

Daily News 11 / 06 / 2018

EU budget: Commission proposes €1.26 billion to reinforce the European Solidarity Corps

For the next long-term EU budget 2021-2027, the Commission is proposing a new programme for the European Solidarity Corps beyond 2020, with €1.26 billion to broaden the opportunities it offers. The new programme will allow at least 350,000 young Europeans to support communities in need between 2021 and 2027 through volunteering, traineeships and job placements. Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources, Günther H. **Oettinger**, said: *“Solidarity is one of the key values in the European Union, and the success of the European Solidarity Corps shows that there’s a high demand of young people to participate in solidarity activities. That’s why we have significantly increased the financial means for the European Solidarity Corps in the next EU budget.”* Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, said: *“With this proposal, the European Commission has confirmed its commitment to strengthening solidarity and empowering young people. We are putting everything in place to enable the European Solidarity Corps to grow into a broad community of people and organisations ready to support those in need across our continent and beyond, helping to build resilient, cohesive societies. Young people, in turn, will gain skills, new friendships, and a strong sense of what it feels like to be European.”* Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, commented: *“Building on the experience gained so far, this proposal provides for a more inclusive and flexible approach and ultimately a greater freedom of choice for participants, whether they’d like to go on a voluntary or professional placement.”* The new programme will build on the achievements of the Corps in its first years of existence and creates one single entry point for young people ready to engage in solidarity, for instance by including volunteering activities in support of humanitarian aid operations in non-EU countries, previously operating under the [EU Aid Volunteers](#). Additional funding or dedicated activities of shorter duration or within one’s own country, for example, to make it easier for disadvantaged young people to take part in the European Solidarity Corps. More information is available in a [press release](#), [memo](#) and [infographics](#) online. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

Commission adopts proposals amending the association agreement with the Kingdom of Morocco to grant preferences to products from Western Sahara, in line with ECJ ruling

The Commission has today adopted two proposals for Council Decisions in relation to the signature and the conclusion of an agreement between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco on the amendment of the EU-Morocco Association Agreement (Protocols No 1 and No 4). The adoption of these proposals follows the December 2016 ruling of the Court of Justice of the

European Union, and aims to respect the Court's ruling and clarify the status of products from Western Sahara for preferential tariff treatment when imported into the EU. The draft Agreement proposes that "products originating from Western Sahara which are subject to the control of the Moroccan custom authorities benefit from the same commercial preferences granted by the EU to products covered by the association agreement". It also aims to contribute to the economic development of Western Sahara by ensuring that exports to the EU originating there will benefit from wide-ranging trade preferences. The proposals are available [here](#) and [here](#) and will now be sent to the Member States in the Council and to the European Parliament for the next steps in the legislative process. Inclusive consultations with a wide variety of Western Saharan local representatives, civil society and other organisations and bodies showed broad support for the socio-economic benefits that the proposed tariff preference would bring, and an accompanying [report](#) that highlights the benefits of the agreement for the local population and economy is available online. These proposals are also concluded without prejudice to the EU's position on Western Sahara, where the EU continues to support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution. Morocco is a key partner in our southern neighbourhood with which the EU has developed a lasting and valuable partnership over many years and areas, and the EU remains committed to strengthening this partnership. (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Lauranne Devillé – Tel.: +32 2 29 80833; Patrick McCullough – Tel.: +32 229 87183)

