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EX-ANTE EVALUATION

Accompanying the document

Proposal for a
REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

laying down the legal framework of the European Solidarity Corps and amending Regulations (EU) No 1288/2013, (EU) No 1293/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1305/2013, (EU) No 1306/2013 and Decision No 1313/2013/EU

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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The EU is built on solidarity: solidarity between its citizens, solidarity across borders between its Member States, and solidarity in its action inside and outside the Union.

Solidarity represents one of the shared values which are embedded in the Treaties governing the European Union. As such, it defines the European project and should be time and again restated and reinforced. It is part of the core fabric that makes the European dream inspire generation after generation. The EU is about more than common rules, institutions or markets: it is a community of values.

This role of solidarity was stressed by President Jean-Claude Juncker in his State of the Union address[1] on 14 September 2016, whereby the idea of a European Solidarity Corps was announced:

"There are many young, socially minded people in Europe willing to make a meaningful contribution to society and help show solidarity. We can create opportunities for them to do so […] Solidarity is the glue that keeps our Union together […] Young people across the European Union will be able to volunteer their help where it is needed most, to respond to crisis situations […] These young people will be able to develop their skills and get not only work but also invaluable human experience".

At the Bratislava summit of 16 September 2016, 27 Member States agreed to provide better opportunities for young Europeans and enhanced EU programmes dedicated to them.

In response to the political resolve to do more for young people, the Commission initiated the European Solidarity Corps in December 2016.

In its first phase, the European Solidarity Corps put in place opportunities to express solidarity through existing programmes[2], building on the Erasmus+ programme (specifically the European Voluntary Service (EVS)), the Employment and Social Innovation programme, the LIFE programme, the Europe for Citizens programme, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (through Interreg), the European Regional Development fund and the Health programme.

The European Solidarity Corps has not been put in place in a vacuum: there is a multitude of solidarity activities and programmes in operation in the Member States. In most EU Member States there are long-standing traditions and experiences with volunteering, and some operate national civic service programmes offering young people the possibility to engage in activities that serve the public interest. Others facilitate activities undertaken by civil society. Moreover, on the EU level, the European Voluntary Service has provided volunteering opportunities for young people for 20 years, and policies and programmes such as the Youth Guarantee and the Your First Eures Job are helping young people get into traineeships and jobs.

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1 Available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-16-3043_en.html

2 European Commission (2016), *A European Solidarity Corps*, Communication from the Commission from the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM(2016) 942 final of 7.12.2016.

The European Solidarity Corps will draw on these national, local and European experiences and traditions, respecting different approaches across the EU and without replacing existing schemes set up by Member States.

It is against this backdrop that the Commission is developing the instruments necessary to consolidate the European Solidarity Corps beyond its current, initial phase. The Commission wants the European Solidarity Corps to contribute to addressing unmet societal needs by further enhancing and underpinning young people's willingness to engage, whilst at the same time helping organisations active in solidarity activities. It should address unmet needs, multiply successful projects, and reach more people and organisations in the most effective way. It seeks to offer, through a single entry point, high quality placements for young people to not only express solidarity but also to gain relevant skills and experience to improve their employability. Thereby it will ensure that all interested young people across the EU have equal opportunities to join.

Ultimately, the European Solidarity Corps aims to help strengthen cohesion and solidarity in Europe, supporting communities and responding to societal challenges. It can help bring people from different communities and ages together. It can facilitate the integration of migrants and refugees in a new environment[3]. The European Solidarity Corps can eventually contribute to creating a community of individuals and organisations committed to solidarity activities. The European Solidarity Corps could also increase the opportunities open to people to start grass root efforts to meet needs present in their local communities.

Expressions of solidarity can inspire and promote European democratic values, tolerance and citizenship. Activities motivated by solidarity tend to be inclusive and embrace diversity, thus serving as good examples of ways to counter racism and prejudice.[4]

Even if many young Europeans are already active in their communities, more young people, from different backgrounds, can be reached.

Around half of young people in the EU are members of at least one organisation. Amongst the most popular activities are sports clubs (29%), youth clubs or organisations (16%), local organisations supporting local communities (11%) and cultural organisations (10%). One in four young people in the EU have been involved in an organised voluntary activity in the past 12 months, mainly in activities related to charity, humanitarian and development aid, environmental protection, education, training and sport.[5] However, the less educated or less involved young people are in social activities, the less they take part in civic activities such as voting or volunteering[6].

According to surveys, actions towards increasing equality in education and living standards are indicated as priorities by one in two young individuals.[7] The emphasis on equality and

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3 Hill, M., Russell, J., and Brewis, G., (2009) *Young people volunteering and youth projects. A rapid review of recent evidence*. Institute for Volunteering Research, p.7.

4 Sherraden, M., Lough, B., McBride, A., (2008) Effects of International Volunteering and Service: Individual and Institutional Predictors. In: *International Journal of Voluntary and Non-profit Organizations*, Vol.19(4), p.408.

5 Eurobarometer 408 (2015) *European youth*.

6 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework, "EU Youth Report", 2015.

7 Special Eurobarometer 451 (2016), *Future of Europe*.

solidarity is also reflected in what young people see as global priorities. Almost one in two young persons in Europe indicates fostering social equality and solidarity as an essential need for society.[8] Last but not least, over 70% of young Europeans have expressed the belief that these activities are more efficient when they are provided and coordinated at EU level.[9]

2. PROBLEM ANALYSIS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2.1 What is the problem?

The main problem is a lack of easily accessible opportunities for young people to engage in solidarity activities, resulting in societal challenges and needs in communities not being met while there is engagement of young people that goes untapped. Solidarity activities should be of high quality, properly validated and geared to real and concrete societal challenges, strengthening communities and solidarity overall. By engaging in a solidarity activity, young people should get the opportunity to improve their skills and competences for personal, educational, social, civic and professional development, as well as their employability.

During the consultations on the proposal for the European Solidarity Corps, stakeholders have emphasized the need for focused an explicit profile of the concept of solidarity activities. Against this backdrop, many stakeholders expect the future Commission proposal for a legal base to provide a clear definition of 'solidarity activities', clarifying whether a placement will be linked to the field in which it is carried out or to the nature of the activity.

In the context of the European Solidarity Corps, a "solidarity activity" means an activity that is aimed at addressing unmet societal needs and which primarily results from the motivation by individuals or organisations to act to the benefit of a community. A solidarity activity in the European Solidarity Corps sense will also foster the educational, social civic and professional development of the participants.

2.1.1 Challenges and opportunities related to solidarity activities

There are concrete and growing needs for solidarity activity in Europe.

European Solidarity Corps participants can be involved in areas such as education and youth, health, social and labour market integration, assistance in the provision of food and non-food items, shelter constructions, site construction, renovation and management, reception, support and integration of migrants and refugees, post-conflict reconciliation, environmental protection and nature conservation, climate action or prevention of natural disasters (excluding immediate responses which would require specialised skills).

Some areas of solidarity activity are particularly confronted with unmet needs and shortages.

Community needs in areas as diverse as health, food relief and construction have emerged with the need to cater for EU citizens as well as for newly arrived migrants and refugees. Societal support to fulfil these needs is reliant on a variety of actors – public institutions (including the EU), International Organisations and NGOs, as well as grassroots efforts. Solidarity activities induced through the European Solidarity Corps can help these actors, including in crucial areas such as host society and job market integration.

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8 Special Eurobarometer 451 (2016), *Future of Europe*.
9 Special Eurobarometer 434 (2015), *Humanitarian aid*.

In view of the growing numbers and severity of natural and man-made disasters, there is an increasing unmet societal need for help e.g. with disaster prevention and dealing with recovery. From the perspective of civil protection authorities, European Solidarity Corps participants could be involved in tasks related to prevention and recovery from disasters affecting, among others, urban and rural areas, coastal zones, forests, water resources, cultural heritage, etc., complementing existing capacities and helping to fill gaps shortages. Such tasks could cover collecting data for mapping community assets and infrastructure which are critical during or after a disaster, creating learning and awareness raising products on disaster risks, organising exercises and drills with schools and communities; developing mobile/internet-based applications for Early Warning Systems, contingency planning or providing psycho-social support programmes. In light of the rapidly evolving science and technology applications for the purpose of civil protection/disaster risk management, young graduates and professionals could well provide significant contributions to Civil Protection authorities.

Solidarity-related activities cover a significant proportion of the labour market.

With employment in solidarity-related sectors in the EU estimated at employing some 45 million people, these sectors cover some 20% of the total labour market.[10] The solidarity sector in the EU is faced with shortages: according to Eurostat, 17% of all job vacancies are found in the solidarity sector.[11] Conversely, data from the EURES portal shows that around 80,000 jobseekers are looking for work in solidarity-related sectors in another EU country, meaning that there are issues related to matching supply and demand.

Two areas in particular stand out in terms of the share of total employment in solidarity-related sectors: education and health. Taken together, they account for 90% of employment in the above estimate, and offer many opportunities through their sheer size, as well as the growing labour needs that will need to be met in the future. Both sectors have been affected by budgetary restrictions in recent years that have impacted on the ability to provide the services needed, especially for special-need groups.

The **education sector** is a growing area. According to the EU skills panorama[12] in 2015, the share of education in total EU employment was 7.61%, and this share is projected to increase over the next decade. The biggest occupation group in education are teaching professionals, amounting to almost ten million in 2015 (9,681,603). The sector offers a variety of occupational opportunities, besides those directly related to teaching. A priority is to support inclusive education for all, low performing disadvantaged students, early school leavers and children with special needs, sections of the adult population with low basic skills, or newly arrived refugees. Similarly, the importance of foreign language competencies is increasing.

The highest number of so-called bottleneck occupations can be found among health professionals, personal care workers in health services and food preparation assistants. The **health sector** is fast-growing and provides the possibility for a wide range of employment opportunities across different skill-levels for young people. Specific areas where support is

[10] This figure concerns employment in six solidarity-related fields, including education, health care, social integration/social work, environmental protection, emergency and disaster management (immediate response, and including the reception of refugees), as well as food aid. Study commissioned end of 2016 by the European Commission on "Labour demand in solidarity-related sectors in the EU" (based on 2015 data).

[11] This figure concerns the six solidarity-related fields outlined in the above footnote.

[12] http://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en/sectors/education#1

needed include working with migrant health, health promotion and respite care for families looking after their sick or disabled members (social care). Job opportunities also exist in highly specialised medical care, health care in isolated/rural areas, and care for the elderly. However, the health sector is highly regulated. This requires that cross-border workers obtain appropriate national recognition and accreditation of their qualification before being able to practice in a host country.

Other sectors where solidarity activities can make a difference are those of **environmental protection** and **climate action**. The Commission's Employment Package "Towards a job-rich recovery" identifies the green economy as a job-rich sector[13]. The creation of green jobs is also an important measure of progress towards 'sustainable' growth as part of the European Commission's Europe 2020 strategy. Within 'Green jobs', traineeships as well as volunteering[14], there is a need for both low- and high-level skills[15]. Moreover the shift toward a resource-efficient, low-carbon and climate-resilient economy will need professionals able to design, develop, use and apply new efficient low-carbon production processes and technologies in a broad range of sectors. The potential of employment creation linked to the production of energy from renewable sources, energy efficiency, waste and water management, air quality, restoring and preserving nature and biodiversity and developing green infrastructure is significant and is resilient to changes in the business cycle.

The area of **food aid** supports two groups in particular; homeless people and households on low incomes. The two main types of activities undertaken are the provision of ready-cooked meals, and the provision of ingredients to prepare meals at home. Over 120 million people, or 24% of the EU population, are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Another almost 9% of all Europeans live in severe material deprivation. Based on this and on the information from foodbanks and the Salvation Army, it can be expected that the demand for paid workers will increase, together with the increasing demand for volunteers. In total, some 15,500 people work in foodbanks, of whom 90% are volunteers[16].

Another area of need for solidarity work is that of **social work**, who can be found in a variety of settings including schools, hospitals, mental health clinics, youth and child welfare service agencies, settlement houses, and community development organisations. The estimated labour force in the area of social integration and social work, including the reception and integration of asylum seekers and migrants, currently stands at 170,000[17], and this figure does not comprise the volunteers active in social activities. For instance, analysis of areas of activity among EVS volunteers show that among the most prevalent activities are youth support (leisure and information), arts and culture and social exclusion.

A number of factors make cross-border placements in the social sector more challenging, including the need to communicate with persons from other cultural backgrounds in a foreign

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13 European Commission (2012) *Towards a job-rich Recovery*.

