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EX-ANTE EVALUATION

Accompanying the document

Proposal for a

**REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL
establishing the European Solidarity Corps programme and repealing [European
Solidarity Corps Regulation] and Regulation (EU) No 375/2014**

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GLOSSARY

| <i>Term or acronym</i> | <i>Meaning or definition</i> |
|------------------------|---|
| EACEA | Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency |
| EU | European Union |
| MFF | Multiannual Financial Framework |
| NPS | Net Promoter Score |
| TEU | Treaty on European Union |
| TFEU | Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union |

1 INTRODUCTION: POLITICAL AND LEGAL CONTEXT

1.1. Scope and context

On 2 May 2018, the European Commission adopted its proposals for a new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027. Under these proposals, the European Solidarity Corps programme will have a budget of EUR 1,260,000,000 over this period¹. This ex-ante evaluation reflects the decisions of the MFF proposals and focuses on the changes and policy choices which are specific to this instrument. It takes into account the lessons learned and the recommendations from the external evaluations for the relevant programmes, as well as the recent open public consultation.

1.1.1 Current state of play

The European Union is built on solidarity, a shared value which is strongly felt throughout European society. Solidarity defines the European project and provides the necessary unity to cope with current and future crises by holding a strong moral ground. Solidarity provides a clear compass to guide the European youth in their aspirations for a better Union. In the Rome Declaration, at the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, the leaders of 27 Member States and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission reaffirmed their commitment to enhance unity and solidarity in order to increase the strength and resilience of the European Union².

The State of the Union address of 14 September 2016 emphasised the need to invest in young people and announced the idea of a European Solidarity Corps to create opportunities for young people across the European Union to make a meaningful contribution to society, show solidarity and to develop their skills, "thus getting not only work but also invaluable human experience". The Bratislava Summit of 16 September 2016 called for reinforced political momentum to support young Europeans and to establish new EU programmes to improve opportunities for them. The Commission Communication "A European Solidarity Corps" of 7 December 2016³ launched the first phase of the European Solidarity Corps. During this initial phase, eight different EU programmes⁴ have been mobilised to offer volunteering, traineeship or job opportunities to young people across the EU.

There are many young people who want to engage in solidarity activities and, at the same time, there are many unmet needs in communities that could be better addressed thanks to the involvement of young people in solidarity activities. There is an untapped demand by many organisations for motivated young people to support them in their efforts⁵; if supported, these organisations could offer even more to communities. There are however, shortcomings in the matching of supply and demand and obstacles related to the availability of resources, to ensuring quality, as well as various legal aspects.

The current European Solidarity Corps was created to merge several EU volunteering and solidarity traineeships/jobs schemes into one same programme. The proposal for a Regulation was accompanied by an ex-ante evaluation, which demonstrated the need for a single EU programme acting as a "one stop shop" for all solidarity related opportunities for young people⁶.

Despite the high demand from young people for solidarity opportunities⁷, further development of activities can be attained, in particular with regards to an extension of the geographical scope, synergies with national frameworks, a larger community, and an inter-generational dimension of the programme. Furthermore, given the similarities between former programmes, the decision was taken to enlarge the scope of the European Solidarity Corps to include volunteering in humanitarian aid related projects.

1.1.2 Inclusion of humanitarian aid

European solidarity knows no borders. It is not something that should be restricted within our borders, but

¹ Modern Budget for a Union that Protects, Empowers and Defends – The Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027, COM(2018) 321 final, p. 29.

² Rome declaration, 25 March 2017.

³ A European Solidarity Corps, COM(2016)942, 7 December 2016.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) (SWD(2018)40), 31 January 2018.

⁶ Ex-ante evaluation of the European Solidarity Corps (SWD(2017)166), 30 May 2017.

⁷ While over 3,500 placements have been accepted, over 55,000 young people are registered in the European Solidarity Corps (data as per 3 April 2018). This proves placements offered are greatly overshadowed by the demand by young people.

rather expanded and open to countries outside the Union.

The Treaty of the European Union highlights solidarity as one of the principles key to the European Union⁸, which should be promoted not just within our borders, but also be one of the foundations of the EU's external action. Indeed, the first general provision governing the EU's external action is the objective to advance in the world the principles that are central to our Union:

*The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the **principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: [...] the principles of equality and solidarity***⁹.

This objective is what the extended European Solidarity Corps wants to achieve.

The Council's General Approach regarding the proposed Regulation for the European Solidarity Corps suggested that the geographical scope of participating countries should be extended for the volunteering strand¹⁰. This extension included, amongst others, countries covered by the European neighbourhood policy and by the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance. The proposal which this ex-ante evaluation accompanies is in line with this desire for the extension of the geographical scope.