DiscoverEU: 15,000 travel passes up for grabs to explore the EU this summer

As of tomorrow (12:00 CEST) until 26 June, (12:00 CEST) young people can [apply](#) for a ticket giving them the opportunity to discover their continent from July 2018 until the end of October 2018. [DiscoverEU](#) will enable them to better understand Europe's diversity, enjoy its cultural richness, make new friends and get a sense of their European identity. Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: "*DiscoverEU offers an excellent opportunity to young people to explore Europe through a personal journey in a way that no book or documentary can. I am confident that this experience will make a positive change – for the young people participating and for the communities they visit. What we are launching tomorrow is an opportunity for 15,000 unforgettable European stories, to be followed by many more later this year and beyond.*" Applicants must be 18 years old on 1 July 2018, EU citizens and prepared to travel this summer. With a budget of €12 million in 2018, DiscoverEU is expected to give at least 20,000 young people the opportunity to travel around Europe this year. Every EU Member State has been allocated a number of travel passes, based on the share of its country's population compared to the overall population of the European Union. The first application round, launched tomorrow, will allow at least 15,000 recipients to explore their continent. A second application round with at least 5,000 tickets will take place in autumn 2018. More information on the application criteria and process is available in a [press release](#) and [memo](#) online. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

Investment Plan supports renewable energy expansion in Austria

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is lending Energiepark Bruck/Leitha a total of €19.3 million to carry out two new wind farm projects with a joint capacity of 17 MW. Erste Bank is also participating in the €27.3 million financing plan. The EIB financing is guaranteed by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the Investment Plan for Europe. Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"The EU is committed to supporting the clean energy transition in Europe. Financing for wind farms is a long term transaction and high risk by nature, which is where the European Fund for Strategic Investments is essential in providing the EU budget guarantee. It is very positive that the project is cofinanced by the private sector in the form of Erste Bank."* (Full press release is found [here](#). For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)

EU steps up its support to fight Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The European Commission will provide €1.8 million in humanitarian aid to support the ongoing response to the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The funding brings the total EU response to Ebola so far in 2018 to € 3.43 million. *"Since the current Ebola outbreak was declared on 8 May 2018, the EU has immediately supported the efforts of the World Health Organisation and the national authorities to contain the spread of the disease. Previous outbreaks taught us a valuable lesson: we cannot be complacent with Ebola. We cannot let our guard down. This is why today I am strengthening our EU support. This funding will help our humanitarian partners and the authorities to fight and contain the further spread of Ebola,"* said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management and EU Ebola Coordinator Christos **Stylianides**. The EU aid will support the coordination and logistical operations of the ongoing response, control and prevention of infections, surveillance of exit/entry points of Ebola-affected areas and safe burials. It will also provide general support to primary health centres in the affected areas. The funding is part of overall EU support for the outbreak, which includes the activation of [EU's Civil Protection Mechanism](#), whereby an isolation system was deployed from Norway to transport quarantined patients in need of specialised treatment. The European Commission's humanitarian air service [ECHO Flight](#) is also providing a shuttle service from Kinshasa to transport personnel and medical supplies to the affected areas. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Commission consults fishermen, industry and society for fishing opportunities in 2019

The Commission has adopted today a [Communication](#) which takes stock of the implementation of [EU's Common Fisheries Policy](#) and launches the process of consultation on the fishing opportunities for 2019. Via a [public consultation](#), the Commission will consult Member States; Advisory Councils,

which include the fishing industry, non-governmental organisations, and interested citizens. Commissioner Karmenu **Vella**, responsible for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said: *“Restoring the health of our seas and oceans is not a choice, it’s an imperative, and the EU must continue to lead by example. The laudable efforts of our fishermen over the last decade are starting to pay off: Many of our fish stocks, though far from all, are returning to sustainable levels. 2019 will be a crucial year for achieving our shared objectives. Working hand-in-hand – fishermen, industry, civil society and authorities – let us keep up the efforts and keep our ambitions high for our ocean. I look forward to working closely with all parties.”* Recent years have seen significant progress in the management of fisheries resources, notably in northern and western waters, where overfishing has decreased considerably, whilst biomass has increased and in 2016 on average was nearly 39% above 2003 levels. By contrast, moving towards sustainable exploitation in the Mediterranean and the Black Seas remains a challenge. Over recent years, EU fleet has also registered significant improvement in its overall economic performance, with record net profits of €1.3 billion in 2016. More details available [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321)