14 According to the study on the *impact of transnational volunteering through the European Voluntary Service*, ICF, 2017, +/- 15% of EVS volunteers is active on environmental issues.

15 "Green" jobs according to the definition adopted by Eurostat centres on the environmental goods and services industry, comprises "activities which produce goods and services to measure, prevent, limit, minimise or correct environmental damage to water, air and soil, as well as problems related to waste, noise and eco-systems." This includes technologies, products and services that reduce environmental risk and minimise pollution and resources, OECD, 1999.

16 The estimated size of the sector can be found by looking at the European Federation of Food Banks (FEBA). http://www.eurofoodbank.org/

17 "Labour demand in solidarity-related sectors in the EU", 2015.

language, and the need to have an understanding of the legal, institutional and social context. In rural areas there are specific issues, such as higher rates of poverty and unemployment among young people, as well as more evident expressions of social exclusion compared with urban areas. This phenomenon is linked with other types of social difficulties such as depopulation, isolation of elderly people and general problems in generational renewal.

2.1.2 Challenges and opportunities for young people

Young people are keen to become active in society, but this is challenging.

The skills, creativity and diversity of 90 million young people are one of Europe's greatest assets. Whilst an increasing group of young people appear to turn away from traditional forms of politics and representation, many are willing to take action. Today's young generation attaches importance to social equality and is keen to engage in community life[18]. Interviews with stakeholders and studies confirm there is no crisis of democratic participation amongst youth, nor major disenchantment with political issues; in fact, quite the contrary. For instance, young people who volunteer with the European Voluntary Service (EVS) want to make a difference to people's lives, the opportunities to learn a foreign language, meet new people, live abroad, develop soft skills and enhance career prospects[19]. National data confirm interest of young people in solidarity. Across all civic service programmes, youth serve more than any other group, as a study shows[20]; it depicts that 77% of the programmes engage youth.

Transitions from childhood to adulthood have become longer and more complex. Specifically, the transition from education to work has become more protracted as the crisis has exacerbated young people's already fragile position on the labour market. Youth unemployment in the EU peaked at 24% in January 2013 and the same year annual rates exceeded 40 % in four Member States. Young people's situation in the labour market has improved in recent years, but youth unemployment remains high[21], with 3.9 million young people unemployed in the EU.

Involving young people in solidarity activities would constitute a real investment in their personal, social, civic and professional development. Stimulating the non-formal and informal learning of young people through solidarity activities is thus highly relevant.

For instance, experience from the EVS shows that participants in this volunteering experience learned to get along better with people from a different cultural background, that the experience helped them to identify opportunities for their personal and professional future often made them more confident in moving around on their own to travel, study or work abroad. Moreover, 85% of participants have become more aware of common European

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[18] According to Special Eurobarometer 451 (2016) *Future of Europe*, young people consider fostering social equality as the most important aim for the future of Europe. Almost one in two young persons in Europe indicates fostering social equality and solidarity as an essential need for society.

[19] CHE Consult, ICF International, (2017), *Study on the impact of transnational volunteering through the European Voluntary Service*, Draft final report, EAC/2015/17.

[20] McBride, A. M., Benítez, C., Sherraden, M. (2003), *The Forms and Nature of Civic Service: A Global Assessment*, Research Report. St. Louis: Center for Social Development, Washington University. Available at: https://csd.wustl.edu/Publications/Documents/Global_Assessment_Report.pdf

[21] Eurostat, at 17.3% (February 2017).

values.[22] Today, only a minority of young people gets the chance to enroll in the EVS or similar schemes and there is thus a largely untapped potential.

Failing to provide young citizens with the opportunity to get engaged in solidarity results in a loss of personal and social capital as well as employment potential.

Not tapping into the energy and potential of youth to get engaged puts both young people and the society at a disadvantage, at the price of loss of social capital. The concept of social capital is based on the idea that networks and relationships can serve as a resource. Evidence shows that social capital produces positive returns for network members and the community at large. There are indicators that social trust and strong networks help buffer against the effects of economic downturns. German data reveal that engagement in a range of social activities is positively linked with job-finding among the unemployed. In addition, social capital can provide a counterweight to economic and social disadvantage. In general, research suggests that the influence of social capital is a benign one, associated with higher levels of performance, in terms of educational attainment, employment and social inclusion, and that these appear to hold particularly true for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. As one academic puts it, social capital can beat the disadvantages of social class and weak cultural capital.

Lack of favourable prospects and inactivity among young people can have wider negative social effects and exclusion, and trigger negative sentiments including frustration, disappointment, or loneliness.[23] About one third of young Europeans between 15 and 24 years of age do not have confidence in the future[24]. For the first time since the Second World War, there is a real risk that the generation of today's young adults ends up less well-off than their parents. Europe cannot afford to lose the most educated group it has ever had.

The specific situation for young people, and the risks associated with not supporting them, justifies an initiative targeting young people, even if some stakeholders pointed to the relevance of promoting solidarity activities among other age groups.

Challenges are compounded in the case of disadvantaged young people.

Inactive young people deserve special attention. About 6.6 million young people are neither in employment, education or training ("NEETs") and one third of young people are at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Evidence hints at links between educational and professional activity and level of civic engagement: 28.7% of NEETs are interested in politics, compared to 40% of non-NEETs; 65% of NEETs declare a disposition to vote compared to more than 75% of non-NEETs. Furthermore, NEETs have lower levels of trust in institutions.[25]

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22 Ongoing research-based analysis and monitoring of the EU youth programme (Youth in Action/Erasmus+ Youth in Action) by means of RAY/www.researchyouth.net

23 Unemployed and inactive young people are more likely than others to feel socially excluded, to feel lonely, to face a lack of social support, and to have lower levels of mental well‑being. Eurofound (2014), *Social situation of young people in Europe*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

24 Standard Eurobarometer 85.2 (2016).

25 Eurofound, (2012), *Youth unemployment in Europe, NEETs – young people not in employment, education or training*.

Those starting life with fewer opportunities tend to accumulate disadvantages.[26] Young people with no qualifications, with a migrant background, with disabilities, or family responsibilities, all face additional obstacles in their transition to adulthood[27]. According to the latest PISA survey, around one in five 15-year-old pupils in the EU today lacks the minimum level of reading, maths or science competence needed to fully participate in society.

More than one determinant is generally at play in producing social exclusion, and these determinants often overlap in the life trajectories of socially excluded persons.[28] Research shows that some particular groups of young people find specific barriers to participation in solidarity activities:

- Disadvantaged young people lack confidence to take part in their society.[29]
- Young people with low income lack financial independence and fear losing social benefits.
- Young people living in rural areas face the challenges of geographical spread and long travel distances.
- Young people of minority ethnic groups face challenges based on language, cultural differences and discrimination.[30]

Despite significant efforts by Member States to improve outreach, young people in the most vulnerable situations, including the low-skilled and non-registered NEETs, are for instance under-represented among beneficiaries of the Youth Guarantee.[31] Many disadvantaged young people are less likely to be registered with Public Employment Services or local welfare services.[32] Disadvantaged young people are benefiting less from opportunities to work abroad. According to the latest Your First EURES Job (YFEJ) monitoring report, the combined share of the registered candidates that had been in higher education was 70%. Conversely, candidates with basic education levels represented 8% among the jobseekers registered.[33]

One of the key issues highlighted by stakeholders during the consultation process was the need for an inclusive approach, in order to make sure that all young people will be able to participate, irrespective of their background, educational attainment, skills level, or disability. This requires sufficient support, financially and through information channels, trainings, mentoring, etc. Some stakeholders pointed out that guidelines for assessment of projects should clearly prioritize disadvantaged young people, by using effective methods that lead to a higher ranking of these projects.

Overall stakeholders highlighted the particular need for training for disadvantaged young people. This is a group who face different, often multiple, barriers to entering the labour market and partaking in civic engagement. Therefore they can benefit from tailored support

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[26] 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-18). 2015/C 417/03. OJ C 417, 15.12.2015, p. 17–24.

[27] Eurofound, (2012), *Youth unemployment in Europe, NEETs – young people not in employment, education or training*.

[28] Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) (2013), *Youth Social Exclusion and Lessons from Youth Work*. Available at: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/tools/documents/social_exclusion_and_youth_work.pdf

[29] Gaskin K., Young People Volunteering and Civic Service. A Review of Literature, NCVO, 2004 p. 24.

[30] Gaskin K., Young People Volunteering and Civic Service. A Review of Literature, NCVO, 2004, p. 23.

[31] COM/2016/0646 final
Carcillo, S., Fernández, R. and Königs, S., (2015). 'NEET Youth in the Aftermath of the Crisis: Challenges and Policies', *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Paper*s, OECD Publishing, Paris.

[33] Your First Eures Job Progress Monitoring Report, November 2016, p. 9.

through not only language training, but also for instance personal development courses, psychological or practical help and professional mentoring before and during the placement. Some stakeholders also pointed out that disadvantaged young people should benefit from more flexibility in terms of type of placement, duration of placement and age bracket.

Solidarity action is a way of improving disadvantaged young people's prospects.

The EVS Impact Study showed that 90% of the disadvantaged jobseekers participating in the EVS stated that they have a better idea about their future life. 80% of them feel prepared for an international career path. 45% of youth with fewer opportunities engaging in the EVS (compared with 35% for other groups) joined to improve and widen their career prospects and enhance employability. According to the same study, negative perceptions on the value of volunteering, including in terms of career perspectives are more frequent in social groups that are unfamiliar with volunteering. On this basis, one could assume that a group with much to gain from getting involved remains unaware of the value and thus misses out.

As confirmed by research[34], volunteering can play a role in job acquisition for marginalized youth by giving them opportunities to build knowledge, skills and competences that are transferable from non-profit to business settings (general employment skills, people skills, life skills). It also prepares them for employment by making them more confident, more socially connected, and more aware of their work interests and aptitudes.[35] Traineeships can provide another good bridge to work. There is broad consensus that traineeships represents a useful experience to acquire relevant practical, personal and social skills, which facilitate access to employment.

During the consultations for the preparation of the legal base for the European Solidarity Corps, stakeholders stressed the importance of offering relevant trainings, such as for languages, to these groups. The same is true for validation of the experiences gained.

2.1.3 The limits of current instruments supporting the engagement of young people

The availability of a broad range of solidarity projects, as well as efficient information and awareness of these opportunities, is crucial to increase the motivation particularly among disadvantaged youth.

However, the existing supply falls short of meeting the interest among the young to get engaged in solidarity.

Only 6% of young people have stayed abroad for the purpose of volunteering; over 80% of young Europeans aged 15-24 said to have never been offered such opportunity.

Erasmus+ Youth, which contains the European Voluntary Service (EVS), demonstrates high demand and decreasing share of projects receiving grant support. From 50.7% of success rate in 2014 to only 33.5% in 2016 of submitted projects which could be granted. This leaves only in 2016 more than 8 000 volunteering placements unfunded due to the lack of available funds.

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[34] EU Youth Report 2015.
for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-18). 2015/C 417/03. OJ C 417, 15.12.2015, p. 17–24.

[35] European Commission, Literature review for "Study on the impact of transnational volunteering through the European Voluntary Service", June 2016, p. 14-15.

Or, since the start of the Your First EURES Job Scheme under the EaSI programme (2010-2020), only 1469 placements could be made following 8615 registrations and requests for assistance.

To foster intra-EU labour mobility for young, the Commission tested between 2011 and 2013 a scheme called "Your first EURES job" (YFEJ to help the EU citizens aged 18-30 to find a job, traineeship or apprenticeship in another EU Member State, to offer a full package of pre- and post-placement support as well as to assist employers with finding workers in other EU country. Since 2014, YFEJ is implemented in the framework of the 2014-2020 EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)[36] as a "targeted mobility scheme"[37] but it remains small-scale and did not focus on solidarity sectors.

Particularly in the case of traineeships, barriers to mobility appear to be high; cross-border traineeships are underrepresented on the European labour market.[38] Stakeholders see a great potential for traineeship placements in solidarity sectors, as revealed during the targeted consultations.

In April 2013 the EU launched the Youth Guarantee with the objective to ensure that all young people up to the age of 25 receive a quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.[39] Since then, this initiative has significantly contributed to increase opportunities for young people on the labour market.[40] Yet, the Youth Guarantee does not specifically target the solidarity sector and in this regard, the European Solidarity Corps can complement Member States' efforts.