Also, we must take into account the outermost regions of the European Union, which are included in the programme¹¹. Additional funding is foreseen for young people from these regions, in particular through increased travel contributions (as suggested by President Juncker¹²), as well as for participants taking part in placements in these regions.

While challenges arise from the fact that these regions are far away from the European continent, this also represents more opportunities. The European Union's neighbours are situated not only around the Mediterranean and to the East. They are also in the Caribbean, in West Africa, and the Indian Ocean. The outermost regions share maritime and land borders with several countries, some of them being part of the list of countries where EU Aid Volunteers can deploy volunteers. One of the key pillars of the EU's outermost regions' strategy is promoting regional cooperation and tightening the links with these neighbours, especially given their ties with Oversea Countries and Territories and with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States¹³. For instance, Caribbean countries share most of the same challenges as the French outermost regions in the Caribbean with regards to climate change and environment, two of the areas covered by the European Solidarity Corps¹⁴.

This ex-ante evaluation as well as the proposal for a Regulation it accompanies assumes continuity of the current European Solidarity Corps (in line with proposed regulation of May 2017), but reflects the consideration of extending the Corps to humanitarian aid deployments. In order to highlight the importance of humanitarian aid related activities, these are covered in the proposal under a separate chapter, to tailor for the particularities derived from the context in which these deployments will take place. Furthermore, as described in section 3 of this ex-ante evaluation, the programme structure includes a separate action for these activities. Finally, it must be noted that the extension of geographical scope does not affect the occupational strand (traineeship and job placements), as these will remain available only within the European Union. This is due to Union market regulations, which make it simpler and more transparent to have such placements in Member States.

1.1.3 Proposed programme

The extended European Solidarity Corps provides a wide range of opportunities for young people (starting at 18 years old, but not older than 30 years old) to take part in solidarity activities. These should be aimed at addressing unmet societal needs, and developed in relation to different areas, such as education and training, employment, gender equality, environment and nature protection, climate action, disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery, social assistance and welfare, and cooperation across borders, to name a few. These activities can take place in the participant's country, in another EU Member State, in a third country associated to the programme, or in a partner country. The expected number of placements would depend on the budget assigned to the programme, and thus varies between 250,000 and 375,000

⁸ Treaty on European Union, TEU (2012/C326/01), art. 2.

⁹ *ibid*, art. 21, par.1.

¹⁰ Council of the European Union, General Approach, 20 November 2017, page 14.

¹¹ A stronger and renewed strategic partnership with the EU's outermost regions (COM(2017)623), 24 October 2017, page 11.

¹² Speech of President Juncker during the Conference of Presidents of Outermost Regions, Cayenne, 27 October 2017.

¹³ A stronger and renewed strategic partnership with the EU's outermost regions (COM(2017)623), 24 October 2017, page 15.

¹⁴ A renewed partnership with the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (JOIN(2016)52), 22 November 2016, page 18.

solidarity opportunities (see section 5.1 for more details). When compared with the ongoing programmes, the extended European Solidarity Corps has some additional features, such as an inter-generational component and an improved community. These changes aim mainly at tackling the challenges foreseen as described in section 2.1, as well as to address the feedback received from stakeholders on the design and implementation of the European Solidarity Corps¹⁵.

The extended European Solidarity Corps also addresses current trends and new challenges¹⁶ that are of special interest to the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework. It directly contributes to reducing social divergences, as the projects contribute to address certain societal needs, while also providing an opportunity for young people to develop their skills, which will increase their employment prospects.

In particular, skills and competences development is at the core of the specific objective of the programme (see below section 2.2), which is thus fully aligned with the way forward proposed in the Reflection Paper on the Social Dimension of Europe. Indeed, one of the key factors that determine the future of Europe is skills development¹⁷. The development of skills is what empowers citizens to create strong societies¹⁸. The European Solidarity Corps focuses on the participants' skills development, with a training and evaluation cycle that starts well before the deployment, and virtually never ends, thanks to the learning platform. The skills developed during the deployment are certified, which allows the participant to demonstrate its learning outcomes.

The extension of the scope to include humanitarian aid will also contribute to the simplification principle, by combining two programmes that used to target the same population and in so doing will decrease confusion for potential participating young persons and organisations. It is also in line with the EU approach to the Youth, Peace and Security (as set out in UN Security Council Resolution 2250 of 2015), which highlights the importance of promoting active participation of young people in society, in particular through cross-border mobility¹⁹. Lastly, the extension of the scope to include humanitarian aid related activities also addresses the idea of wider opportunities for young people as put forward by the New Narrative for Europe campaign²⁰.