Commission brings together consumer alternative dispute resolution bodies from across the EU

Today, the Commission kicks off a two-day event in Brussels bringing together more than 350 consumer Alternative Dispute Resolution bodies, businesses, consumer representatives, and Member States authorities from across the EU. Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality said: *“Alternative dispute resolution is an important tool for consumers to enforce their rights, in particular when the value of the dispute is low. I want more businesses to use it; it’s in their interest as it brings consumer trust and helps them avoid costly court procedures.”* Under this framework, consumers can have their disputes with traders resolved quickly, fairly and easily with the help of high-quality [alternative dispute resolution](#) bodies. When the purchase is made online, consumers can also use the European [online dispute resolution](#) (ODR) platform to ask an alternative dispute resolution body for help. Effective alternative and online resolution of consumer disputes is a key pillar under the [New Deal for Consumers](#) proposed by the Commission in April. The Commission is currently conducting a communication campaign to increase business engagement in Alternative Dispute Resolution procedures and on the Online Dispute Resolution platform. (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of joint control over London Luton Airport by AMP Capital and Aena Internacional

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over London Luton Airport Operations Limited (“LLAO”) of the UK by AMP Capital Investors (UK) Limited (“AMP Capital”) of the UK and Aena Desarrollo Internacional, S.M.E., S.A. (“Aena Internacional”) of Spain. LLAO manages and operates the London Luton Airport. AMP Capital, belonging to the corporate group of AMP Limited of Australia, is active in infrastructure investment and management services, and controls Newcastle

International Airport as well as Leeds Bradford Airport in the UK. Aena Internacional is majority-owned by the Spanish statutory corporation ENAIRE and is active in the management of airport infrastructure. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of the limited impact it would have on the market. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8923](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of a newly created joint venture by Banco de Sabadell and Oaktree Capital Group

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over a newly created joint venture by Bitarte S.A., belonging to the group Banco de Sabadell, both of Spain, and Oaktree Capital Group Holdings GP LLC of the US. The joint-venture will identify, acquire, develop, and commercialise residential plots of land in Spain. Banco de Sabadell is the fourth largest banking group in Spain. Bitarte owns real estate assets under development or awaiting development. Oaktree Capital Group is a global alternative and non-traditional management company with a particular expertise in credit strategies. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given its limited impact on the market structure. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8875](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

STATEMENTS

Speech by Transport Commissioner Violeta Bulc on military mobility at the North Atlantic Council

Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** today presented the [EU Action Plan on Military mobility](#) to the North Atlantic Council, the principal political decision-making body within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). She said, *“The Action Plan on Military Mobility was developed in the context of our President’s commitment during his State of the Union speech in September 2017, to have a full-fledged Defence Union in place by 2025 (...). It is all about a higher level of security for the EU citizens. And, since many EU countries are members of NATO, it is also about a higher level of security and effectiveness of the military personnel of all NATO allies. That is what we want to concretely achieve, by leveraging EU policies which we already address for civilians. It is a matter of importance to me that when we invest billions of Euros of public money – that we do so in full knowledge of the military requirements and do so jointly, whenever we define these dual use – military and civilian – cases.”* Her full speech is available [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 69143)

[EU budget: Commission proposes €1.26 billion to reinforce the European Solidarity Corps](#)

The new programme will allow at least 350,000 young Europeans to support communities in need between 2021 and 2027 through volunteering, traineeships and job placements. The proposal adopted today marks the consolidation of the Corps for the next budgetary period.

Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources, Günther H. **Oettinger**, said: *“Solidarity is one of the key values in the European Union, and the success of the European Solidarity Corps shows that there’s a high demand of young people to participate in solidarity activities. That’s why we have significantly increased the financial means for the European Solidarity Corps in the next EU budget.”*

Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, said: *“With this proposal, the European Commission has confirmed its commitment to strengthening solidarity and empowering young people. We are putting everything in place to enable the European Solidarity Corps to grow into a broad community of people and organisations ready to support those in need across our continent and beyond, helping to build resilient, cohesive societies. Young people, in turn, will gain skills, new friendships, and a strong sense of what it feels like to be European.”*

Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, commented: *“Building on the experience gained so far, this proposal provides for a more inclusive and flexible approach and ultimately a greater freedom of choice for participants, whether they’d like to go on a voluntary or professional placement.”*

The new programme will build on the achievements of the Corps in its first years of existence and creates one single entry point for young people ready to engage in solidarity. In particular, the programme will include:

- **Volunteering activities in support of humanitarian aid operations in non-EU countries:** The addition to the European Solidarity Corps of this well-established EU scheme for humanitarian aid, which has so far operated under the name [EU Aid Volunteers](#), will provide volunteering opportunities outside the EU and will complement existing opportunities under the Solidarity Corps to volunteer individually or as a group, follow a traineeship or get a job in a solidarity field in Europe or beyond;

- **Targeted measures:** These will include additional funding or dedicated activities of shorter duration or within one's own country, for example, to make it easier for disadvantaged young people to take part in the European Solidarity Corps.

Next steps

A swift agreement on the overall long-term EU budget and its sectoral proposals is essential to ensure that EU funds start delivering results on the ground as soon as possible.

Delays could put into question the implementation of the first year of the European Solidarity Corps programme. An agreement on the next long-term budget in 2019 would provide for a seamless transition between the current long-term budget (2014-2020) and the new one and would ensure predictability and continuity of funding to the benefit of all.

Background

During his [2016 State of the Union](#) address, Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker announced the creation of a European Solidarity Corps, offering young people between the ages of 18 and 30 the opportunity to take part in a wide range of solidarity activities across the EU and beyond. Since its [launch on 7 December 2016](#), almost 64,000 young people have joined the European Solidarity Corps, and almost 5,000 participants started their activity.

During a first phase launched in [December 2016](#), eight different programmes were mobilised to offer volunteering, traineeship or job opportunities under the European Solidarity Corps. [In May 2017, the Commission put forward a proposal to equip the European Solidarity Corps with its own financing mechanism and legal framework](#). The proposal is currently being discussed by the European Parliament and the Council. This will help further increase its coherence and impact. A budget of €376.5 million for the European Solidarity Corps over the period 2018-2020 would allow 100,000 young Europeans to support communities and develop their competences by the end of 2020.

Any public or private body adhering to strict quality requirements can propose projects for the European Solidarity Corps. It will be implemented by the European Commission, the Erasmus+ National Agencies in the Member States, and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency.

For more information

[MEMO: The European Solidarity Corps beyond 2020: Questions and Answers](#)

[Factsheet: EU budget for the future: European Solidarity Corps beyond 2020](#)

[Factsheet: EU budget for the future: European Solidarity Corps in action](#)

[Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Solidarity Corps programme and repealing \[European Solidarity Corps Regulation\] and Regulation \(EU\) No 375/2014 \(COM \(2018\) 440/2\)](#)

[European Solidarity Corps portal](#)

[Website on the EU budget for the future](#)

The European Solidarity Corps beyond 2020: Questions and Answers

[IP/18/4035](#)

What is the objective of the European Solidarity Corps?

Solidarity is a shared value within the European Union – between its citizens, Member States, and in its action inside and outside the Union.

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, Slovakian 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 and abroad through volunteering, traineeships and jobs. Taking part not only benefits young people’s personal development, active involvement in society and employability, but also helps communities in need and assists non-governmental organisations, public bodies and companies in their efforts to cope with societal and other unmet needs.

What is new in this proposal, compared to the legal base governing the European Solidarity Corps until 2020?

According to the new proposal, the Solidarity Corps will become a single entry point for young people willing to engage, by integrating the [EU Aid Volunteers](#) scheme. This scheme will add new opportunities to volunteer in support of humanitarian aid operations in non-EU countries where humanitarian aid activities and operations take place. This will create a true one-stop-shop for young people willing to engage in solidarity activities in the EU or abroad.

