

# European Solidarity Corps: First call for proposals under the new strengthened structure – Questions and Answers

## **What is the idea behind the European Solidarity Corps?**

Solidarity is a shared value within the European Union – between its citizens, Member States, and in the Union's internal and external action.

As President Juncker said in his [2016 State of the Union address](#) announcing the creation of the European Solidarity Corps: *"We often show solidarity most readily when faced with emergencies. When the Portuguese hills were burning, Italian planes doused the flames. When floods cut off the power in Romania, Swedish generators turned the lights back on. When thousands of refugees arrived on Greek shores, Slovak tents provided shelter. In the same spirit, the Commission is proposing today to set up a European Solidarity Corps."*

The aim of the European Solidarity Corps is to give young people the chance to take part in a range of solidarity activities that address challenging situations across the EU. Taking part in solidarity activities not only benefits young people's personal development, active involvement in society and employability, but also assists non-governmental organisations, public bodies and companies in their efforts to cope with societal and other challenges.

## **Why did the European Solidarity Corps need a legal base?**

Since its launch in December 2016, the European Solidarity Corps has so far been implemented under eight different programmes, each one with its own legal base, objectives and budget ([Erasmus+ programme](#), [EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation \(EaSI\)](#), [LIFE programme](#), [Asylum and Migration Fund](#), [Health programme](#), the [Europe for Citizens programme](#), [European Regional Development Fund](#), [Agricultural Fund for Rural Development](#)).

A self-standing legal base provides one comprehensive funding instrument with a clear set of objectives. This will help consolidate the European Solidarity Corps, by increasing its coherence, impact and cost-effectiveness, and create even more opportunities for young people.

On 30 May 2017, following targeted consultations with stakeholders, the Commission put forward a proposal to equip the European Solidarity Corps with a single legal base, its own financing mechanism and a broader set of solidarity activities.

## **When is the Regulation on the European Solidarity Corps expected to enter into force?**

In June 2018 the European Parliament and the Council reached a political agreement on the Commission's proposal to provide the European Solidarity Corps with its own budget and legal framework until 2020. Subject to a positive vote of the European Parliament during its plenary session in September and the formal adoption in the Council, the draft Regulation can be expected to be published in the Official Journal of the European Union and enter into force in October 2018<sup>[1]</sup>.

### **What is the budget of the European Solidarity Corps until 2020?**

The overall budget available for the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps for the period from the Regulation's entry into force until 31 December 2020 will be €375,600,000 in current prices. Enshrined in the legal base, this will guarantee a stable budget for this initiative for the rest of the current Multiannual Financial Framework.

Costs for individual solidarity activities vary depending on their type, duration and the country where they take place.

### **Will the European Solidarity Corps continue after 2020?**

The European Commission proposed that the European Solidarity Corps continues within the next long-term budget. To this end, on 11 June 2018, the Commission put forward its proposal for the European Solidarity Corps beyond 2020, allocating €1.26 billion to allow an estimated 350,000 young people to go on a solidarity activity.

## **GOVERNANCE**

### **What organisational structure will be in charge of the Corps?**

In the first phase (since 2016), the European Solidarity Corps has been financed and managed by eight different EU programmes. Under its new legal base, the European Solidarity Corps will be implemented by the European Commission, the [Erasmus+ National Agencies](#) in the Member States and the [Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency \(EACEA\)](#).

The Erasmus+ National Agencies, already responsible for managing the youth strand of the Erasmus+ programme, will be in charge of implementing most of the actions of the European Solidarity Corps: assessing requests from most types of organisations applying for a European Solidarity Corps Quality Label, evaluating requests for funding from participating organisations, providing training and support, organising networking activities, or promoting the European Solidarity Corps at national level.

The European Commission, supported by the EACEA, will manage horizontal services to European Solidarity Corps participants, e.g. online training, online linguistic support and insurance. The Agency will also attribute the Quality Label to certain types of stakeholders (e.g. Europe-wide networks or platforms, national public authorities and services, organisations offering activities run with the support of EU programmes other than the European Solidarity Corps, providing volunteering, traineeship or job opportunities).

In addition, a newly created European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre will support the implementing bodies and the participating organisations, in particular as regards the certification and documentation of skills acquired by young people during their activities.

### **What will be the role of employment services?**

Labour market actors, such as public and private employment services, but also Chambers of Commerce, will be able to contribute to the European Solidarity Corps by assisting the participants in obtaining a solidarity job or a traineeship. Their support will be built upon existing structures.

