, employed or unemployed, is welcome to join the Corps. Placements should be available for a large variety of profiles, from school leavers to higher education graduates who may already have experience in the workplace.

As suggested by its name, the European Solidarity Corps will in the first place be based on the value of solidarity. Young people who wish to be a member of the Corps will need to subscribe to its mission as part of their registration, declaring their engagement and willingness to undertake solidarity-minded activities once they are matched with an organisation or have been accepted as a volunteer.

While a place cannot be guaranteed once registration is undertaken, the multifaceted challenges – and subsequent wide range of skills needed to address them – indicate

that a wide spectrum of professional profiles will be needed.

What kind of activities will European Solidarity Corps members be involved in?

Members of the European Solidarity Corps can take part in any kind of activity related to disaster preparedness and long-term response, as well as activities addressing social challenges, such as social exclusion, poverty, health and demographic challenges, or activities aiming at tackling the refugee crisis.

The scheme could for instance support the development of social, health care and rehabilitation services, for people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, such as the Roma, people with disabilities, certain immigrant groups and other people facing discrimination and prejudice.

Immediate disaster response is excluded – for instance fighting forest fires or urban search and rescue – because these activities require highly trained specialists. However, if a rural community wants to minimise the risk of forest fires by weeding out the underbrush for example, ESC members could make a valuable contribution.

Where will European Solidarity Corps members be deployed and for how long?

Members of the Corps could be deployed in their home country or in another EU Member State, depending on the needs of the participating organisations and the profile and preferences of the applicant.

Which organisations can participate?

NGOs, local authorities or private companies active in addressing challenging situations can use the portal to contact and recruit members of the Corps.

All organisations involved in volunteering activities need to hold a valid accreditation which guarantees their compliance with the European Volunteering Scheme (EVS) [Charter](#) to ensure they abide by the necessary quality standards

Will participants be paid?

If the person is recruited as regular employee, a trainee or an apprentice in another Member State, the person will receive a salary (for a job contract) and/or an allowance (for a training or apprenticeship) to cover living and travel costs that can be financially supported, for instance, by the Youth Guarantee scheme.

If the person is going as a volunteer, the essential costs of volunteers' participation (i.e. food, lodging, travel costs) are covered through the grant given to the organisation through the European Voluntary Scheme. He or she will also receive pocket money, the amount of which will be depending on the country of service. Furthermore, all volunteers will be covered by the obligatory EVS group insurance set up by the scheme.

How will this initiative be financed?

Financial costs linked to cross-border mobility and subsistence abroad will be largely covered by EU support, under already existing structures such as the European Voluntary Service and the Youth Guarantee Scheme.

What's in it for participating NGOs, companies or local authorities?

Through the European Solidarity Corps, all companies, NGOs and local authorities looking for employees, trainees or volunteers for solidarity-minded projects can have an easy, single-point access to information, placement and recruitment services. Moreover, the pool of motivated young people will be much broader than the typical local or national radius.

Furthermore, as all young people registered in the ESC will need to declare their commitment to the mission of the Corps and demonstrate their motivation, organisations and companies will be able to more easily and quickly pre-select the ones that best fit the culture of their organisation and their specific needs.

Possible Examples

- A Croatian organisation working in a post-conflict area hosts a number of volunteers from several EU Member States. They organise activities for young people from different communities to help them live together peacefully. The fact that the volunteers do not come from the region will make them more acceptable to both communities and allow achieving a more significant impact.
- Following an oil spill in the North Sea, a young Danish citizen will go to help a local Swedish authority in the area most affected for a period of nine months. She will support the municipality in cleaning up areas and rehabilitate animals. Her accommodation, food and travel expenses, as well as insurance and pocket money will be paid by the European Volunteering Service to the local authority.

- After consulting his career counsellor at his local job centre, a young Greek social worker from Athens has taken up a job offer to work in a refugee reception centre in Thessaloniki. He will join forces for the next eight months with a team of psychologists, social workers and teachers, to help refugee children adjust to their new reality. He will receive a net monthly salary as well as a monthly allowance of EUR 200 to cover living and mobility costs.

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