In-country mobility schemes are usually not specifically targeting young people nor the solidarity sector *per se*. While many Member States have supportive measures in place to foster in-country geographical mobility for jobs, traineeships or voluntary placements, few invest in measures for intra-EU labour mobility. In this respect, they rely to a large extent on the European Employment Services (EURES) network services.

Young people get involved in solidarity to varying degrees in the EU and structures are differently organised across the EU.

Evidence shows that addressing solidarity and building social, economic and civic cohesion benefits from the existence of a rich tissue of dynamic organisations and associations[41]. A comparison of funding and support schemes available to volunteering in the Member States shows that there is a wide variety in the availability of opportunities in each country, with differences in the way they are managed, organised or funded[42].

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36 http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1081.

37 Targeting young nationals aged 18-35 and employers from the European Economic Area (EEA, i.e. the EU 28 countries, Norway and Iceland)

38 Your First Eures Job: Monitoring Report, November 2016

39 Fourteen Member States have extended the upper age limit beyond 25, see section 2.1.1.2 below.

40 European Commission (2016) "The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on", COM/2016/0646 final

41 See, for example, Robert D. Putnam, Bowling Alone (Simon & Schuster, 2000) and Robert D. Putnam and Lewis Feldstein, Better Together (Simon & Schuster, 2003).

42 Comparative youth research in preparation for the upcoming Youth Wiki.

According to a Eurobarometer survey[43], a quarter of young people in the EU have been involved in an organised voluntary activity in the past 12 months. These activities were more often aimed at making a change to circumstances in the local community (66%) than in the country as a whole (27%), in other European countries (7%) or other parts of the world (11%).

There is considerable variation by Member State:[44] More than a third of young people in Ireland (42%), Denmark (39%) and the Netherlands (38%) have participated in organised voluntary activities, while respondents in Bulgaria (10%), Greece (13%) and Sweden (15%) are the least likely to have done so. Respondents who finished their education at the age of 20 or over are more likely to have participated in organised voluntary activities (26%) than those who ended education at the age of 16-19 (20%) or at the age of 15 or under (15%). Participation is also lower among manual workers (17% compared with 25%-27% in the other occupation groups).

Respondents in the Netherlands (11%) and Ireland (10%) are the most likely to have volunteered abroad at some point. Young people are least likely to have had the opportunity to volunteer abroad in Italy (98% have never had the opportunity), Portugal (97%), Cyprus (95%) and Romania (95%).

In 2008 the EU adopted a Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers with the aim of promoting and overcoming barriers to cross-border mobility. An evaluation[45] of the Recommendation showed that the obstacles which it aimed at overcoming almost a decade ago, are relevant still today. These include quality in volunteer management, availability of information, access of disadvantages young people, visa issues, linguistic support, insurance and protection, and simplification of application procedures. The evaluation recommended to make a more explicit link with funding opportunities.

2.2 Causes of the problem

2.2.1 A fragmented and complex landscape of supporting structures and enablers for solidarity activities

To the extent that opportunities to engage exist, solidarity activities are designed in line with national structures and are unevenly distributed across Member States.

Thus, young people who wish to make a positive contribution to society and have identified opportunities to do so are often confronted with a complex and heterogonous institutional landscape across the EU.

At EU level, the European Voluntary Service (EVS) reaches only a small proportion of the target population, its placements are not exclusively with solidarity activities addressing unmet societal needs and it does not allow for placement of volunteers in their home country. As far as opportunities for traineeships and jobs are concerned, there are no existing

[43] Eurobarometer 408 "European Youth", 2015.

[44] The variety by country is confirmed in SOLIDUS (2015), Concept paper for research and policy analysis of the spatial dimension of solidarity (Horizon 2020 project "Solidarity in European societies: empowerment, social justice and citizenship).

[45] Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU, ICF, 2016.

instruments or programmes supporting placements exclusively with solidarity activities addressing unmet societal needs, and that do so across the whole of the EU.

According to a study, organisations active in transnational solidarity in the EU are facing several problems[46]:

- the majority of organisations reported shrinking funding opportunities in times of increasing activities. Since the start of the crisis, solidarity activities had increased due to growing numbers of people in need. Lack of adequate funding was reported as the highest/extremely pressing constraint for about half of the studied organisations;
- the studied organisations reported problems associated with disjointed and discontinued funding schemes, often as a result of shifting public attention and priorities. Even if solidarity practices are focused on meeting urgent needs, the organisations stressed the need for a more enduring and sustained collective effort;
- the organisations were concerned about the need to improve cooperation and coordination, not only to regarding relationships between public authorities and the organisations, but also the coordination between organisations. Transnational cooperation was considered important to exchange knowledge and experience, foster learning processes and enhance the discussion capacity in the field;
- it was recommended to consider public assistance and professional services for volunteers, e.g., in the area of support, mentoring and supervision of volunteers, and voluntary associations to cope with the problems of burnout and work overload.

The study concluded that – in light of the above and against the backdrop of the current political and social climate of national retrenchment and growing populism – it would be advisable to refortify social investment and provide civil society with the necessary financial resources to maintain and reinforce transnational solidarity cooperation. Moreover, public institutions were called upon to intensify their efforts in assisting civil society organisations to foster cross-national encounters and deliberations amongst local and national solidarity actors in order to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experience and practices.

While there are volunteering traditions in all Member States they are quite different, and, as also emphasised by stakeholders, entail different concepts, purposes, activities and legal provisions.

By way of example, one can observe the following kind of differences:

- Schemes apply different notions of the learning, duration or recognition of outcomes. For instance, national programmes tend to focus on the benefits of the server, and less on skills. Conversely, international programmes tend to focus more on those who are being served and skills are more often needed[47].
- Volunteering schemes, programmes and activities also have different perceptions on social protection (young people might lose their unemployment and other social benefits when volunteering) and varying legal status.

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[46] TransSOL research consortium (November, 2016), Policy Implications Arising from the Analysis of Innovative Practices of Transnational Solidarity Organisations, European Policy Brief 2 (Horizon 2020 project, Transnational solidarity at times of crisis). Based on a sample of 2408 organisations.

[47] Global Service Institute, Center for Social Development, Washington University in St. Louis, *The forms and Nature of Civic Service: A Global Assessment*, 2003.

- In some countries, there is a preference for state intervention whereas in others, civic society is in the lead. Member States also have different connotations of volunteering.

These changes imply differences in access to opportunities to engage in solidarity and, in a cross-border context, limited scope to upscale.

Stakeholders who were consulted on the future legal base for the European Solidarity Corps suggested the use of lessons learnt from the variety of experiences across Member States in the future implementation of the Corps, and pointed to the potential of boosting volunteering in those Member States where it is less prevalent today.

The development and dissemination of a social innovation and solidarity approach on a larger scale in the EU is hampered by:

- Insufficient knowledge of the needs and capabilities of civil society organisations, social enterprises and social entrepreneurs and public sector organisations;
- Fragmentation of efforts and resources, lack of transparency and visibility, limited financial support and insufficient technical skills that can support organisations to develop and deliver social innovations;
- Low levels of involvement of citizens and business[48]; civic participation has undergone significant change and the modern societies have gradually developed towards greater individualism. The sector has to cope with new types and forms of participation, characterised by selective short-term engagement.[49]
- Poor diffusion, and little scale-up of good practices;
- Emergence of new forms of solidarity fostered by the digitalisation that revolutionise or even replace traditional expressions of solidarity;
- Poor methods of impact evaluation of actions and policies[50].

Traineeships are becoming increasingly common for young people as part of their transition from education to work.[51]

As mentioned earlier, there is a wide consensus about the usefulness of traineeships and their role in finding employment. According to a Eurobarometer survey, almost every second young person in the age group 18-35 had at least one traineeship experience and 70% of ex-trainees stated that such experience was useful in finding a regular job.[52]

The availability and scope of traineeships are uneven across Member States, although they could be grouped into two broad categories – active labour market policy (ALMP)[53] and open

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48 Study on Social Innovation, prepared by the Social Innovation eXchange (SIX) and the Young Foundation for the Bureau of European Policy Advisors, 2010.

49 EU Youth Report 2015.
Union, pp. 242-253

50 See BEPA (2010), *Empowering people, driving change: Social innovation in the European Union*; OECD (2011), *'Fostering innovation to address social challenges*.

51 I.a. Apprenticeship and Traineeship schemes in EU 27: Key success factors. A guidebook for policy planners and practitioners. European Commission / Ecorys 2013.

52 Flash Eurobarometer 378, 2013: The experience of traineeships in the EU.

53 Offered to young persons by public institutions (typically the public employment services) acting as an intermediary between the host organisation and the trainee.

market[54] traineeships. Moreover, there is a plurality of regulatory frameworks ranging from provisions in the labour law, specific acts to collective agreements or no regulation at all.

Acknowledging the existing fragmentation, stakeholders still warned against ignoring existing national, regional and local activities and called to ensure synergy and avoid overlaps.

2.2.2 Obstacles deterring young people from getting engaged

Even where opportunities exist, information does not sufficiently reach the target groups.

Lack of awareness and information about existing volunteering opportunities is a recurrent challenge in volunteering and has been tackled by the Council Recommendation in the Mobility of Young Volunteers[55], one action of which was to raise awareness about volunteering. As is highlighted by the EU Youth Report 2015, the Council Recommendation puts a strong emphasis on the sharing of information on volunteering – such as existing opportunities, information and training for youth workers, organisations and other actors.

More organisations could benefit from EU support to volunteering if the support was better known[56]. The European Voluntary Service (EVS) mainly attracts a segment of the youth population that is higher educated and already engaged: 70% of young people getting into the EVS already had volunteering experience[57]. According the EVS impact study, the of awareness tends to go hand in hand with general level of engagement in education, formal and non-formal, and youth activities.

Thus, there is scope to improve outreach to those young people who not yet engaged in or familiar with volunteering and other civic activities. This was confirmed by stakeholders who said there was a need for both awareness and for practical information. Stakeholders thereby suggested making better use of the channels and the language used by young people, such as personal stories and sharing of experiences on social media.

"*IVO4ALL, international volunteering opportunities for all*" explored access of young people to voluntary opportunities abroad[58]; as part of an evaluation process of national voluntary schemes. Thanks to an experimentation process, 204 young people could benefit from new information and support measures, such as pre-departure and voluntary training. To ensure inclusive and accessible programmes, the project recommended having improved communication, adapted selections, specific support, upskilled staff and mentors, post-placement follow-up and adapted placements. The project furthermore provided advice around programme set-up and project management, including for instance a clear vision and targets, remove legal barriers, strong partnerships, adequate support for practitioners and quality assurance to e.g. enable field trials.

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54 Open market traineeships, there is no third party apart from the trainee and the host organisation which makes quality assurance more difficult.

55 Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU.

56 EVS Communication Campaign – Mapping of target audiences (May 2016).

57 Study on the impact of transnational volunteering through the EVS, 2017.

58 IVO4ALL involved seven ministries and youth agencies, from France, the UK, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Italy and was co-funded by Erasmus+.

Although overall awareness of the Youth Guarantee among young people has increased in recent years – from 21% in 2014 to 24% in 2016 [59] – figures indicate an increase in young people's awareness in countries which have invested in awareness-raising activities and/or in which media coverage of the Youth Guarantee was high.

Cross-border occupational services are essentially made available through EURES and these are not sufficiently well-known to the public according to youth organisations. According to the latest YFEJ monitoring report, 40 % of registered candidates are between 23 - 26 years, 33% between 27-30 years old and only 11 % are between 18 - 22 years old.

Financial obstacles deter getting engaged in voluntary activities.

A survey conducted in 2014 that addresses young people's propensity to volunteer, [60] are a first factor: Only 16% of young volunteers said to have received contributions for the expenses incurred in voluntary activities, whereas 28% of respondents had incurred expenses but did not receive any contributions (a slight majority did not incur expenses). About a third of young volunteers received a contributions towards expenses incurred. For young volunteers who received financial compensation, the main source is the organisations for which they volunteer (11%), followed by governments and public bodies (3%), family and friends (3%) or businesses (2%). When it comes to volunteering abroad, 38% respondents did not incur expenses, and among those getting compensation received it from the organisation they volunteered for (20%), government and public bodies (10%), family and friends (13%) and commercial businesses (3%).

And there are further, personal barriers to participation.