Public Employment Services in particular have ample labour market intelligence, i.e. access to job vacancies, both in-country (via their own database) and cross-border (via EURES). They could, in addition, help reach out to employers to promote the European Solidarity Corps as well as to young people to encourage them to register. They can also provide support to European Solidarity Corps participants after their activity, to ensure that their participation in a solidarity activity acts as a stepping stone into the labour market.

Labour market actors, including public and private employment services, will be able to apply individually or jointly for grants via the Erasmus+ National Agencies.

## **ACTIVITIES**

### **Will the supported activities remain the same?**

In the first phase of its implementation (2016-2018), the European Solidarity Corps offered young people opportunities for individual volunteering, traineeships or jobs.

With the new legal base, in addition to supporting young people in carrying out volunteering activities for up to 12 months, traineeships for 2–6 months, and jobs in compliance with relevant national legislation for 3–12 months, the European Solidarity Corps will also provide participants with the opportunity to set up their own solidarity projects or to volunteer as a group on a short-term basis.

Special attention is given to young people with fewer opportunities. Specific financial support and adapted formats of activities are proposed to facilitate their participation. A range of support measures (e.g. general and language training, insurance, support before and after solidarity activities, administrative assistance) will be available for all participants and participating organisations.

### **What are volunteering teams?**

Activities by volunteering teams are a new feature of the European Solidarity Corps. These are solidarity activities allowing teams of European Solidarity

Corps participants from different participating countries to volunteer together for a period between two weeks and two months. Due to its shorter duration and collective character, this format is expected to facilitate the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in the European Solidarity Corps.

Furthermore, the format of volunteering teams will also be used for pursuing specific policy priorities, e.g. protection of European cultural heritage; integration of third-country nationals (including asylum seekers and refugees); response to environmental and climate challenges, including disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery (excluding immediate disaster response), through a centralised action “volunteering teams in high priority areas”.

### **What is a solidarity project?**

Solidarity projects are youth-led initiatives, set up and carried out by groups of at least five European Solidarity Corps participants, lasting between two and twelve months. The young participants will play an active role in designing and implementing their own ideas for the benefit of their local communities, in any solidarity-related areas. A solidarity project should address a specific challenge within the participants’ community and show a clear European added value.

As solidarity projects typically happen in the country of residence of the European Solidarity Corps participants, this format is also adapted for the participation of young people with fewer opportunities, who may encounter difficulties engaging in activities abroad, but still want to contribute to society.

### **What are networking activities?**

Networking activities aim at increasing the quality of overall implementation of the European Solidarity Corps, accompanying its implementation and enhancing its effectiveness, impact and visibility. They also aim at creating a sense of belonging to the Corps. These activities could be related e.g. to informing newcomers (both young persons and potential participating organisations) about the European Solidarity Corps, to consultation fora, the exchange of good practice or the establishment of alumni networks.

### **Who can apply?**

Public and private bodies established in EU Member States may apply for the Quality Label and funding. Moreover, groups of young people registered in the European Solidarity Corps Portal may apply for solidarity project funding. Organisations from Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and other partner countries may participate as partners in volunteering projects. More information is available in the European Solidarity Corps Guide.

### **Where and when can one apply to this call?**

Applications for funding for volunteering teams in high priority areas should

be addressed to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. Applications regarding other actions should be submitted to the National Agency of the country in which the applicant organisation is established.

Eligible organisations and groups of young people should submit their applications by the following deadlines [before 12.00 (noon), Brussels time]:

Volunteering Partnerships	16 October 2018
Volunteering Projects	16 October 2018
Traineeships and Jobs	16 October 2018
Solidarity Projects	16 October 2018
Volunteering Teams in high priority areas	18 February 2019

Applications for the Quality Label can be submitted on a continuous basis.

### **Who can register for the European Solidarity Corps?**

Anyone who is between 17 and 30 years old, and who is a national of, or legally residing in, a participating or partner country can register for the European Solidarity Corps. The minimum age to participate in a solidarity project is 18. All activities of the European Solidarity Corps are open to young persons and organisations from the participating countries (Member States of the EU), while some of the activities are also open to Partner Countries (European Free Trade Association, EU candidate countries, Western Balkans countries, Eastern Partnership countries, South-Mediterranean countries, Russian Federation).