What will be the budget of the European Solidarity Corps?

The European Commission proposes to set the overall budget for the European Solidarity Corps at €1.26 billion in current prices, for the period from 1

January 2021 until 31 December 2027. This would allow for about 350,000 young people to participate between 2021 and 2027, in addition to the 100,000 participants the Commission aims to support by the end of 2020.

Who can register for the European Solidarity Corps?

The eligibility criteria for young people to participate remain the same: Anyone who is between 17 and 30 years old, and who is a national or legally residing in a participating country can register for the European Solidarity Corps. The minimum age to participate in one of the Corps' activities is 18.

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](#). In case of participation of non-EU nationals, they may not necessarily have all the rights or permissions needed to reside in another EU country to participate. It is the responsibility of the participating organisation to ensure that such rights and permissions are in place for any person that they wish to engage in one of the Corps' activities.

Where will the activities take place?

Already today, the European Solidarity Corps activities will be implemented throughout the European Union; volunteering activities will also reach out to other countries members of the European Economic Area and pre-accession and neighbouring countries.

For the budgetary period 2021 – 2027 the Commission proposes a wider geographical scope for volunteering activities and accompanying measures, including volunteering activities to support humanitarian aid operations. These will take place in non-EU countries receiving Official Development Aid. Young people will not engage in professional emergency aid or dangerous tasks and will not be part of activities in countries affected by an ongoing armed conflict.

Will the registration guarantee participation in an activity?

All registered young people may take part in a general online training and in community-building activities online or in their own communities. Registering, however, does not guarantee the ability to participate in an activity. This depends on the budget, the availability of projects and the specific interest of the candidates.

Under the Commission's proposal to equip the European Solidarity Corps with its own legal framework and budget, put forward in May 2017, the programme will also foresee solidarity projects, allowing young people who have registered to take action themselves and implement their ideas for solidarity at local level, instead of waiting to be offered an opportunity by an organisation.

What are the requirements for organisations?

Here too the requirements remain unchanged. Participating organisations will be carefully assessed (by the National Agencies implementing the Erasmus programme or by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, depending on their profile). And they must commit to respecting the principles and objectives of the European Solidarity Corps. This means that they undertake to foster the personal and professional development of European Solidarity Corps participants, guarantee safe and decent conditions, provide adequate training and support to equip participants with the skills needed to carry out their activity. Organisations active in offering opportunities within the European Solidarity Corps will have to obtain a new quality label.

How does the matching process work?

When young people register for the European Solidarity Corps via the European Youth Portal, beyond providing information about their education and employment experience and personal interests, they will also be able to provide further information: indicating which type of activities they would like to be involved in, which countries they would like to go to and when they are available. They can choose between the types of activities 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, for example in working with refugees, children, elderly or disabled people, teaching, in media, music, arts, building/construction, engineering, project management or other fields.

Organisations will have the possibility to choose from candidates whose motivation, interests and skills correspond most closely to their needs. In addition to consulting vacancy notices on the European Youth Portal and respond to them, participants can apply for them or accept or decline any offer made by an organisation.

What costs are covered by the different types of activities?

For a volunteer, living expenses such as food, accommodation and pocket money of up to €155 per month, as well as travel and insurance will be covered.

Jobs will be based on an employment contract and wages will be set in accordance with national laws, regulations and collective agreements in force in the country where the job is carried out.

Traineeships will be based on a written traineeship agreement and remunerated by the hosting organisation. The principles outlined in the [Quality Framework for Traineeships](#) will guide the traineeships offered under the Corps.

In addition to remuneration, financial support for travel is foreseen both for jobs and traineeships.

A financial top-up is foreseen for disadvantaged young people to cover any necessary additional expenses. The Corps will also cover certain costs incurred by participating organisations. This may include a financial

contribution to specific training and mentorship.

