



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 20 February 2017
(OR. en)

6275/1/17
REV 1

ENV 131
CADREFIN 19
JEUN 20
EDUC 46
SOC 92
EMPL 62

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Natura 2000 in the European Solidarity Corps
- Information from the Commission

Delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the Commission on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 28 February 2017.

Natura 2000 in the European Solidarity Corps

- Information from the Commission -

On 7 December 2016, the European Commission launched the European Solidarity Corps. This initiative will allow young people to participate in a wide range of solidarity activities, either by volunteering or by working to help address challenging situations across Europe.

The European Solidarity Corps will bring together two complementary strands: volunteering and occupational.

Many young Europeans are ready to volunteer or work for a good cause and to show solidarity with those less fortunate, in projects where their help makes a difference. Finding the right opportunity can be difficult. Therefore, the objective of this initiative is to provide more opportunities for young people not only for solidarity volunteering activities, but also for taking on solidarity jobs – at home or abroad.

The European Solidarity Corps will provide young people with a chance to gain invaluable experience develop their skills and make a contribution to society. It will cover a broad range of activities, with a very strong environmental dimension supported in the first phase by the LIFE programme.

Natura 2000 in the European Solidarity Corps

Through the European Solidarity Corps, young people will have a chance to contribute directly to the management of the Natura 2000 sites and gain knowledge, learn new skills and enjoy the unique experience of Europe's diverse nature.

After a first phase launched last December, in which volunteers will work within their countries, in 2017 LIFE will partner with ERASMUS+ to offer young Europeans cross-border volunteering opportunities in the field of environment and climate. Activities could include the monitoring of species and habitats, restoration activities, reforestation and tree planting and care, wildfire prevention, identification and eradication of invasive alien species, ecological restoration, environmental clean-up (e.g. marine litter), etc.. Working for the benefit of the Natura 2000 network is an investment in nature that pays dividends for future generations. Natura 2000 is one of the EU's outstanding achievements. Stretching over 18 % of the EU's land area and almost 6 % of its marine territory, it is the largest coordinated network of protected areas in the world. And while nature is certainly beautiful in many ways, it is not only about aesthetics or emotions. From carbon storage to bee pollination, from water purification to flood prevention, nature and its ecosystems provide many vital services that are indispensable for our well-being and as fundamental underlying drivers of our economy.

The environmental sector also has great potential for occupational placements under the European Solidarity Corps. According to Eurostat estimates, employment in the EU-28's environmental economy amounted to 4.2 million full-time equivalents in 2013 and is expected to increase further ¹.

The set-up of the European Solidarity Corps can only be achieved with the active support of the Member States and in close cooperation with a broad range of key stakeholders, including authorities and organisations at international, European, national, regional and local level, NGOs and businesses.

¹ EUROSTAT (2016). Environmental economy - employment and growth. Available on: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Environmental_economy_-_employment_and_growth.