The proposed programme also follows the four principles key to the design of the future EU budget²¹:

EU added value: the EU added value of this proposal comes from:

- **a common quality standard**, 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.
- **solidarity, as a common European value**, which ensures that the European Solidarity Corps complements, and does not compete with, existing public and private policies, programmes and activities, both at national and European level. This is fully in line with the subsidiarity principle, as the European Solidarity Corps will not replace similar actions by Member States, but will serve to complement and support them.
- **economies of scale and scope**, achieved as a consequence of acting at European level. Indeed, while national frameworks could achieve similar results, they would do so at a greater cost (double the cost), as put forward by the Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020)²².
- **consistency**, as by bringing different types of placements under one European Solidarity Corps brand, awareness about and visibility of the opportunities available to young people can be improved.

Accountability: high degrees of both transparency and accountability are achieved through a thorough monitoring and evaluation framework, as well as through continuous coordination with the implementing institutions (the Commission, the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency and Erasmus National Agencies).

More flexibility within a stable framework: this programme will use the delivery mechanisms already in

¹⁵ Meeting with stakeholders on 30 January 2018.

¹⁶ Reflection Paper on the Future of EU Finances, 28 June 2017, pages 22 and 23.

¹⁷ Reflection Paper on the Social Dimension of Europe, 26 April 2017, pages 12 and 19.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, page 22.

¹⁹ Draft Council Conclusions on the role of Young people in building a secure, cohesive and harmonious society in Europe, 23 February 2018.

²⁰ 12 Ideas for the Future of Europe, June 2017, idea 2, page 12.

²¹ Reflection Paper on the Future of EU Finances, page 25.

²² Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) (SWD(2018)40), 31 January 2018.

use by the European Solidarity Corps (see below section 4). This guarantees a high degree of flexibility in the implementation of the programme, allowing for adjustments and reactivity to future, unforeseeable changes in the needs of participants, organisations, and society, while at the same time providing the stability derived from the use of the Erasmus network, which have proved so successful in the past, counting on the national experience and know-how from the Erasmus National Agencies.

Simplified rules²³: this new programme provides for a simplification of procedures, which was recently highlighted as a barrier to participation²⁴. Further simplification can be sought to better cater for the needs of participants and organisations.

In relation to the proposed programme, no similar existing programme has been identified. Nonetheless, mention must be made to the pilot project, "Youth for Development", which aims at sending young European volunteers to projects funded through EU development budget in order to contribute to EU development cooperation actions is under development. This would enable young EU citizens to improve their skills, competences and intercultural knowledge. An operational proposal prepared for this pilot recommends a collaboration with the European Solidarity Corps after 2020²⁵. Should the pilot show the demand for and positive impact of such activities, it could be considered to include such activities under this programme.

1.2. Lessons learned from previous programmes

1.2.1 EU Aid Volunteers:

The EU Aid Volunteers initiative was established in 2014 on the basis of article 214(5) of the TFEU. It aims to strengthen the EU's ability to provide needs-based humanitarian aid and to strengthen the capacity and resilience of vulnerable or disaster-affected communities in non-EU countries. At the same time it allows European citizens to show solidarity with people in need by taking part in humanitarian action in these countries.

Its general objective, as stated in Article 4 of the EU Aid Volunteers Regulation, is:

The objective of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative shall be to contribute to strengthening the Union's capacity to provide needs-based humanitarian aid aimed at preserving life, preventing and alleviating human suffering and maintaining human dignity and to strengthening the capacity and resilience of vulnerable or disaster-affected communities in third countries, particularly by means of disaster preparedness, disaster risk reduction and by enhancing the link between relief, rehabilitation and development. That objective shall be attained through the added value of joint contributions of EU Aid Volunteers, expressing the Union's values and solidarity with people in need and visibly promoting a sense of European citizenship.

The programme has a budget of EUR 147.9 million (2014-2020) and the objective to deploy 4,000 volunteers by 2020 to non-EU countries. Until end of 2018, EU Aid Volunteers will have deployed 381 volunteers and provided around 100 online volunteering opportunities. It is expected that the average annual amounts for the current budget will reach EUR 15-16 million instead of EUR 21 million planned in the last MFF. Currently the programme is not restricted to young people. It needs to be noted that the largest part of the budget is dedicated to capacity building / technical assistance of organisations and training. During the first three years of implementation (2015-2017) 242 partner organisations (EU based and non-EU based) received funding for capacity building activities and 66 organisations received funding for technical assistance projects (only EU-based organisations).