There are further factors holding young people back from getting engaged in solidarity, related to one's personal abilities and circumstances. For instance, the inability to express oneself in a foreign language also limits possibilities to spend time abroad. On average one in five young Europeans reports not knowing any foreign language.[61] Other reasons that the EVS impact study[62] mentions for not engaging were related to work responsibilities (lack of time and opportunities) or family obligations.

2.2.3 Varied quality standards

Ensuring quality placements to young people is essential to ensure their engagement in the solidarity sector is not a one-off experience.

The idea of placements should be to step up civic engagement and to serve as a stepping stone into the labour market by improving, in particular, their skills and employability.

10 out of the 25 Erasmus+ programme countries participating in the Youth Wiki[63] report having put in place systems for monitoring the quality of the volunteering programmes in

[59] Flash Eurobarometer of the European Parliament (EP EB395), European Youth in 2014; Special Eurobarometer of the European Parliament, European Youth in 2016. These figures refer to the share of young people who answer 'yes' in response to the questions "Have you ever heard of the EU's initiative called 'Youth Guarantee' which is intended to combat youth unemployment?" .

[60] Flash Eurobarometer 408 (2014) *European Youth*.

[61] Eurostat UOE [edat_aes_l22]

[63] A forthcoming information tool for youth policy information in EU Member States.

which young people are involved. In the remaining majority of countries, no formal system of quality assurance is in place. In some cases (for example in the Netherlands and Sweden), the high degree of decentralisation of volunteering regulations and the tradition of organisations' self-regulation are reasons behind the absence of national QA systems. In ten out of the 25 countries covered by the Youth Wiki, there are no pre-defined support schemes or regulations on the reimbursement of expenses.

The EVS impact study concluded that strengthening quality systems in EVS is necessary, including raising capacity of organisations and greater monitoring on the ground. It also recommended improving measures to ensure consistently high quality activities and provide high-quality pre-departure preparation and follow-up. The evaluation of the Council Recommendation on mobility of young volunteers[64] confirmed the need for better quality in volunteer management, notably in terms of sufficient training, capacity-building and funding.

Similarly, a recent report by the Commission, staking stock of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee since January 2014, underscored while over 16 million young people have entered a national Youth Guarantee schemes and around 10 million have taken up an offer of employment, continued education, a traineeship, or an apprenticeship, the quality of the offers which they have received are of varied quality.[65] Challenges relate to the fact that offers of continued education do not always ensure that a learning outcome has been achieved or lead to a recognised qualification. Other challenges relate to the lack of regulation of traineeships offers in the open market as regards transparency of hiring, duration and recognition. A 2013 Eurobarometer survey underscored similar concerns[66]. Variations in the quality of offers depend primarily on the national labour market, they also result from whether and how 'good-quality' offers have been defined and provided in practice.

To ensure quality placements under the European Solidarity Corps, quality standards should be ensured for all participants irrespective of the host country in which they based and the type of placements they are engaged in (job, traineeship or volunteering). This expectation to meet high quality standards also resonated in the stakeholder consultation on the legal base. While solidarity jobs should comply with national laws, regulations and collective agreements, an important yardstick for gauging the quality of traineeships is the European Quality Framework in adopted in March 2014.[67]

2.2.4 Lack of validation of the solidarity activity

Formal validation of skills is still limited.

On average, only a quarter of young volunteers received a certificate or diploma identifying and documenting their experience and the skills they have demonstrated.

In most cases certificates – though they can support young people's CVs and might be taken into account by future employers – are not part of a more formal process of validation of the

64 Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU.

65 European Commission (2016) *The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on*, COM/2016/0646 final.

66 Eurobarometer 378 (2013) "the experience of traineeships in the EU".

67 Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships, 2014/C 88/01
European Commission (2016), staff working document, Applying the quality framework for traineeships.

knowledge, skills and competences acquired. Only very few education systems report to have established – or to be in the process of establishing – validation mechanisms through which voluntary work can contribute to obtaining a qualification or degree.

In 2007 the EU launched the Youthpass, which supports the visibility and validation of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning in projects funded by Erasmus+ Youth in Action. Youthpass Certificates come with a guided process that helps young people become aware of and describe the experiences and key competences gained in the activities.

The 2013 Youthpass Impact Study[68] confirmed that participants consider Youthpass useful when applying for a job, traineeship or formal education. The study identified the need to increase its awareness and acceptance among employers, vocational training providers and higher education institutions. Links need to be established with wider policy developments, at EU and national level, in the area of validation of non-formal and informal learning and youth work. The study pointed to the need to strengthen the quality aspects of Youthpass implementation and further develop the certificates and technical tools. Stakeholders suggested to use the experience of tools such as Youthpass, but also to develop it further.

The validation of skills of non-formal and informal learning is a way to recognise the full range of an individual's knowledge, skills and competences, making them more visible and usable for further studies or employment. Such validation - as outlined in the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning - is still limited and Member states have been invited to put the necessary arrangement in place by 2018.

As regards the validation of the knowledge, skills and competences gained through engaging in a solidarity action, many countries report[69] that young volunteers receive certificates, such as a "passport", "card", "record book" or "award" from the organisations that engaged them.

The on-going review of the European Framework of Key Competences provides an opportunity to review validation of experiences within the European Solidarity Corps and seek synergies with other instruments.

2.3 Summary

Summarising the problems, needs and causes, the messages below should guide the choice of options to foster engagement of young people and organisations in solidarity. This is why the EU needs to address the following challenges in the framework of consolidating the European Solidarity Corps:

- mobilise and enable organisations to provide more opportunities for solidarity activities through volunteering, jobs and traineeships to address unmet societal needs;
- ensure easy and equal access through lean procedures and possibilities for placements of young people also in their own local communities, along with other measures facilitating the inclusion of disadvantaged young people;

[68] https://www.youthpass.eu/en/about-youthpass/youthpass-impact-study/

[69] Source: Information relayed by Member States to Youth WIKI (not yet published)

- ensure European added value by promoting placements according to shared standards for quality and a common understanding of the acquisition of skills and competences to be recognised across borders;
- ensure synergies between all organisations in a variety of sectors at local, regional, national or EU level;
- create greater awareness for and transparency about other existing programmes which contribute to solidarity, national or European, and harness their potential to expand the scope and outreach of their activities, in complement to the European Solidarity Corps.

The major challenges are i) the insufficient supply of offers for placements; ii) addressing the current fragmentation resulting from a large variety in the understanding and organisation of solidarity schemes, iii) bringing volunteering and occupational solidarity activity opportunities under one umbrella with a shared quality approach; iv) creating a visible and broad recognition for the learning experience gained, regardless whether this experience took place in a voluntary or an occupational context.

3. OBJECTIVES

3.1 General Objective

The intended objective of the European Solidarity Corps is to enhance the engagement of young people and organisations in accessible and high quality solidarity activities to contribute to strengthening cohesion and solidarity in Europe, supporting communities and responding to societal challenges.

3.2 Specific Objectives

Individual Level: provide opportunities for young people to engage in quality solidarity activities while improving their skills and competences

The European Solidarity Corps would provide young people, with the support of participating organisations, with easily accessible opportunities for engagement in solidarity activities while improving their skills and competences for personal, educational, social, civic and professional development, as well as their employability and facilitating transition into the labour market, including by supporting the mobility of young volunteers, trainees and workers.

Societal Level: offer quality solidarity activities that address unmet societal needs

The European Solidarity Corps would ensure that the solidarity activities that are offered to the European Solidarity Corps participants contribute to addressing concrete, unmet societal needs and strengthening communities, are of high quality and properly validated.

4. OPTIONS / DELIVERY MECHANISMS

This section describes the relevant policy options which are further analysed and compared. The possibility of using a legal base of one of the existing programmes was discarded due to the fact that it would result in a programme with complex set of overlapping objectives and limited visibility of solidarity actions in a broader frame. Furthermore, such approach would lead to disengagement of stakeholders from the other programmes. Consequently, two policy options have been identified.

4.1 Policy Option 1: Continuation of implementation through various spending programmes (baseline scenario)

Option 1 would be to continue implementation through various spending programmes as it is the case since the launch of the European Solidarity Corps in December 2016[70].

There are currently eight programmes[71] funding European Solidarity Corps activities: in terms of size, the two main ones are Erasmus+ with its European Voluntary Service (EVS), which today supports the European Solidarity Corps' volunteering placements and the Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) that supports its occupational placements (in this first phase, solidarity jobs, traineeships and apprenticeships).

Since December 2016, interested young people can register to participate in one of these eight programmes through an online single entry point accessible via the European Youth Portal.[72] By the end of April 2016, some 28.000 people had registered with the database of participants. Since March 2016, accredited organisations involved in one of the eight programmes have been able to search the database to find suitable candidates for their activities and to subsequently contact them to offer and agree on a placement.

In 2017, the **European Voluntary Service** provides approximately € 58 million for volunteering placements addressing more than 5000 EVS accredited organisations. The implementation through a system of National Agencies ensures that the targeted 8 000 placements will be available in each Erasmus+ Programme Country[73].

The **EaSI progamme** is the largest provider of occupational placements under the European Solidarity Corps. The Commission launched one call for proposals under EaSI with a budget of € 14.2 million aiming to support 4,000 to 6,000 cross-border placements (job, traineeship or apprenticeship) over a 24-month period. The call required the establishment of a Consortium of at least 5 organisations from 5 different Member States, including at least 2 Public Employment Services.

The **LIFE Programme** launched a specific call for proposals for volunteer activities linked to the conservation of Natura 2000 to allow for in-country placements of European Solidarity Corps participants. Furthermore, in 2017 LIFE has partnered with Erasmus+ to reinforce the environment strand of the European Voluntary Service and extend it to environmental and climate action cross-country placements.

In 2017, the **Europe for Citizens programme** is encouraging project promoters to engage young people registered in the European Solidarity Corps. The approximate budget is up to € 3.5 million.

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70 European Commission (2016), *A European Solidarity Corps*, Communication from the Commission from the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM(2016) 942 final of 7.12.2016.

71 The Erasmus+ programme, the Employment and Social Innovation programme (EaSI), the LIFE programme, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Health Programme, the Europe for Citizens programme, the European Regional Development Fund (through Interreg) and the Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

72 https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en

73 EU Member States, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Turkey and former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

There are a minimum of € 9.5 million for projects financed by the **Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund** in 2017 aiming at promoting the integration of third-country nationals. The beneficiaries have been encouraged to involve European Solidarity Corps participants.

The **Interreg Volunteer Youth initiative** offers the possibility to European Solidarity Corps participants to serve as volunteers in cross-border, transnational or interregional programmes and related projects. The total budget of this initiative is € 1 million.

In 2017, the **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development** provides support for projects with an agricultural or rural development component involving European Solidarity Corps participants. The funding earmarked for those projects is € 1.8 million

In 2017, beneficiaries of operating grants of the **Health Programme** are encouraged to involve European Solidarity Corps participants in the health sector. An estimated € 60,000 are available for these activities.

None of the eight programmes have an exclusive focus on solidarity activities; their objectives have a broader scope. Some allow for placements of young people only in a different country than their own. Each of the eight programmes has its own legal basis, objectives and budget, resulting in a situation where the programmes are not aligned in terms of scope and conditions for participation.

4.2 Policy Option 2: Self-standing programme with strengthened focus on solidarity

This option would consist of developing a new spending programme to the benefit of youth focussing which will address unmet societal needs through solidarity activities offered by organisations and performed by the young European Solidarity Corps participants. This option would build on the experiences of the funding programmes currently underpinning the European Solidarity Corps and aim to attract, on the one hand, new solidarity placement providers, but also, on the other hand, be attractive to the organisations that are involved in the implementation as it operates currently. A clear set of objectives would allow activities to focus on solidarity and contribute to clarity for organisations on the purpose of the activities.

The opportunity to express solidarity and gain experience should be accessible to all young people from the EU. Disadvantaged young people constitute a highly heterogeneous group with different, and often multiple, barriers to participation in work and civic life. For instance, and as called for by stakeholders during the consultations, young people without qualifications, with disabilities, or with parental responsibilities, should receive targeted and tailored support to ensure their participation in the European Solidarity Corps.

To make the European Solidarity Corps attractive and accessible, participants would be able to choose from a menu of options. This is in line with stakeholder expectations, which pointed to the importance of tailored support and flexibility to enable participation of disadvantaged youth. It will allow everyone to get an offer tailored to his or her needs and abilities.

Options/parameters would include:

- different type of placements (volunteering, jobs and traineeships) which best suits the young person's profile, goals and professional pathway/trajectory;
- flexibility in terms of choice in terms of the duration of a placement;
- a broad range of skills-level to include young people no matter their level of skills;
- in-country and cross-country placements.

