European Solidarity Corps

2017/2585(RSP) - 06/04/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on Culture and Education on the European Solidarity Corps (ESC).

The resolution called on the Commission to **provide the ESC with a clear and detailed legal framework** . It pointed out that more than 20 000 people have already registered to participate in the European Solidarity Corps since the launch of the Commission's online platform in December 2016.

Clear definitions: Parliament called for a precise definition of solidarity action at EU level. It also invited the Commission to define the objectives of the European Solidarity Corps and to make its actions measurable.

According to Members, the goal of the European Solidarity Corps should be to **create a sense of community, solidarity and social responsibility** in Europe while providing a meaningful and empowering volunteering work, trainee or apprenticeship experience.

The initiative should enable participants to:

- develop lifelong skills as well as a sense of ownership and sharing;
- overcome differences in language, culture, religion, belief or financial status, misconceptions and prejudices;
- promote an active citizenship experience and help participants to acquire a critical analysis of the reality and societal problems.

Members urged the need to ensure that **all EU citizens**, including those with special needs or from disadvantaged backgrounds, have **equal access** to the European Solidarity Corps. Gender equality should be mainstreamed when implementing the initiative.

Financing: the Commission is invited to include in its future legislative proposal a **clear description of the budgetary arrangements** that will allow for the effective functioning of the ESC. Funding must not have a negative impact on existing programmes aimed at young people and initiatives such as the Europe for Citizens and Erasmus+ programmes, the Employment and Social Innovation programme, and initiatives such as the Youth Guarantee.

Integration into a broader strategy on volunteering: Members called on the Commission to integrate the European Solidarity Corps into a wider policy strategy to create a conducive environment for volunteering in Europe while not overlapping with but rather strengthening successful existing initiatives, such as the European Voluntary Service. There should be no additional administrative burdens for individuals or participating organisations.

Volunteering should also be integrated into European programmes and funds such as the Structural Funds, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the LIFE programme and the EU's external action programmes and funds.

Distinguishing between actions: when implementing the ESC, the Commission should make a clear distinction between volunteering activities and job placements:

- **the volunteering strand** should be underpinned by a clear understanding of the principles of quality volunteering, such as those outlined in the European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers; emphasises, furthermore, that any volunteering should always be in support of non-profit solidarity actions to meet identified community needs;
- **the occupational strand** should focus on providing quality jobs, traineeships and apprenticeships in the solidarity non-profit and social enterprise of the solidarity sector.

Members suggested that host organisations should subscribe to a **quality charter** comprising agreed objectives, principles and standards. They also called for the **comparability, recognition and validation of the skills** and competences acquired during the experience.

In addition, young volunteers should receive **financial compensation** and young workers with adequate payment as well as adequate health insurance, training and mentorship.

Lastly, Parliament stressed the need for **consultation with stakeholders** such as youth organisations, European social partners, volunteer-based organisations, trade unions and Member States prior to drafting the legislative proposal.