European solidarity corps programme 2021–2027

2018/0230(COD) - 22/04/2021 - Council position

The Council adopted its position at first reading with a view to the adoption of a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Solidarity Corps programme and repealing regulations (EU) 2018/1475 and (EU) No 375/2014.

The proposed regulation establishes the European Solidarity Corps programme for the period of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2021-2027.

Objectives

The overall objective of the programme is to increase the involvement of young people and organisations in accessible and high-quality solidarity activities, mainly through volunteering, with the aim of strengthening cohesion, solidarity, democracy, European identity and active citizenship in the Union and beyond, as well as addressing societal and humanitarian challenges on the ground, with particular efforts to promote sustainable development, social inclusion and equal opportunities.

The programme sets up two strands of actions for the participation of young people, one in solidarity activities and the other in humanitarian aid activities (the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps).

Actions supported

The actions supported by the programme for both strands are (i) volunteering, (ii) solidarity projects, (iii) networking activities and (iv) quality and support measures including the development and maintenance of a quality label and the setting up of a European Solidarity Corps portal.

The Programme should support solidarity activities which present a clear European added value, for example through their:

- transnational character;

- ability to complement other programmes and policies at local, regional, national, Union and international level;

- European dimension regarding their themes and aims, approaches, expected outcomes and other aspects of these solidarity activities;

- approach to involving young people from different backgrounds;

- contribution to the effective use of Union transparency and recognition tools.

The Council position strengthens the provisions relating to the participating organisations, in particular with regard to the European Solidarity Corps quality label.

Budget

The financial envelope for the implementation of the programme for the period 2021-2027 is set at EUR 1 009 000 000 in current prices.

With a maximum of 20% for in-country volunteering, the indicative breakdown of this amount is as follows: (a) 94% for volunteering and solidarity projects, (b) 6% for volunteering.

Participation of natural persons

As regards the age limit for volunteers in the field of humanitarian aid, the Council position maintains the general rule of age limits of 18-30 for all volunteers but adds a specific derogation for volunteers in the field of humanitarian aid (upper age limit of up to 35 years). Provisions for experienced coaches, mentors and experts have been strengthened.

Inclusion

When implementing the Regulation, the Commission, the Member States and the third countries associated with the programme should ensure that specific measures are taken to promote social inclusion and equal access, in particular as regards the participation of young people with fewer opportunities.

Insurance coverage

In the light of the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on European Solidarity Corps volunteers, a number of provisions have been introduced in the Council position to improve the insurance coverage of participants as well as security checks to protect vulnerable persons, such as children.

For organisations participating in the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps, the safety and security of volunteers, based on risk assessments, should be a priority.

Governance

The programme will be implemented through work programmes adopted by means of implementing acts. A new recital specifies that actions or initiatives which are not supported under the Regulation cannot be included in the work programme.

Information, communication and dissemination

The recipients of Union funding should acknowledge the origin of those funds and ensure the visibility of the Union funding, in particular when promoting the actions and their results, by providing coherent, effective and proportionate targeted information to multiple audiences, including the media and the public.

The programme should apply from 1 January 2021. A mid-term review of the programme should be presented by the Commission by 31 December 2024.