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**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations  
Subject: European Solidarity Corps  
= Information from the Commission

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Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Commission on the above subject to be presented under "Any other business" at the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 6 March 2017.

## **European Solidarity Corps**

### **- Information from the Commission-**

The European Solidarity Corps, which was launched by the Commission on 7 December 2016, is an initiative allowing young people to participate in a wide range of activities to show their solidarity in practice through either volunteering or employment, traineeship or apprenticeship while helping to tackle challenges across Europe.

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

The European Solidarity Corps will provide young people with an opportunity to gain invaluable experience, develop their skills and make a contribution to society. It will offer more and better opportunities covering a broad range of activities, providing the right training and giving formal recognition to the skills and experiences gained.

The European Solidarity Corps will bring together two complementary strands: voluntary and occupational, and placements with the Corps can last from 2 to 12 months.

Fields of intervention include activities of general interest such as education, health, integration of migrants & refugees, provision of food, environmental protection or prevention of natural disasters such as floods or forest fires... Several activities are related to rural areas and agriculture.

## **Life and FEARD joining forces for rural volunteering**

The Commission is supporting European Solidarity Corps activity in this area through its environment and climate change and rural development funding programmes (respectively LIFE and EAFRD), with a focus on exploring the potential of using volunteer work for environmental protection activities in Natura 2000. Activities could include reforestation and tree planting, identification and eradication of invasive alien species or ecological restoration. Volunteers could thus contribute to protecting core habitats or to sustainable farming and forestry activities.

## **Opportunities under the Common Agricultural Policy**

A number of projects and programmes of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) might benefit from this initiative. National and regional authorities can use already now, on a voluntary basis, CAP resources to engage European Solidarity Corps participants.

Volunteers may participate in the activities under the School Scheme that are carried out by applicants (i.e. suppliers, schools, municipalities etc.). Volunteers may help in the distribution of fruits, vegetables and milk and/or contribute to educational measures as well as information and publicity activities.

Under the 2nd pillar of the CAP, rural development programmes could support engagement of European Solidarity Corps volunteers to execute certain tasks and projects. LEADER is a clear example that already now executes many projects with an important solidarity component (i.e. integration of migrants and refugees, prevention of natural disasters, etc.). Thus, the LEADER/Community Lead Local Development measure is very well placed to play an active role on the implementation of the Solidarity Corps initiative on the ground in rural areas. There are also other potential rural development measures which can be used for or benefit from this solidarity initiative, for example the cooperation measure; some activities under basic services and village renewal; technical assistance, etc.

## **Joint effort needed for a successful implementation**

The European Solidarity Corps is rooted in our core EU values of engagement and solidarity. A successful implementation of this initiative can only be achieved with the active support of and in close cooperation with Member States, stakeholders and citizens.

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