Cross-country placements offer the opportunity for the participant to do a placement outside his/her home country. Strict national legislation on the qualifications required for jobs in certain sectors (health, construction) should not deter cross-border mobility and European Solidarity Corps participants should be supported in the process of recognition of their qualifications. In-country placements will allow young people to express their solidarity within their local communities and in some cases may be more suitable for certain young people (lack of language skills, young people with a disability).

The programme would hence be implemented through three types of activities:
1. Placements (cross-border and in-country).
2. Project-based initiatives
3. Networking activities

Placements would consist of individual volunteering, volunteering in teams, traineeships and jobs placements[74] and typically last between 2 and 12 months[75]. Moreover, based on feedback during the consultation, the activities can also be shorter than 2 months to encourage the involvement of disadvantaged youth.

Project based initiatives would be local initiatives, set up and carried out by groups of minimum 5 participants. They would be youth-led volunteering activities where young people participate actively in designing and implementing their own ideas for the benefit of their local communities. They would be aimed at equipping participants with the necessary resources (seed money) and support to be themselves drivers of solidarity actions

Networking activities would consist of dedicated activities aiming at:

- building a sense of belonging among European Solidarity Corps participants;
- enhancing the impact and the benefits of the placement experience on the individual;
- reinforcing the capacities of participating organisations to offer better quality placements, to an increasing number of European Solidarity Corps participants;
- attracting newcomers - both youngsters and participating organisations – into the European Solidarity Corps initiative;
- offering participants and participating organisations the opportunity to give feedback to the European Commission and National Agencies on the state of art of the implementation of European Solidarity Corps.

In order to maximise the attractiveness for organisations, businesses and public authorities to offer solidarity placements, a number of modalities related to the financing of the activities will be open to such participating organisations, who may either i) use funding from the European Solidarity Corps; ii) use funding from a different EU funding programme and iii) use no EU funding at all.

With a clear implementation structure based on the system of National Agencies (indirect management mode) the accessibility of the programme even for small organisations should be ensured. Moreover, bearing in mind the role of National Agencies, a natural contact point for

[74] Apprenticeships will not be available under the European Solidarity Corps in order to avoid overlaps with the ErasmusPro initiative.
[75] Traineeships will typically last up to 6 months.

solidarity activities would be created at national level with the capacity of linking EU objectives to national realities. This structure would then build on the existing Erasmus+ experience but, in order to provide the necessary link with labour markets, also open the door to labour market actors, such as public and private employment services, Chambers of Commerce and other organisations interested in facilitating occupational placements.

This governance structure would avoid the multiplication of structures at national level and ensures a degree of continuity vis-à-vis stakeholders engaged under Erasmus+ as well as the consortia that will be involved in the European Solidarity Corps Call under EaSI (Phase 1).

Quality measures would be applied in the form of a set of procedures and criteria to ensure that placements are of high quality, including:

- Certification procedures for organisations: ensure a lean, but clear certification mechanism to ensure the integrity of the organisations involved and clearly enable to qualify activities, either as volunteering, traineeships or jobs.
- Insurance: complementary health and accident insurance for insurance-related expenses which are not already covered by the European Health Insurance Card or other insurance schemes to which participants may be enrolled.
- Online Linguistic Support (for cross-border placements): European Solidarity Corps participants are to be given access to an online tool allowing them to assess and improve (through an online language course) their competences in the foreign language they will use to carry out their placement abroad.
- General Online training: an open-access training provided prior to departure via the European Solidarity Corps' portal. This is a general online induction with various modules, such as: the mission of the European Solidarity Corps, ethics and integrity of the European Solidarity Corps, roles and responsibilities of participants and placement providers, European values and democracy, inter-cultural awareness, and health and safety, etc.
- In addition, the following specific training to those European Solidarity Corps participants carrying out individually a cross-border placement: on-arrival training, which aims to serve as a welcoming training in the placement country, mentorship and continuous training, to equip the participant with the skills needed to carry out the tasks envisaged by the placement; (optional) pre-departure training, for participants with disadvantages and mid-term evaluation sessions, for participants in placements lasting more than six months.
- European Solidarity Corps certificate: participants would be entitled to a certificate of participation in a European Solidarity Corps' placement, to be issued compulsorily at the end of the placement by the placement provider. The European Solidarity Corps' participants who so wish will have the opportunity to receive a certificate identifying and documenting the main learning outcomes of their experience. The responsibility for issuing the Skills passport/Youthpass certificates to the participants would be with the placement provider.
- Post-placement support: participants would be provided with guidance and support services at the end of their placement, with a view to encourage there continued involvement in the European Solidarity Corps initiative (alumni network; training/mentoring to future participants), as well providing them career guidance and/or support to sustainable labour market integration in their home country or other.

The European Solidarity Corps would also strive to develop quality of solidarity activities for young people more generally. This will be done through supporting partnerships between the

Commission and organisations active in solidarity by awarding to those fulfilling the necessary criteria a Quality Label. Such a label, which was also suggested by several stakeholders during the consultations, would allow them to benefit from limited horizontal services without being a grant-holder. In doing so, this will allow to get synergy with other financial resources for solidarity.

Awareness and visibility of the opportunities available to young people would be further enhanced by developing the single access through the European Youth Portal. This development was widely endorsed by stakeholders during the consultations. Yet, some pointed to the need to cater for the specific needs of disadvantaged youth, such as disabled people, or those with little access to on-line tools.

Building on the experience of its programmes so far, the Commission would provide implementing measures to ensure that the programme reaches all young people and that it provides the recognition of the learning outcomes.

In order to ensure continuity, coherence and complementarity among the volunteering activities supported at EU level, those activities that have been supported under the European Voluntary Service and that fall within the geographical scope of the European Solidarity Corps will be supported by the latter in the form of cross-border volunteering placements. In parallel, the other European Voluntary Service activities that do not fall under the geographical scope of the European Solidarity Corps will continue to be supported under the Programme established by Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013.

The Commission will foresee lean but accurate reporting and quality control, building on but at the same time improving the procedures in place today. Stakeholders for instance pointed to a need for rapid treatment of certification and placements. High quality of activities under the European Solidarity Corps will be essential in ensuring real and effective recognition of the skills and competences gained through participation on a person's CV by employers, even beyond the solidarity sector. Some stakeholders pointed to the possibilities of new technology in managing future developments of the European Solidarity corps, in terms of information, awareness-raising, trainings and preparations, matching and reporting. Stakeholders suggested making a clear distinction between voluntary and occupational activities, which will be addressed through subscribing to the European Solidarity Corps' charter and the certification procedure. They were split as regards the involvement of different types of organisations, especially commercial undertakings.

5. ANALYSIS OF DELIVERY MECHANISMS AND RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1 Indicative assumptions for the analysis of the Policy Options

The analysis and comparison of options in this section are based on the following hypothesis:

- Sufficient and consistent financial resources are essential to ensure the success of the European Solidarity Corps with the objective to "engage" 100.000 young people by 2020. Whilst at least 12,000 young people are foreseen to take part under the current set-up of the European Solidarity Corps drawing on existing financing programmes, about 88,000 young people could take part in the second phase of the European Solidarity Corps on the basis of the legislative proposal by the end of 2020. The financing will require a mix of 'fresh money' (25%) and direct redeployment from existing programmes (75%) in line with the precedents set by other important Commission initiatives. An overall budget of

341, € 5 million will be required for the period 2018-2020, of which EUR 294.2 million under Heading 1a being the financial envelope[76] of the Solidarity Corps and EUR 47.3 million of contributions coming from other Headings and programmes. The calculation of the budget is based on average costs of similar activities in other EU-programmes. The average costs for the placements of participants in the European Solidarity Corps depend on the type of activity and the foreseen average duration of the placement;

- Below is an overview of the different sources of funding including the Global Margin for Commitments for the 2018 year and the unallocated margin under Heading 1a for 2019-20 period which will constitute the total amount of € 341,5 million to be financed as mentioned above:

Sources of funding for the European Solidarity Corps *(in euro million- rounded figures)*	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**TOTAL**
Erasmus+, of which:	**51.9**	**69.2**	**76.6**	**197.7**
15 02 01 01 - Promoting excellence and cooperation in the European education and training area and its relevance to the labour market	2.1	2.1	1.8	5.9
15 02 01 02- Promoting excellence and cooperation in the European youth area and the participation of young people in European democratic life	49.9	67.1	74.8	191.8
European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) , of which:	**2.5**	**3.5**	**4.0**	**10.0**
04 03 02 01- Progress — Supporting the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Union employment and social policy and working conditions legislation	2.5	3.5	4.0	10.0
The Union Civil Protection Mechanism, of which:	**2.0**	**2.0**	**2.0**	**6.0**
23 03 01 01- Disaster prevention and preparedness within the Union	2.0	2.0	2.0	6.0
LIFE, of which:	**1.5**	**1.5**	**1.5**	**4.5**
34 02 03- Better climate governance and information at all levels	0.5	0.5	0.5	1.5
07 02 03- Supporting better environmental governance and information at all levels	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.0
European Social Fund (ESF)*	**11.1**	**12.1**	**11.8**	**35.0**

[76] This financial envelope constitutes the prime reference amount within the meaning of point 17 of the Interinstitutional Agreement (2013/C 373/01) between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management.

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) *	**1.8**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**1.8**
Unallocated margin under Heading 1a (including Global Margin for Commitments)	**18.4**	**30.5**	**37.7**	**86.5**
Total Contribution to European Solidarity Corps	**89.2**	**118.7**	**133.6**	**341.5**
* The contribution from EAFRD and ESF comes from the overall technical assistance envelope included in the financial programming and not yet allocated.				

The Commission would propose to apply the necessary equivalent reductions on the indicated budget lines and funds in the financial programming of different schemes for the remaining 3 years of the current MFF (2018-2020).

Taking into account the current schemes (EVS, ESC-Phase I) and to maximize the achievements of the set objectives, the following working assumption have been considered: the activities funded will be indicatively constituted of 80% volunteering activities and 20% jobs and traineeships placements.

The budget calculation takes account of the need to maintain high quality standards and keep due focus on inclusion, as is the case under EVS. Therefore, costs dedicated to the placements and projects will be complemented by specific expenditure related to quality (certification of organisations, dedicated training, insurance, language support and additional support for disadvantaged young persons). The Commission will foresee a possibility to ask additional support related to participation of disadvantaged young people in a flexible manner, to cater for all possible types of barriers of participation. Detailed budget calculations will depend on the demand for such additional support by future participating organisations. Based on experience on past implementation of the EVS and goals set for the European Solidarity Corps, the Commission anticipates that around one in four participants will benefit from such additional support.

5.2 Analysis and comparison of the Policy Options

The comparison of options is based on a multi-criteria analysis, whereby each option has been assessed against a set of criteria relating to different potential benefits and costs. Lack of certain data prevented to quantify the likely impact of each option in monetary terms and thus impacts were only assessed in qualitative terms.

The following criteria are used in the analysis:

- Accessibility– visibility and clarity for organisations, young people and other stakeholders how to participate and access funding for solidarity activities.
- Quality – procedures and criteria that ensure quality and safe placements, through the simplest possible procedures and conditions that do not undermine quality standards.
- Inclusiveness – measures to ensure the participation disadvantaged young people.
- Synergy - involvement and synergy between organisations active in solidarity action regardless of their local, regional, national or European scope.
- Efficiency and simplicity of management provisions and low administrative costs.

5.2.1 Accessibility

Option 1 makes it complicated for organisations and young people to gain an overview of all opportunities. It also obliges organisations to adhere to more than one quality approach, accreditation requirements and reporting. Furthermore, operating through eight programmes today results in a lack of visibility and clear identity of the action.

This option would imply that organisations continue applying for funding under different structures. Moreover, due to the different decision-making processes for each programme, a complete overview on offer for solidarity activities will not be available at the same time.

The scope for setting common horizontal services would remain limited and therefore the offer for participants and organisations cannot be made more coherent across all spending programmes in this option. This would lead to unequal levels of support to young people and participating organisations, and a lack of clarity.

Option 2 would give a clear and single access point for organisations and young people and make solidarity actions more visible. This would respond to stakeholders' wish for clear and practical information and help overcome current lack of awareness for relevant activities as pointed out in section 2.2.2. An important message resulting from stakeholder consultations is the need to communicate effectively and widely on the European Solidarity Corps. By pooling activities under one legal base, this will facilitate communicating messages around the value that the European Solidarity Corps can bring to a young person's personal development and employability. As a separate initiative, the European Solidarity Corps can become a strong and identifiable brand.

