European solidarity corps programme 2021–2027

2018/0230(COD) - 12/03/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 513 votes to 95, with 64 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Solidarity Corps Programme and repealing the [European Solidarity Corps Regulation] and Regulation (EU) No 375/2014.

The position of the European Parliament adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure has amended the Commission proposal as follows:

Objectives of the project

The overall objective of the programme would be to promote solidarity as a value, mainly through volunteering and to strengthen the engagement of a generation of young people more likely to engage in solidarity activities in order to contribute to strengthening social cohesion, solidarity, democracy, European identity and active citizenship in the Union and beyond, to support communities and to address societal and humanitarian challenges on the ground. Emphasis should be placed on social inclusion and equal opportunities.

Actions should promote solidarity between Member States as well as with third countries affected by man-made crises or natural disasters, while aiming to strengthen the promotion of solidarity and the visibility of humanitarian aid among EU citizens, as well as to facilitate the transition from humanitarian aid to sustainable and inclusive development in the long term.

The programme should also enable young people to validate their skills for personal, educational, social, cultural and civic development and professional development, by facilitating their continued engagement as active citizens, their employability and their transition to the labour market.

Solidarity activities

These would be high quality, inclusive and adequately funded activities (i) aimed at meeting important societal needs for the benefit of a community or society as a whole, (ii) with European added value and (iii) respecting health and safety regulations and international human rights standards. They could take the form of volunteering, internships, jobs, solidarity projects and networking activities in various fields.

Members have clarified the concepts:

- voluntary service means an optional solidarity activity consisting of the exercise of an activity of public utility which contributes to social welfare, which a participant carries out during his free time and of his own free will, without the right to remuneration, for a period of not more than 12 months;

- internship: a paid solidarity activity in the form of professional experience in a participating organisation for a period of three to six months, renewable once and for a maximum period of 12 months, and including a training component enabling the participant to acquire relevant skills and experience;

- employment" means an activity of solidarity paid for a period of 3 to 12 months, including an apprenticeship and training component, based on a written contract, without replacing or replacing an existing job offer;

- "participant": a person aged between 18 and 30 years, legally residing in a participating country, who has registered on the portal of the European Solidarity Corps.

Dialogue with local and regional authorities and European networks specialised in urgent social issues should be encouraged in order to best identify the unmet needs of society and ensure a needs-based programme. The Commission should consult regularly with key stakeholders, including participating organisations, on the implementation of the programme.

Joint actions

These actions should also facilitate the access of people with disabilities to all proposed activities and provide opportunities to provide feedback on solidarity activities and promote the programme as an ambassador. Support measures should also aim at:

- protect beneficiaries of solidarity activities, including targeted training for participants who carry out solidarity activities for vulnerable groups, including children, as well as background checks for participants working with children;

- promote social inclusion and equal opportunities, in particular with a view to the participation of young people with fewer prospects, such as appropriate formats for solidarity activities and personalised support;

- provide capacity building and administrative support for participating organizations;

- encourage social enterprises to support the activities of the programme or to enable workers to engage in voluntary activities under the programme.

Members have introduced amendments to ensure a higher visibility of the European Solidarity Corps.

Budget

The financial envelope for the execution of the programme for the period 2021-2027 would be EUR 1 112 988 000 at 2018 prices (EUR 1 260 000 000 000 at current prices). An amount of the budget would also be devoted to the exchange of good practices between Member States and the development of youth networks.

The indicative breakdown of this amount would be as follows: (i) volunteering for solidarity activities and projects: 86%; (ii) internships and jobs: 8%; and (iii) volunteering in support of humanitarian assistance operations: 6%.

Participation, quality labels, annual programmes

The European Solidarity Body would be open to the participation of public or private entities, whether profit-making or not, and international organisations, including youth organisations, religious organisations, charities, secular humanist organisations, NGOs or other civil society actors, provided that they offer solidarity activities, have legal personality in accordance with the legislation of the country where they are registered and have obtained the European Solidarity Body quality label.

The specific requirements to be fulfilled in order to obtain the quality label would vary according to the type of solidarity activity and the functioning of the entity. Participating organisations that have been awarded a quality label would have access to a platform that would allow them to easily search for suitable candidates.

Each year, secondary strategic choices and priorities, including details of specific actions, would be set by means of an annual work programme adopted by means of delegated acts.