European Solidarity Corps

2017/0102(COD) - 30/05/2017 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to lay down the legal framework of the European Solidarity Corps.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: the European Union is built on solidarity, a shared value which is strongly felt throughout European society and which provides the necessary unity to cope with current and future crises by holding a strong moral ground.

Solidarity provides a clear compass to guide the European youth in their aspirations for a better Union. There are many young people who want to engage in solidarity activities and there is an untapped demand by many organisations for motivated young people to support them in their efforts.

This proposal also responds to the call by the European Council in its Conclusions of 15 December 2016 to take work on the European Solidarity Corps forward, and it is one of the priority initiatives included in the Joint Declaration on the EU's legislative priorities for 2017.

In the absence of measures to bring organisations and young people together around solidarity, there is a risk that an important potential for solidarity activities goes untapped.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: two options were defined to analyse the impact of the proposal, based on the views of the main stakeholders. The preferred option aims to develop a new self-standing initiative with strengthened focus on solidarity and also aims to:

- provide a clear and single access point for organisations and young people and will make solidarity actions more visible. It will embed a more inclusive approach through a dedicated inclusion strategy;
- provide overall quality of placements and of preparedness of the young participants through a series of specific qualitative processes and criteria (such as quality label for organisations, training, insurance, etc.);
- bring new synergies between the activities and their recognition as it will put them in one common framework and will help create new networks between people and organisations with common aspirations for solidarity;
- decrease management costs while reaching greater effect.

Specific objective of the initiative: the European Solidarity Corps will provide young people with easily accessible opportunities to engage in volunteering, traineeships or jobs in solidarity-related sectors, as well as to devise and develop solidarity projects at their own initiative, which shall also contribute to improving their skills and competences for their personal, social and professional development, as well as their employability.

The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) will also support networking activities for European Solidarity Corps participants and organisations, aimed at fostering a European Solidarity Corps spirit and sense of belonging to a wider community committed to solidarity, as well as at encouraging the exchange of useful practices and experience.

The European Solidarity Corps will further aim at ensuring that the solidarity activities offered to the young participants contribute to addressing concrete societal challenges and to strengthening communities.

Continuity between the European Solidarity Corps and the EVS: the proposed initiative will build on the foundations of the former European Voluntary Service (EVS) which is now under the ERASMUS+ programme. EVS has provided volunteering opportunities for young people for 20 years), while proposing new opportunities, wider visibility and greater impact of the actions undertaken.

The European Solidarity Corps will offer a single, easily accessible entry point through its Portal, and will aim at the widest possible outreach to participating organisations and to the young people involved.

In general, everything has been designed to ensure continuity between the European Voluntary Service and the European Solidarity Corps, through a single system of cross-border volunteering placements. At the same time, other EVS activities that do not fall under the geographical scope of the European Solidarity Corps will continue to be supported under ERASMUS+.

Actions of the European Solidarity Corps: the proposal provides a description of the activities envisaged for the achievement of the objectives of the proposed Regulation.

The Union's support measures include:

- solidarity placements,
- projects and networking activities,
- quality and support measures on the other.

Participation conditions: the proposal specifies criteria for the participating countries, individuals and organisations:

(1) the participating countries are the EU Member States and possibly other countries on the basis of bilateral agreements;

(2) young people aged 17-30 can register in the European Solidarity Corps Portal whereas participation can only start when they are between 18 and 30 years of age;

(3) a participating organisation that may make offers for solidarity placements or activities to registered individuals is any public or private entity, or an international organisation that carries out solidarity activities in the participating countries, provided that they have

received a quality label certifying their adherence to the requirements of the European Solidarity Corps.

Performance, results and dissemination: provisions are included for the Commission and the participating countries to ensure regular monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the performance of the European Solidarity Corps as well as to ensure the dissemination of information, publicity and follow-up with regard to all actions supported by the European Solidarity Corps.

Management and audit system: the proposal foresees the implementing bodies of the European Solidarity Corps. In management terms, the proposed implementation modality is a combination of indirect management (through national agencies at national level) and direct management (through the Commission at Union level, including the use of an executive agency on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis). The combination of management modes is based on the positive experience of the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme and builds on the existing structures of that programme, including for some tasks related to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency.

Implementation: implementing provisions sets out the necessary provisions for the conferral of certain powers to the Commission to adopt work programmes by way of implementing acts.

This Regulation shall apply from 1 January 2018.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS: it is proposed to finance three fourths of the European Solidarity Corps budget by redeployments from existing programmes. The remaining amount will be covered by the mobilisation of the Global Margin for Commitments in 2018 and by available unallocated margins in 2019 and 2020.

The prime reference amount under Heading 1a for the 2018-20 period is EUR 294.2 million, which includes redeployment under the same headings from the Erasmus+ programme (EUR 197.7 million) and the Employment and Social Innovation programme (EUR 10 million).

The allocation in Heading 1a will be complemented by contributions from programmes in other headings from an amount of EUR 47.3 million:

- the European Social Fund (EUR 35 million),
- the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (EUR 6 million),
- the LIFE programme (EUR 4.5 million),
- the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EUR 1.8 million).

Consequently, the acts relating to these different programmes have been modified accordingly.