Stakeholders generally welcomed flexibility in the options for young people and organisations to participate, including the possibilities for in-country placements as ways of integrating more young people and grass-root movements. Option 2 is also the best approach to optimally diversify the menu of options offering a combination of in-country and cross-border activities of various natures.

5.2.2 Quality

Despite efforts for coherence and harmonisation in **Option 1** quality measures like training, insurance, accreditation and recognition are provided through different structures in a heterogeneous way, leading to variable standards and approaches.

Furthermore, there is limited scope for a common improvement of quality of solidarity placements due to different funding rules, legislative bases and implementation modalities. At present, the eight programmes apply a baseline for uniform quality assurance criteria. For instance, participating organisations in each of the funding programmes need to respect the principles in the European Solidarity Corps Charter. However, as each programme has its own quality measures, they are implemented through different structures in a different way.

The consultations revealed that stakeholders overall stressed the importance of quality. The general view of stakeholders was that the European Solidarity Corps should have an even stronger focus and stronger emphasis on addressing solidarity needs than existing programmes.

Option 2 will in a number of ways, allow for a high overall quality of placements and of preparedness of the young people. Placement offers will be personalised and match the skills, interests, and learning potential of the individual European Solidarity Corps participant.

The following different qualitative processes and criteria can be established under Option 2:

- All organisations offering quality placements will need to comply with the principles and requirements of the European Solidarity Corps' Charter. This will lead to award of a Quality Label, to be reached according to one process for all participating organisations.
- To ensure high quality placements, they would fulfil specific predefined quality standards. Solidarity jobs will be based on an employment contract in accordance with the national regulatory framework of that participating country. Similarly, the principles of the European Quality Framework for Traineeships (QFT) will guide the traineeship placements being offered under the European Solidarity Corps.
- A training offer for individuals will be developed according to common quality principles, thereby taking into account the different types of activities. Such offer will be complemented by networking activities for participating organisations to build their capacity to offer quality placements.
- Harmonised complementary insurance coverage will be put in place as well as a possibility to identify and document the main learning outcomes of participants' experience through a certificate.

5.2.3 Inclusiveness

As shown in chapter 2, and highlighted by stakeholders, assuring inclusiveness to the European Solidarity Corps is of high importance.

In **Option 1** there is limited potential for a coherent approach across all funding programmes. It would also be particularly hard for those with the fewest means and information to find their way through the manifold and complex conditions and application procedures. It thus exacerbates inequality in access and opportunity. Dedicated strategies and support for including disadvantaged young people are available only in some of the funding programmes. For instance, the EaSI programme and EVS are providing supplementary funds for disadvantaged young people. An extension across all programmes is not possible due to different objectives and delivery mechanisms.

Option 2 allows for a focus on clarity and simplicity on conditions and application procedures. It will build on the experiences with targeted inclusion efforts under Erasmus+ programme (25% of participants are from disadvantaged backgrounds in EVS) and embed the inclusiveness approach in the programme design through a dedicated inclusion strategy. This may include additional funding to enable participation of young people with fewer opportunities on equal terms as others or to support the organisations involving them.

5.2.4 Synergy

Option 1 fails to tap the potential synergies between the activities of the different programmes. For instance, when it comes to recognition of experiences, there is limited scope beyond a particular segment or sector and accessibility will be restricted. Moreover, the networking and exchange of organisations from different sectors working on solidarity will remain limited.

Option 2 will benefit from new synergies between the activities and their recognition, which are currently implemented through different programmes. It will put them in one common framework and help create new networks between people and organisations with common aspirations for solidarity and towards new communities built around solidarity.

5.2.5 Efficiency

Option 1 is characterised by a complex system of multiple implementation modes which is not only difficult to access, but offers a limited scope for simplification and fast treatment, issues that stakeholders said to consider important: it needs to take into account the design of all eight programmes.

This complex structure (8 programmes) would definitely require major administrative costs inside the Commission at different levels: high number of officials involved in different Commission services and more need for coordination between Commission services. Furthermore, additional costs related to the administrative management of 8 programmes committee considering that each programme committee would need to address the European Solidarity Corps would be needed as well as more communications costs are to be expected.

Option 2 will allow for the simultaneous decrease of management costs while reaching greater effects (more value for less money). This will be done by seeking administrative simplification and economies of scale and scope, notably to ensure fast treatment of applications, user-friendly information and forms, no red tape, no costs and no need for specific expertise to apply. These procedures will be developed gradually during the implementation, building and improving based on the experience of existing programmes, for instance the use of simplified grants.

Common implementation of horizontal services like insurance, training and recognition will bring higher efficiency for the programme management and for the organisations it supports, whilst not increasing average costs of placements for the organisation. To ensure consistency, some horizontal services will be made available also to programmes not contributing financially to this regulation due to their specificities.

5.2.6 Comparison option

The table hereunder provides on overview of the comparison of the two identified policy options as made in the sub-chapters 5.2.1 – 5.2.5.

Criterion	Policy Option 1	Policy Option 2
Accessibility	Neutral	Positive
Inclusiveness	Neutral	Slightly Positive
Quality	Neutral	Positive
Synergy	Neutral	Positive
Efficiency	Neutral	Slightly Positive

Based on the multi-criteria analysis, the preferred option to address the needs described in chapter 2 and reaching the objectives is option 2.

5.3 Delivery mechanism of the preferred option

The preferred option – a self-standing programme with strengthened focus on solidarity – could be implemented through different delivery mechanisms. This chapter presents and compares alternative mechanisms and their suitability for reaching the programme objectives in the most efficient manner. It also takes into account that stakeholders highlighted the need for a division of roles and competencies among implementing bodies, for clarifying the rules for accreditation of organisations, for a well-functioning matching tool between organisations and volunteers and for a high quality support system for the European Solidarity Corps participants as important factors to reach the goal of high quality placements.

5.3.1 Direct management

The delivery through only direct management would mean that all programme actions (placements, quality measures, networking and community building activities) have to be implemented at centralised level.

Implementing the whole programme at centralised level would result in uniform programme implementation (one call for proposals, one pool of experts assessing the projects etc.) and a single entry point for all organisations.

The shortcomings of this implementation are in the results. To create a strong link to national realities and needs would be very difficult; the access for small organisations would be problematic as well as ensuring effective inclusion of the disadvantaged groups of youth which differ across Member States,

5.3.2 Indirect management

The delivery through only indirect management would mean that the implementation of all programme actions (placements, quality measures, networking and community building activities) will be decentralised to national actors through the system of National Agencies. There would be one call for proposals with common eligibility and award criteria, but it would be implemented by structures in each Member State.

Such implementation would result in good effects in terms of inclusion (adaptation to national realities) and access for organisations (single contact point in each country). The uniform offer to organisation and participants would be ensured through the existence of common rules stated in the call for proposals.

Although this implementation mode offers potentially very good results in programme implementation, shortcomings would particularly appear in terms of efficiency. Some services could be provided easily at horizontal level, like insurance, induction training, online language training would need to be re-invented at each national level. The risk of variable quality of service between the Member States would need to be mitigated by fairly thorough programme monitoring steered at centralised level.

5.3.3 Combination of direct and indirect management

Governance and implementation structures for the European Solidarity Corps as a whole would best be built on the current Erasmus+ set-up, i.e. by indirect management via National Agencies, to support all types of placements under the European Solidarity Corps, albeit with leaner and simpler processes. This governance structure should foresee the necessary link with labour markets and open the door to labour market actors, such as public and private employment services, Chambers of Commerce and other organisations interested in facilitating occupational placements.

The combination of direct and indirect management modes is based on the experience of Erasmus+ programme implementation and also withheld the preference of a majority of stakeholders consulted. Many emphasized a wish to preserve what has been built up and learnt during 20 years of implementing the EVS.

In this delivery mechanism, the placements, placement-related quality measures (i.e. on-arrival trainings, award of quality label to organisations active at local, regional and national level) and part of the networking activities would be implemented through indirect management and benefiting from a strong effectiveness of this implementation mode.

Horizontal quality measures (online induction training, insurance coverage, online language training) as well as quality label for organisations active at EU level would be provided by direct management at centralised level. This ensures highly efficient implementation of horizontal activities where the need to adapt to national realities is minimal. The exact management body (DG EAC or delegation EACEA) will be determined through a Cost-Benefit Analysis.

Bearing in mind the programme objectives and the focus on quality in the targeted quantitative level (100 000 placements by 2020), the combination of direct and indirect management will ensure the most cost-effective implementation.

5.4 Expected results and impact

5.4.1 Social Impacts

Increasingly respond to unmet societal needs through the solidarity actions involving young people can have a two-pronged societal impact.

Firstly, and fundamentally, at a **societal level**, unmet needs in communities will become addressed and this will have effects on social welfare and well-being. Secondly, there is an impact of addressing those needs by young people who chose to engage on the basis of a sense of solidarity, advocating solidarity itself. Equally important, being involved in solidarity actions in an EU context can instil a greater sense of citizenship and understanding of one's neighbours. European Solidarity Corps participants can be a considerable resource to Europe’s future social tissue and their activities could assist EU policy goals such as youth participation, civil protection, social inclusion, regional development and the environment.

At the **level of the young persons**, allowing to improve their knowledge, skills and competences through the non-formal and informal learning experience of a solidarity placement is a strategic intervention that contributes to their personal, social, civic and professional fulfilment and will facilitate transition into the labour market. This is confirmed

by survey results of EVS participants regarding learning and changing attitudes, underscoring that volunteering can have very encouraging and positive outcomes.

5.4.2 Economic impacts

Promoting youth participation and social capital is closely connected with economic growth. "Youth citizenship affects economic outcomes through three channels: by enhancing the human and social capital of individuals (in particular by upgrading their knowledge, skills and competences), by promoting government accountability for basic service delivery, and by enhancing the overall climate for investment and private decision making[77]". Increased participation and employability of young people will ultimately have positive consequences for employment and macro-economic growth.

However, the small size of the proposed interventions makes it difficult to measure the real impact in macro-economic terms, especially as impacts will be spread out throughout Europe and not concentrated on one particular Member State or sector.

5.4.3 Environmental impacts

The areas of environmental protection and climate action are areas where various solidarity activities particularly can make a tangible, positive contribution, such as cleaner forests. Currently, the European Solidarity Corps – through the LIFE programme – can support placements that will concretely help with the conservation of Natura 2000 protected areas, and this will be possible also with the preferred option.

Any programme involving increased mobility will generate a demand for transport, which in turn may lead to the increased emission of greenhouse gases. This increased demand for transport is however relatively negligible and thus an in-depth analysis of this kind of environmental impacts has not been performed.

5.4.4 Risk assessment

Considering feedback received during the consultation and from regular exchanges with stakeholders, the following risks preventing the fulfilment of the objectives identified in chapter 3 have been identified in the implementation of the preferred policy option:

1. The newly created self-standing programme with a stronger focus on solidarity might not be accepted by the beneficiaries of the different programmes contributing to solidarity activities;
2. There are not enough young people registered in the database with necessary motivation for the solidarity activities on offer;
3. There are not enough offers from organisations, or the offers do not match the interests of the young European Solidarity Corps participants;
4. The envisaged quality label for organisations ensuring the minimal quality standards of solidarity activities is not attractive for organisations and/or the process leading to get such label is perceived as too bureaucratic;
5. Involved organisations to commit fraud of irregularities with received funds.

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[77] World Bank (2007), *World development report 2007: Development and the next generation.*

All identified risks are not of a critical nature and concrete mitigating measures have been identified in order to minimise their possible impact. As regards the last risk on fraud or irregularities, the risk is low as the management of activities will be based on good past experiences in Erasmus+ which has an error rate well below 2%.

The table hereunder summarises the assessment of the risks looking at the probability and the effect of identified risks. For each of the risks the envisaged mitigating measures are mentioned.