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 project.

What about insurance and social security coverage?

The proposal foresees that participants receive complementary health and accident insurance for insurance-related expenses which are not already covered by the [European Health Insurance Card](#) or other insurance schemes in which participants may be enrolled.

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

Will there be language support?

Yes. European Solidarity Corps participants who accept an offer for a cross-border 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?

Participants in the European Solidarity Corps will receive the European Solidarity Corps certificate once they have completed the activity. Furthermore, tools such as Youthpass and Europass will be used to identify and document the knowledge, skills and competences acquired during the activity.

[DiscoverEU: 15,000 travel passes up for grabs to explore the EU this summer](#)

As of tomorrow (12:00 CEST) until 26 June, (12:00 CEST) young people can [apply](#) for a ticket giving them the opportunity to discover their continent from July 2018 until the end of October 2018. [DiscoverEU](#) will enable them to better understand Europe's diversity, enjoy its cultural richness, make new friends and get a sense of their European identity. Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: *"DiscoverEU offers an excellent opportunity to young people to explore Europe through a*

personal journey in a way that no book or documentary can. I am confident that this experience will make a positive change – for the young people participating and for the communities they visit. What we are launching tomorrow is an opportunity for 15,000 unforgettable European stories, to be followed by many more later this year and beyond.”

Under this new EU initiative, young people will be able to travel as individuals or as a group of maximum five people. As a general rule they will be travelling by rail. However, to ensure wide access across the continent, participants can, in special cases, use alternative transport modes, such as buses or ferries, or, exceptionally, planes. This will ensure that young people living in remote areas or on islands part of the EU also have a chance to take part. As 2018 is [the European Year of Cultural Heritage](#), those traveling will have the chance to participate in the many events that are being organised all over Europe.

How to apply

Applicants will need to provide their personal data as well as details about the trip they are planning to make. They will also need to complete a 5-question quiz, linked to the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage, [EU initiatives targeting young people](#) and the upcoming European Parliament elections. Finally, they will need to answer an additional question on how many young people they think will apply for this initiative. The replies will allow the European Commission to select the applicants. Once this is done, participants need to start travelling between 9 July and 30 September 2018. They can travel for up to 30 days and can visit up to 4 foreign destinations.

Background

With a budget of €12 million in 2018, **DiscoverEU** is expected to give at least 20,000 young people the opportunity to travel around Europe this year. Every EU Member State has been allocated a number of travel passes, based on the share of its country's population compared to the overall population of the European Union. The first application round, launched tomorrow, will allow at least 15,000 recipients to explore their continent. A second application round with at least 5,000 tickets will take place in autumn 2018. The European Commission intends to develop the initiative and has therefore included it in its proposal for the next [Erasmus](#) programme. If the European Parliament and the Council agree to the proposal, an additional 1.5 million 18 year olds are expected to be able to travel between 2021 and 2027, supported by a budget of €700 million.

DiscoverEU is an EU initiative based on a proposal from the European Parliament, which secured its funding for 2018 through a Preparatory Action. The initiative focuses on young people turning 18, as this marks a major step to adulthood.

The European Commission would like to hear from the young travellers and will encourage them to share their experiences and adventures. That is why, once selected, the participants will be part of the DiscoverEU community and become ambassadors of the initiative. They will be invited to report back on

their travel experiences, for example through social media tools like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, or by providing a presentation at their school or their local community.

For more information

[Memo](#)

[European Youth Portal: Apply here](#)

DiscoverEU: 18 year olds can tomorrow apply for 15,000 travel passes to explore the EU this summer

DiscoverEU is a new EU initiative based on a proposal from the European Parliament. It offers 18 year olds a travel experience that will enable them to take advantage of the freedom of movement in the European Union, discover the diversity of European regions, enjoy its cultural richness, connect with people from all over the continent and ultimately discover themselves.

Will this initiative happen again or is it a one-off action?

