

European Solidarity Corps: from pilot project to reality

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On 27 June **EU ambassadors confirmed an agreement** between the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council and European Parliament representatives on a legal framework for the **European Solidarity Corps (ESC)** and a related **budget for the period 2018-2020**.

The ESC was created to help **young people between 18 and 30** to participate in a range of **solidarity activities** in different fields (environment, culture, social services, helping refugees, migrants, children or the elderly) as a tangible expression of European values. The aim of the ESC is to contribute to addressing unmet societal needs, while enhancing young people's personal, educational, social, civic and **professional development**.

Today's agreement makes it possible to **switch to phase two of the ESC implementation** and to reach the objective of seeing the first 100.000 Europeans participate in ESC activities by 2020.

In just a few months the ESC has already proven its value: young people have decided to use their time to help the others, knowing that this enriching experience will help them in the future both as individuals and professionals. This is a clear message: European solidarity is not just a motto but a reality. And this reality can now thrive thanks to an agreement that gives the scheme clear rules and adequate funding.

Krasen Kralev, Minister for youth and sports of the Republic of Bulgaria and President of the Council

The proposal for a European Solidarity Corps was presented by the Commission as a part of the broader set of initiatives called "Investing in Europe's Youth" launched on 7 December 2016. The ESC builds on the experience of the European Voluntary Service (EVS), which has provided volunteering opportunities for young people for 20 years, as well as policies and programmes such as the Youth Guarantee and the "Your First Eures Job". Since its **launch in December 2016** eight different EU-wide ESC programmes have been mobilised to offer volunteering, traineeship or job opportunities in solidarity-related sectors to young people across the EU. So far **almost 60.000 young people have registered** and almost 5.000 of them started a

placement.

After a successful phasing in of the project, clear rules and an appropriate budget were needed.

Details of the agreement:

- the ESC will devote **90%** of its resources to **volunteering and solidarity projects** and **10%** for either **traineeships and/or jobs**, with a maximum of **20%** set aside for **in-country activities**
- concerning the budget (**€376.5 million**) the ESC will be funded by **80%** through **redeployments** principally under **heading 1a** of the budget and **20%** through **unallocated margins**, i.e. fresh money. No additional funds will be deployed from the Erasmus+ programme
- the **ESC portal** – a single, easily accessible entry point to high quality volunteering and occupational solidarity placements for young people across the EU – will continue to play a central role
- **solidarity activities** will be able to be undertaken both outside the country of residence of the participants (**cross-border**) and in the country of residence of the participants (**in-country**) and will be for a period of **three to twelve months**
- particular emphasis will be put on **inclusiveness** and **young people with fewer opportunities** and their participation in the programme. In order to help them, even shorter placements will be foreseen
- the programme will be run together with a **variety of participating organisations** so as to increase the choice for young volunteers

Now that the agreement has been confirmed by EU ambassadors on behalf of the Council, the regulation will be submitted to the European Parliament for a vote at first reading, and will subsequently go back to the Council for adoption.

The new rules will enter into force on the day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union and will apply from **1 October 2018**.

On 11 June 2018 the Commission tabled a further proposal for the **ESC beyond 2020** with an increased budget of **€1.26 billion** and a target of at least **350.000 participants**.

The proposal will now have to be agreed on by the European Parliament and the Council.

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