Risk	Probability	Effect	Mitigating measure
The newly created self-standing programme with strengthened focus on solidarity will not be accepted by the beneficiaries of the different programmes contributing to solidarity activities.	Low	Medium	Broad consultation of stakeholders from various sectors on the definition of implementation details of the European Solidarity Corps. Effective communication towards targeted groups of the previous funding streams. Networking activities of organisations.
There are not enough young people registered in the database with necessary motivation for solidarity activities.	Low	High	Communication activities towards young people. Continuous development of the European Solidarity Corps portal in line with the user's feedback. Community Building activities of already registered young people. General induction training ensuring awareness about the mission of the European Solidarity Corps and the possible type of solidarity activities.
Not enough offers from organisations or offers that do not match the interests of the young European Solidarity Corps participants	Medium	High	Communication activities towards organisations. Networking activities among organisations to enable peer learning and sharing of good experience. Guidance and support for organisations through the implementing structures.
The envisaged quality label for organisations ensuring the minimal quality standards of solidarity activities is not attractive for organisations and the	Medium	Medium	Guidance and support for organisations through the implementing structures. Simple and user-friendly process with clear time limits. Networking activities of the organisations including dedicated

process leading to get such label is perceived as too bureaucratic.			training.
Involved organisations to commit fraud of irregularities with received funds	Low	High	Prior screening of organisations through granting the quality label. Monitoring of implementation structures and monitoring system of implementation of activities including checks on grant beneficiaries Reporting obligations after completion.

6. EUROPEAN ADDED VALUE

6.1 Solidarity is a common European value

There are well-known close links and spill-overs between many of the societal demands facing EU Member States. While for some areas of unmet demands, such as environmental protection, EU action is prevalent, the responsibility addressing demands in some other areas, such as social protection and education, rests primarily with Member States and regions.,In whichever case, however, the EU has a role to play since the objective of the acitvities of the European Solidarity Corps is to strengthening solidarity between Europeans.

By the European Solidarity Corps, the EU aims to enhance the European dimension to solidarity by addressing unmet societal needs, i.e. situations where needs among communities and citizens are – e.g. for reasons of lacking resources – not being met by the labour market or by existing volunteering or other types of solidarity programmes. Hence, the Corps will complement, not compete with, existing public and private policies, programmes and activities, both at national and European level. By applying a number of quality safeguards such as the European Solidarity Corps Charter, quality labeling and the principles outlined in the Quality Framework for Traineeships, the European Solidarity Corps can help improve the quality of various placements for young people in Europe and their recognition. By bringing the different types of placements under one European Solidarity Corps brand, awareness about and visibility of the opportunities available to young people can be improved.

6.2 Subsidiarity

In light of the European scale of the proposed objectives – to mobilise young people for solidarity causes throughout the European Union – an action at EU level is appropriate. The EU has a role to play in supporting a Europe-wide approach to solidarity. EU action through the European Solidarity Corps will not replace similar actions by Member States, but will serve to complement and support them, in full respect of the subsidiarity principle. While there are traditions in all Member States for running programs and instruments that support activities that serve the public interest, in particular through volunteering, these are quite diverse, with some countries preferring state intervention, and others letting civil society be in the lead. There are also different concepts and connotations of solidarity activities and volunteering, and the types of activities are different in content and duration. Moreover, there are quite different perceptions of how social protection relates to volunteering, as well as various degrees of legal status, learning and recognition. All this leads to fragmentation at EU

level, which means that young people across the EU have uneven access to the opportunities on offer.

EU action through the European Solidarity Corps will contribute to addressing the need to overcome this fragmentation, as evidenced by the ex-ante evaluation that accompanies this proposal. At the same time, it will be an occasion to build on the lessons learnt from the variety of experiences across Member States, while boosting volunteering in those Member States where it is less prevalent today, as suggested by the stakeholders who were consulted during the preparation of this proposal. The European Solidarity Corps will complement the existing public and private policies, programmes and activities, both at national and European level. By applying a number of quality safeguards such as the European Solidarity Corps Charter, a quality label for participating organisations and the principles outlined in the Quality Framework for Traineeships, the European Solidarity Corps can help improve the quality of various placements for young people across the EU as well as the validation of their learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the European Solidarity Corps will offer a single entry point to high quality volunteering and occupational solidarity placements for young people across the EU, whereas currently these are only accessible via a multitude of schemes. It will therefore ensure that all interested young people across the EU have equal opportunities to join and easier access to a broader variety of activities. Bringing the different types of placements under one brand can also contribute to improving awareness about and visibility of the opportunities available to young people.

The European Solidarity Corps will offer both placements that can be undertaken in a country other than the country of residence of the participants (cross-border) and placements that can be undertaken in the country of residence of the participants (in-country). This flexibility is in line with the proposals received from the consulted stakeholders. As far as cross-border placements are concerned, especially in view of the fragmentation in structures and programmes offering volunteering, traineeships as well as the diversity in understanding and concepts of the sector offering solidarity activities, individual Member State action cannot replace EU action. As far as in-country placements are concerned, the European Solidarity Corps can be expected to have an innovative character, while helping address local or national challenges from a broader European perspective. In particular, EU action can help overcome fragmentation in the offer of placements and ensure inclusiveness for all young people, including those who face obstacles to engage in international activities. It can also offer a European context and help find European solutions to specific challenges that are not confined to national borders.

Last but not least, the use of existing structures that have proved their efficiency and effectiveness will ensure an efficient and effective implementation of the European Solidarity Corps as well synergies and complementarities with Member States' actions in favour of youth.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The monitoring and evaluation of the European Solidarity Corps initiative in achieving the objectives will consist of permanent monitoring to assess progress and an evaluation to assess the existing evidence on the effectiveness of the initiative results. At the latest six months after entry into force of the proposal, the Commission will establish a detailed programme for monitoring the outputs, results and impacts of the Regulation. To ensure consistency across Member States, the Commission will produce guidance on the data to be collected.

The operational objectives will aim at:

- To improve the supply and variety of solidarity opportunities offered to young people by way of supporting the supply by organisations of volunteering, job and traineeship placements, as well as the availability of local, project based activities;
- To improve the sharing of knowledge, information and contacts among the European Solidarity Corps stakeholders and in solidarity sectors through the creation of networks and an increase in networking activities;
- To improve the quality of solidarity activities through the establishment of, and subsequent sign-up by organisation to, a European Solidarity Corps quality label; as well as ensure the availability of various aspects of training for European Solidarity Corps participants.

The monitoring and evaluation of the European Solidarity Corps initiative in achieving the objectives will consist of permanent monitoring to assess progress and a review to assess the existing evidence on the effectiveness of the initiative results.

Monitoring arrangements will be based on an extensive analysis of the quantitative outputs of the Programme, via dedicated IT systems, which will ease the collection of necessary information about activities and projects implemented. The indicators that will be collected will include inter alia:

- number of participants in volunteering placements (in-country and cross-border);
- number of participants traineeship placements (in-country and cross-border);
- number of participants in job placements (in-country and cross-border);
- number of participants in solidarity projects;
- number of organisations holding a European Solidarity Corps quality label.

At the latest six months after the entry into force of the Regulation laying down the legal framework of the European Solidarity Corps, the Commission shall establish a detailed programme for monitoring the outputs, results and impacts of this Regulation.

In 2020 the Commission will publish a Report taking stock of the progress made towards achieving its results, including the target of offering 100.000 young people opportunities under the European Solidarity Corps by 2020 (covering individual and team volunteering, traineeships, jobs, cross-border and in country).

The Commission will perform an independent evaluation four years after its date of adoption of the Regulation to assess qualitative outcomes that serve to measure the action's effectiveness and impact on the young people, unmet societal demands and participating organisations. The main components of this evaluation will concentrate on a change in knowledge, attitudes, values, skills and practices occurring in individuals, organisations and communities as a direct result of the European Solidarity Corps activities. The sources of verification for the evaluation will include the analysis of work plans and reports from the National Authorities and Agencies, results arising from dissemination, evidence-based studies and surveys focussing on measuring effects. The process will involve the collection and selection of the most significant change stories emanating from the field level, i.e. by panels of designated stakeholders or staff. The focus will be on the continuous process of the European Solidarity Corps monitoring and management and will be used to help assess the performance of the European Solidarity Corps as a whole.

8. ANNEX: CONSULTATION ON THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS - SYNOPSIS REPORT

8.1 Introduction

This report aims to provide a summary of the results of consultation activities during the period of January to April 2017 related to the preparation of the legislative proposal of the European Solidarity Corps. The report is meant to:

- inform policy-makers on the outcome of all consultation activities;
- inform stakeholders on how their input has been taken into account and to explain why certain suggestions could not be taken up.

8.2 Consultation strategy and activities

The objective of the consultation was to define key priorities and contribute to shaping the legislative proposal for the European Solidarity Corps. The consultation results have informed the Commission's legislative proposal, as further explained in chapter 5, as well as its accompanying ex-ante evaluation, including the analysis of policy options related to the implementation of the initiative. Both the public and targeted consultations build on an initial, targeted consultation of a selection of key stakeholders in late 2016 in the lead-up to the launch of the European Solidarity Corps on 7 December 2016[78].

8.1.1. Public consultation

The public was consulted via an on-line questionnaire (open public consultation) consisting of introductory questions about the persons/organisations completing the questionnaire, general questions to all respondents and specific questions either for persons replying as individuals or questions for persons replying on behalf of organisations. The public consultation was open for eight weeks, from 06/02/2017 till 02/04/2017.

A number of general and specific questions were multiple-choice. In addition, if stakeholders had the option of ticking 'other' in the list of possible answers, they were given the opportunity, via a free text field, to further specify their views or add elements that they considered missing. The questionnaire also offered a possibility to upload documents such as position papers. In addition, the stakeholders had the opportunity to add further information, in particular regarding good practice examples which could serve as a model for future European Solidarity Corps activities.

The consultation was fully translated and made available in official EU languages, and replies were accepted in all these languages.[79]

8.1.2. Targeted consultations

An issues paper, setting out the key issues and options for the legislative initiative under preparation, was sent to targeted stakeholders in order to inform these consultations.

[78] See http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1481272643295&uri=COM:2016:942:FIN

[79] The full report of the public consultations can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/info/content/public-consultation-european-solidarity-corps_en

The questions of the targeted consultations were broad, focusing on the potential and the challenges of creating the European Solidarity Corps and identifying the possibilities for the different sectors. The key issues for discussion were focused around the following topics:

- Eligibility for the placements
- Key parameters for the placements
- Budget and implementation
- Interest and opportunities in different sectors

In addition to targeted stakeholders' meetings, the idea of the European Solidarity Corps was also presented and discussed in a wide range of fora, seminars, meetings and events, engaging a broad variety of stakeholders from the different sectors covered by the initiative. Moreover, a Stakeholder Forum, gathering around 700 people, was held on 12 April 2017 in Brussels. The Forum encompassed three workshops where stakeholders could discuss various issues and identify key elements on how to make the European Solidarity Corps an attractive initiative for young people and organisations, how to set-up and govern the European Solidarity Corps in efficient way and how to support young people's employability and reach out to disadvantaged young people.

All targeted stakeholders were also invited to submit their input in written format. A total of 82 position papers and inputs from stakeholder organisations, Member States, EFTA/EEA countries, regional authorities, national agencies, public employment services, civil society organisations, Youth Guarantee Coordinators and social partners were received and analysed in particular in order to identify key messages, feedback, ideas and experience from a wide range of stakeholders.

8.3 Stakeholder groups included in the consultation

The European Commission engaged with a broad range of stakeholders at all levels, reaching out to the public, key stakeholders within the policy areas of youth, employment, agriculture and health, and young people registered in the European Solidarity Corps portal.

Key stakeholders consulted included EU-level umbrella organisations in the fields of youth, education, health, volunteering and employment in the solidarity sector, National Authorities in the field of youth though the Council's Youth Working party, National Agencies for Erasmus+ Youth, Member States' Public Employment Services, the European Employment Services (EURES) network, Youth Guarantee coordinators, LEADER organisations, social partners and civil society. The European Parliament, the Council of the EU, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee were also involved in the consultation.

8.4 Consultation findings

8.1.3. General feedback

The stakeholders expressed an overall appreciation of the visibility and political recognition given to young people’s engagement for solidarity. They welcomed the new opportunities for young people to make a change thanks to the European Solidarity Corps and get recognised for this. Overall stakeholders emphasised the potential of the European Solidarity Corps to foster integration and inter-European solidarity and to promote common values. Yet, they

highlighted the need for additional funding for an inclusive and non-elitist approach and quality placements, while building upon already existing structures.

8.1.4. An attractive initiative for young people and organisations

The stakeholders believe that the European Solidarity Corps should offer an attractive package that would provide young people with valuable experience, a safe environment and a strong learning dimension so that it could result in a rewarding experience and investment in their personal development and skills in view of supporting their future labour market integration.