In the framework of a European Parliament Preparatory Action adopted in March 2018, the Commission is selecting the first batch of at least 15,000 young people during a first application round in June. The Commission will organise a second round of applications in autumn 2018 based on the feedback it will receive from the first round. The success and continuation of DiscoverEU up to 2020 will depend on its reception by the target audience. For the budget period 2021 – 2027 the Commission has proposed to allocate €700 million for this initiative, which should be able to fund around 1.5 million travels for young Europeans.

Why don't you offer this opportunity to all 18 year olds?

The aim would be to give as many young people as possible the chance to benefit from this new initiative to explore Europe. However, the budget of €12 million does not allow to offer this opportunity to all 18 year olds in Europe. In the EU around 5.8 million young people turn 18 each year. If we assume that only 50% of them would be interested in a travel pass, this would – taking an average price of the travel pass at €255 – cost around €750 million per year.

Will there be a quota per country?

The selection will be carried out in accordance with the number of travel

tickets allocated to each European Union Member State. This allocation is based on the share of the Member States' population compared to the overall population of the European Union.

Selection will be carried out based on the nationality indicated by the applicant in the registration form. In case there are fewer applicants than the fixed quotas for certain countries, the remaining tickets will be distributed among the countries where there are more applicants than the fixed quotas.

Who can participate?

All EU nationals who will be 18 year old on 1 July 2018 can apply. This means young people born between 2 July 1999 (included) and 1 July 2000 (included) are eligible to participate. Young people have to submit their application online through the European Youth Portal during the application period from 12 June 2018 12:00 (midday) CEST until 26 June 2018 12:00 (midday) CEST.

Why is the initiative only accessible to young people aged 18?

The European Parliament Preparatory Action as agreed in the 2018 EU budget focuses on young people turning 18, as this age marks a major step to adulthood and to European citizenship.

For how many days are participants allowed to travel?

Young people can travel between a minimum of 1 and up to 30 days inclusive. They can visit from 1 to 4 foreign country destinations (only EU 28 Member States) with a travel trip arranged back home. The trip must start between 9 July 2018 and 30 September 2018.

Will young people always travel by rail?

Participants will, as a basic rule, travel by rail. Nevertheless, in order to ensure the widest possible access, the project can offer alternative transport modes, such as buses or ferries. Travel will only be in 2nd class.

Only in the special cases referred to here below, the option of travelling by plane may be allowed. This is the case for those young people:

- Residing in any of the nine EU's outermost regions (i.e. Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique, la Réunion, Mayotte, Saint-Martin, Madeira, Azores and Canary Islands);
- Residing in EU countries/regions which are not accessible by rail networks, ferries and buses;
- Having to travel more than 18 hours via land or sea transport before being able to cross the border of the departure country of their trip.

In any of these special cases, only one round trip can be a flight. For the remainder of their trip, participants are required to travel by rail or other alternative modes (except private cars and chartered buses), and they fall under the basic rule.

Can a participant travel alone or in a group of friends?

The project foresees that participants can travel either individually or in a group of maximum 5 persons. In the case of a group, a group leader must be appointed on the group's behalf. The group leader will fill in the application form and respond to the quiz and subsidiary question. S/he will receive a code in the confirmation email when submitting the application. S/he should then communicate this code to the group members in order to allow their registration. Based on the code provided by the group leader, the remaining group members will then have to register online and fill in their personal data.

If a group application is selected will all group members be able to participate?

Yes, a group application will be assessed as one single application.

How are the young people selected?

The selection of applicants will take place via an online application tool available on the [European Youth Portal](#). Applicants will first have to pass the eligibility criteria check. Then, all applicants will need to complete a quiz. They must answer 5 quiz questions linked to the [2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage](#), to European Union initiatives targeting young people and to the European Parliament elections. Finally, they will need to answer a subsidiary question on how many young people they think will apply for this initiative. The correct replies to the quiz and the subsidiary question will allow the European Commission to rank the applicants in case there are more applications than the budget can cater for.