Young people who register for the European Solidarity Corps will need to subscribe to the European Solidarity Corps [Mission Statement and its Principles](#). Registration is easy and can be done on a dedicated webpage via the [European Youth Portal](#).

### **Will the registration on the European Solidarity Corps Portal guarantee that the young person will be offered a solidarity activity?**

All registered young persons can take part in a general online training and in the community-building activities that may be taking place in their local communities. Registering does not guarantee that the young person will be offered a volunteering, traineeship or job opportunity. This depends on the budget, the availability of projects and the specific interest of each candidate.

The draft Regulation also foresees solidarity projects, allowing young people who have registered to take action themselves and implement their ideas for solidarity at local level, instead of waiting for a volunteering, traineeship or job opportunity to be offered to them by a participating organisation.

### **What are the requirements for organisations?**

A Quality Label will be put in place to ensure compliance of the

participating organisations with the principles and requirements of the European Solidarity Corps. In general, obtaining a Quality Label will be a prerequisite for an organisation's participation in any activities supported by the European Solidarity Corps (except solidarity projects) but shall not automatically lead to funding.

The scope of the Quality Label awarded will depend on the type of activities the applicant organisation wishes to be involved in. Specific mechanisms for the application for the Quality Label, evaluation of applications and award (or refusal) of the Quality Label are put in place. Simplified procedures will be provided for organisations already participating in other EU programmes and for public authorities. Transition measures will be applied to organisations accredited under the European Volunteering Service. The application process, depending on the type of organisation, will be evaluated by the National Agencies or the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

### **How does the matching process work?**

When young people register for the European Solidarity Corps via the European Solidarity Corps Portal, beyond providing information about their education and employment experience and personal interests, they can also indicate which type of projects they would like to be involved in, in which countries they would like to carry out a solidarity activity, and when they are available to participate. They can choose between the types of activities (volunteering, jobs, traineeships) and can express their interest to be involved in specific solidarity areas.

When registering, young people can also highlight the specific experience and knowledge they would bring to the European Solidarity Corps, e.g. in working with refugees, children, elderly or disabled people, teaching, first aid, media, music, arts, building/construction, engineering, project management or other fields. Alternatively, young people can apply directly for one of the vacancies published on the European Solidarity Corps Portal by the participating organisations.

Participating organisations will have the possibility to choose from candidates whose motivation, interests and skills correspond most closely to their needs. Young people are free to accept or decline any offer made by an organisation.

### **What are the financial conditions of participating in a Solidarity Corps activity?**

Each young person participating in a solidarity activity shall receive a contribution to his/her travel costs and insurance.

Volunteers also receive free food and accommodation, as well as pocket money throughout the duration of their activity.

Jobs will be based on an employment contract and remuneration will be set in accordance with national laws, regulations and collective agreements in force

in the country where the job is carried out. This remuneration will be paid by the organisation employing the young person. Furthermore, jobholders will receive a relocation allowance to help them with the cost of their installation in the host country.

Traineeships will be based on a written agreement and remunerated by the host organisation. Traineeships offered under the Corps must take into account the principles outlined in the [Quality Framework for Traineeships](#). Trainees will also receive a relocation allowance.

### **Can organisations charge participants money for taking them on?**

No. No individual or entity may request any financial contribution or fee from a participant, related to being selected for participation in a European Solidarity Corps project.

### **What about insurance and social security coverage?**

Participants in cross-border activities will be enrolled in the insurance scheme of the European Solidarity Corps. This will provide complementary coverage for the holders of a European Health Insurance Card and full insurance coverage to those participants who are not eligible for the European Health Insurance Card free of charge.

With regard to jobs and traineeships and the related social security, certain specificities apply in accordance with the national laws, regulations and collective agreements of the country where the solidarity activities will be carried out.

### **Will there be language support?**

Yes. European Solidarity Corps participants who accept an offer for a cross-border solidarity activity will be given access to an online language course allowing them to assess and improve their competences in the foreign language they will use to carry out their activity abroad.

### **What kind of certificate will participants receive?**

Every young person taking part in a European Solidarity Corps activity will receive a certificate of participation once they have completed their solidarity activity. At the end of their volunteering, traineeship or job, the young persons are also entitled to receive a Youthpass certificate documenting the knowledge, skills and competences acquired during the solidarity activities.

[\[1\]](#) The call is published subject to the final adoption of the European Solidarity Corps Regulation by the legislative authority without significant modifications, and to adoption of the relevant financing decisions.