8.1.4.1. Quality placements in solidarity activities

The consultations revealed that stakeholders overall stressed the importance of quality. The general view of stakeholders was that the European Solidarity Corps should have an even stronger focus and stronger emphasis on addressing solidarity needs than existing programmes.

Stakeholders highlighted the need for a clear division of roles and competencies among implementing bodies, clarifying the rules for accreditation of organisations, a well-functioning matching tool between organisations and volunteers and a high quality support system for the European Solidarity Corps participants as important factors to reach the goal of high quality placements.

More than half of the organisations requested a clear distinction between the volunteering activities, traineeships and job placements. The concern of some stakeholders was that European Solidarity Corps placements would become a source of cheap labour and that volunteering would replace paid work. The stakeholders where split on whether only non-profit and non-governmental organisations, as well as public authorities should be eligible, or if also other organisations or employers could be considered. The overall view was that the 'solidarity sector' should be broadly yet clearly defined. Stakeholders believed that the fields proposed in the December Communication[80] formed a good basis.

The strong focus on solidarity should affect what areas of activities the European Solidarity Corps could support, and stakeholders were therefore stressing the need for a clear definition of 'solidarity activities'.

8.1.4.2. Inclusiveness and sufficient support

One of the key issues highlighted by stakeholders was the need for an inclusive and non-elitist approach, in order to make sure that all young people will be able to participate, irrespective of their background, educational attainment, skills level, or disability. This requires sufficient support, financially and through information channels, trainings, mentoring, etc.

Some stakeholders pointed out that **guidelines for assessment** of projects should clearly prioritize disadvantaged young people, by using effective methods that lead to a higher ranking of these projects.

[80] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1481272643295&uri=COM:2016:942:FIN

The stakeholders overall expressed that the level of the financial **support** for individuals should be attractive enough to ensure that all young people can participate without the support of their families. Moreover, such support to participants should be offered under equal and fair conditions, taking into account the specific economic situation of each country. Some stakeholders also highlighted the need for a fair treatment of participants in all types of placements offered under the European Solidarity Corps, be they volunteering, traineeships of jobs. The stakeholders also overall expressed that participants should receive social security coverage, including health-care.

Stakeholders stressed that participants should receive easily accessible and **relevant trainings**, especially language trainings**,** before their placements. The stakeholders were split on who should be responsible for these trainings, but overall they highlighted the particular need for training for disadvantaged young people. This is a group who face different, often multiple, barriers to entering the labour market and partaking in civic engagement. Therefore they can benefit from tailored support through not only language training, but also for instance personal development courses, psychological or practical help and professional mentoring before and during the placement.

Some stakeholders also pointed out that disadvantaged young people should benefit from **more flexibility** in terms of type of placement, duration of placement and age bracket. The possibility of in country-placements, part-time work or volunteering or shorter placements would mean that the European Solidarity Corps could reach a larger group of young people than the existing programmes are doing today. The need to allow the participation of small organisations in the scheme was also underlined.

Targeted consultations have revealed the stakeholders shared the view that the **validation of acquired skills** after the end of the placement is an important element to ensure that participation in the European Solidarity Corps leads to better employability and a stable job in the long run. The stakeholders believe that a European Solidarity Corps Certificate should be more than a certificate of participation. It could be complemented with learning outcomes that would encompass a guided process supporting the participants to define learning targets, guides them throughout the service and helps them describe their experience and the competences acquired in the Certificate. To this end, some stakeholders mentioned that Youth Pass[81] could be further developed, especially to also meet the requirements of the occupational activities.

8.1.4.3. Communication and outreach

The stakeholders overall highlighted that financial support needs to be accompanied by appropriate communication and outreach measures targeted to traditionally excluded groups. A serious marketing effort with targeted information to promote the programme towards young people and organisations is needed. This should include easily accessible, informative and inspirational information on the benefits of joining the European Solidarity Corps.

Some stakeholders emphasised that in order to reach young people the Commission needs to speak their language, for example by using social media and providing visual material about the European Solidarity Corps that would give young people an overview of the diversity of

[81] https://www.youthpass.eu/en/

solidarity sectors and the types of placements on offer. In addition to social media and online tools, stakeholders believe that the involvement of easily accessible information and registration points is necessary, especially for certain groups of young people who cannot be reached through online channels. Employment offices, Universities, training centres, Erasmus + national agencies or regional offices could support the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps and make the process easier and more accessible also for these groups.

8.1.5. A lean and effective set up and governance of the European Solidarity Corps

Stakeholders expressed the need to have a simple and effective governance of the European Solidarity Corps. The legal proposal should be designed in a way to valuably build on the experience of the existing structures while seeking new ways to further simplifying the access to EU funds.

8.1.5.1. Complementarity to existing schemes and national regulations

The implementation structure should be lean and effective whilst complying with the rules and regulations in place at EU level. Stakeholders overall expressed that the European Solidarity Corps should create synergies and build on experience from already existing schemes of high quality, such as the European Voluntary Service (EVS), which has been developed over 20 years. Several stakeholders advocated a concept based on the EVS, or using at least some elements from this programme in the implementation.

The stakeholders also stressed that the European Solidarity Corps should not take over or override existing national schemes. There should be a close and continuous dialogue between the European Solidarity Corps and national schemes. Lessons learnt from national schemes should inform the design and implementation. On the other hand, some stakeholders highlighted that the European Solidarity Corps also has the potential to support the growth of volunteering, particularly in certain Member States where there is no tradition for it.

Some stakeholders mentioned that the different legal frameworks across Member States means that a 'one-size-fits-all' model may not be possible as laws pertaining to volunteering, jobs and traineeships may differ. One possible challenge that was mentioned during the consultations was that national regulations of tax or social benefits could provide an obstacle to young people who want to join the European Solidarity Corps. Some stakeholders mentioned that a European status for volunteers could help solve this issue by forcing national legislation to be adopted to promote volunteering.

8.1.5.2. Accreditation and access to the matching tool

Stakeholders believed that participating organisations should be required to comply with criteria and procedures to ensure that they provide quality offers. A thorough but non-bureaucratic accreditation process for interested organisations should be in place before the organisation can access the pool of young people registered for the European Solidarity Corps. Some stakeholders mentioned that the European Voluntary Service has developed several quality procedures that could be used as a model and be adapted to also apply to the occupational activities.

The stakeholders were overall positive to the development of the matching tool, as it could make the application process easier both for young people who wants to participate and for the accredited organisations. Some stakeholders stressed that the Commission should make sure that the portal is accessible to vulnerable people, in particular disabled young people and people with less knowledge or access to IT tools.

8.1.5.3. Budget

One of the main concerns of the stakeholders was that there would not be sufficient funding. The majority of stakeholders expressed that the European Solidarity Corps needs to be provided with sufficient additional funds, staff and resources to meet the currently existing and future needs. Numerous stakeholders requested a separate budget for the European Solidarity Corps, ensuring that already existing schemes, such as Erasmus + and the Youth Guarantee, would not be affected by the new initiative. The interest and added value to associate European Solidarity Corps in the implementation of a number of EU projects supported under shared management was also highlighted.

While many stakeholders expressed sufficient funding as necessary for organisations to be able to take part in the programme, some stakeholders suggested that organisations could be interested in taking part in the European Solidarity Corps without requesting or receiving EU funding if there was an attractive European Solidarity Corps "label" and/ or if participation meant having access to useful structures, such as the pool of young people, the matching tool and training opportunities.

8.1.5.4. Geographical scope and duration

In the current, initial phase the geographical scope of the European Solidarity Corps primarily covers the EU but also third countries participating in the existing eight contributing programmes. The majority of those stakeholders that mentioned geographical scope argued to keep this scope, arguing that it would ensure consistency with other European Programmes and be in line with the principle of free movement for workers within EFTA/EEA countries. A few stakeholders argued to expand the geographical scope further, to also include candidate countries or neighbouring countries to the EU. However, some stakeholders also pointed out that extending it beyond these borders could lead to challenges such as regarding visas and work permits.

No stakeholders were negative to the proposed possibility to support solidarity activities at the local level. Stakeholders both in the public and the targeted consultations also expressed a need for short-term placements. This would also allow for an extended range of activities to be covered, complement already existing schemes and make the programme more accessible, in particular to disadvantaged young people.

Stakeholders were split on the question about the possibility to allow very short terms placements (< 2 months). Even if the programme could open up for more short-term placements, especially in the case of volunteering, some stakeholders did express that long term volunteering, jobs and internships should be favoured.

8.1.5.5. Age limit

The European Solidarity Corps in its current first phase is targeted at young people (18-30 years, application possible as of 17 years). Some stakeholders argued for a possible widening of age limit for volunteers, exceeding 30 years. Other stakeholders, however, argued for keeping the

current age limits. A few also argued for lowering the age limit under certain conditions, as this could open possibilities for young people in NEET situation, early school leavers, etc.

8.5 Use of stakeholder feedback

The proposal for the European Solidarity Corps largely reflects the views and recommendations collected during the consultations. While several aspects are explicitly referred to in the legislative proposal, other details will be further defined at implementation stage in the future calls for proposals.

Most stakeholders agreed that accessibility, quality and inclusiveness are core principles that should underpin the development of the European Solidarity Corps. In line with these recommendations, the European Solidarity Corps will offer **new opportunities** accessible to all young people, with stronger emphasis on addressing solidarity needs and on encouraging the participation of **disadvantaged young people**, including by envisaging additional financial support when relevant. It will also place special emphasis on ensuring the **relevance and quality** of the activities to be supported. Quality and **support measures**, such as insurance, online linguistic support, general online training and specific training, a European Solidarity Corps certificate and post placement support will be offered to the participants. All these measures were also highlighted by stakeholders during the consultations. Quality will also apply to the organisations willing to offer placements, implement projects and recruit participants under the European Solidarity Corps. To this end, and in line with the suggestions gathered during the consultations, a quality label will be introduced as a pre-condition for participation for all interested organisations. It will aim at checking their complicance with the principles and requirements of the European Solidarity Corps Charter, as regards their rights and responsibilities during all stages of the solidarity experience.

Another key point highlighted by stakeholders during the consultations was the importance to build on the experience and structures of existing programmes in order to maximise efficiency. The Commission's proposal does just that by including provisions for the use of existing implementation structures (such as the national agencies and national authorities for Erasmus + Youth as well as the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency). These structures will also contribute to ensuring **visibility and relevant support** in the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps. In cooperation with Member States and stakeholders at national and EU level, the European Commission should also endeavour to ensure **complementarity** between existing national solidarity schemes and the European Solidarity Corps, building on good practices where appropriate. A European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre will be identified to assist the implementing bodies (National Agencies/Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency/European Commission), the participating organisations and the young people taking part in the European Solidarity Corps in order to raise the quality of the implementation and of the activities of the European Solidarity Corps.

In line with stakeholders' recommendations, the European Commission will strive to improve the user-friendliness and to **reduce the administrative burden** of the registration and application process for both young people and organisations. The development of the European Solidarity Corps portal is already a step in this direction. The portal and the matching tool provide a single entry point for solidarity activities throughout the EU.

One of the main concerns by stakeholders in the consultation process was the need for a dedicated **budget** to ensure that existing schemes would not be affected. The Commission

proposal for a European Solidarity Corps does entail funding through its own budget, drawing on contributions from a number of instruments: the Erasmus+, the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), the European Social Fund; Union Civil Protection Mechanism; the LIFE programme; the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, as well as from the unallocated margin under Heading 1a.. Stakeholders also advocated for a clear split and distinction between volunteering and occupational activities. The draft proposal clearly distinguishes between jobs, volunteering and traineeships and introduces an indicative split for the financial support to solidarity placements and projects (80% for volunteering placements and solidarity projects on the one hand and 20% for traineeships and jobs on the other hand), which should also contribute to ensuring continuity in the activities supported by the programmes contributing to the European Solidarity Corps.

The draft Regulation proposes an initial geographical scope covering the EU Member States only, but provides for the possibility to open up to third countries on the basis of bilateral agreements. Moreover, in order to ensure the kind of continuity and coherence identified by some stakeholders, volunteering activities that have been supported under the European Voluntary Service and that fall within the geographical scope of the European Solidarity Corps will be supported by the latter in the form of cross-border volunteering placements. In parallel, the remaining European Voluntary Service activities that do not fall under the geographical scope of the European Solidarity Corps, will continue to be supported under the Programme established by Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013.