What about young people with special needs?

Young people with special needs (e.g. reduced mobility, visually impairments, etc.) may be entitled to receive appropriate additional support. Those costs will be assessed on a case by case basis according to their needs. In that respect, costs of special assistance (accompanying person, dog for visually impaired participants, etc.) might be covered.

Should the selected participants book the travel tickets themselves?

No. Selected participants shall not book their travel tickets themselves, as tickets purchased separately shall not be reimbursed. Travel tickets for the selected participants will exclusively be booked, purchased and delivered by the external contractor designated by the European Commission.

What is the value of the travel tickets?

The basic rule is that each participant will be entitled to a travel ticket

worth (on average) €255. However, this amount can be higher in the following exceptional cases:

- For participants travelling from the EU's outermost regions (i.e. Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique, la Réunion, Mayotte, Saint-Martin, Madeira, Azores and Canary Islands) to mainland Europe. Once the participants land on the mainland, the basic rule applies.
- For participants outside the above-mentioned outermost regions who are entitled to travel by plane to mainland Europe. Once on the mainland, the basic rule applies.
- For participants with reduced mobility and/or special needs. Those costs to be assessed on a case by case basis according to their needs. In that respect, costs of special assistance (accompanying person, dog for visually impaired participants, etc.) might be covered.

Can a relative or friend older than 18 travel with the participant?

Yes, as long as they book and pay for the travel costs.

Is the travel ticket transferable to another person?

No. Each travel ticket will be nominative and cannot be transferred to another person under any circumstance. The name on the travel ticket cannot be changed.

What if the participants have to cancel their trip or need to modify it?

Any potential cancellation or modification fees will need to be covered by the participants. There is no extra budget foreseen to cover expenditures of this kind, whatever the reason.

Are any of the following expenses included: travel insurance, accommodation, subsistence or any other expenses related to the trip?

No. The initiative does not include any travel insurance. Insurance coverage is the sole responsibility of the participant. Moreover, accommodation, subsistence, travel supplements to be paid during the trip or any other expenses related to the trip shall be covered by the participants.

The participants should acquire appropriate health and travel insurance for the whole duration of the trip. Basic health insurance coverage is usually provided by the participant's national health insurance during his/her stay in another European Union country through the European Insurance Card. However, the coverage of the European Health Insurance Card or private health insurance may not include all possible cases, especially if repatriation or specific medical intervention is needed. In that case, a complimentary private insurance is advisable.

Will the European Commission help participants with booking accommodation?

No. Booking accommodation is the sole responsibility of the participant.

Will the European Commission give preference to specific transport operators?

No. The contractor who will book the trips can select any public transport mode and any operators or lines (private cars and chartered buses are excluded).

How can participants prepare their travel?

The European Commission will provide an online information package to the selected participants with useful tips for travelling. Participants must possess their valid travel document/ticket during their journey. Anything related to such a document (e.g. validity) is the participant's responsibility.

Young people should also have a valid passport or ID card when travelling in the European Union. Anything related to such a document (validity, etc.) is the participant's responsibility.

What is expected from the selected participants?

The European Commission would like to hear back from the young travellers and will encourage them to share their experiences and adventures. That is why, once selected, the participants will become Ambassadors of the initiative. They will be encouraged to report back on their travel experiences, for example through social media tools like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, or by providing a presentation at their school or their local community. Participants will also be welcome to join a Facebook Group set up for this initiative.

Given Brexit, are young people with UK nationality able to participate?

UK nationals aged 18 are indeed able to participate in this initiative as long as the UK remains a Member State of the European Union with all its rights and obligations. Selected participants can also choose the UK as one of their travel destination.

Where can people find more information on the rules of the contest?

The rules of the contest are published on [the European Youth Portal](#).

For more information

[Press release](#)

[European Youth Portal: Apply here](#)