As required, an external evaluation report feeding into the mid-term evaluation²⁶ for the period from mid-2014 to mid-2017 was carried out for the EU Aid Volunteers initiative²⁷. The evaluation provided useful analyses and insights on the implementation of the initiative, including on existing shortcomings and areas for further improvement. The external evaluation report²⁸ made the following observations with regard to the relevance, coherence, EU added value, effectiveness and efficiency of the EU Aid Volunteers:

Relevance: the external evaluation focused on assessing the relevance of the five established operational

²³ A simplification of rules and procedures has been stressed as a recommendation for the EU Aid Volunteers programme, see below section 2.1.1.2.

²⁴ As data from the open consultation shows, see section 1.2.3.

²⁵ Note to DG DEVCO Management, 18 January 2018 (Ref. Ares (2018) 286676).

²⁶ Mid-term evaluation of the EU Aid Volunteers, 2017.

²⁷ Regulation 2014/375 establishing the EU Aid Volunteers initiative, L122/1, 3 April 2014.

²⁸ Please note that the Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and to the Council as well as the Staff Working Document on the interim evaluation of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative has not been adopted yet. This part of the ex-ante evaluation may be replaced by the text in the Report / SWD as soon as it is adopted.

objectives of the EU Aid Volunteers against the different needs of stakeholders (organisations, volunteers, local communities). The evaluation concluded that the programme is highly relevant. First, the needs highlighted in the impact assessment prepared to establish the legislative acts²⁹ are directly addressed by the actions of the programme. Second, the objectives are relevant to their intended stakeholders, particularly in regard to strengthening capacity. Third, all the types of action identified in the Regulation help to fulfil the objectives to an extent which justifies their funding by the EU Aid Volunteers programme.

Coherence: the analysis of the coherence of initiative with other related EU activities (emergency humanitarian response, development assistance, civil protection) revealed room for improvement. The initiative is not fully aligned with the main EU humanitarian aid processes (e.g. global needs analysis, planning of actions, and engagement of professional sector actors). To date there is only informal coordination with EU development actors (e.g. DG DEVCO), and the evaluation identified potential opportunities for cooperation and alignment, especially as regards contributing to the implementation of the EU's Joint Strategic Approach to Resilience. EU Aid Volunteers shows a few examples of cooperation with EU civil protection actors, but there is also a potential for improved coherence in this area.

EU added value: it was found that the centralised management by the Commission provides added value in terms of an integrated transnational approach, a budget for EU level technical assistance, and provision of more project opportunities. The standard of volunteer management established by the programme can be called a European standard as it is mandatory for all deployment grant applicants. The quality of training provided by initiative to candidate volunteers is also a clear added value compared to other existing volunteering schemes. However, no evidence could be found that the initiative has significantly enhanced EU visibility and image at public level in the EU so far.

Effectiveness: processes and administration show good effectiveness levels, e.g. implementation framework, contract management, technical and procedural information to stakeholders, training of volunteers and skills development. Limited effectiveness was observed in relation to "outreach" components such as the engagement of professional humanitarian actors, the external communication of the Union's humanitarian principles, or the enhancement of coherence and consistency of volunteering across Member States. Given that deployment figures are significantly below target, the initiative has not proved effective during the first half of its first implementation cycle.

Efficiency: the evaluation found that the Regulations which govern the initiative, and therefore dictate the processes to be followed by EUAV partners, are often perceived as complex, e.g. the need for certification, list of eligible countries, list of eligible activities, and long periods before deployment. However, they are mostly complex because the Commission takes its responsibility for volunteers seriously. A functioning implementation framework was established and continuous attempts to reduce complexity have led to visible improvements (e.g. the reduction of the number of partners required for EUAV grant application). The established monitoring framework is workable, but some unviable indicators should be reviewed (e.g. average cost per person reached by humanitarian aid projects to which the EUAV initiative contributes). Cost-conscious behaviour of the Commission was identified, for example requesting grant applicants to expressly comment on cost-effectiveness, and through service contracts, because those drawn up for training and insurance of volunteers mostly use variable cost positions. Overall, the external evaluation concludes that the establishment and the implementation of the Initiative, based on the requirements laid down in the Regulations, can be deemed to be efficient.

In the context of the interim evaluation of the implementation of the initiative for the period from mid-2014 to mid-2017, extensive consultations took place with different stakeholders (EU Aid Volunteers (candidates and deployed); EU Aid Volunteers sending organisations and their partners; EU Aid Volunteers hosting organisations; DG ECHO FPA partners (those not yet engaged); EU Aid Volunteers pilot project partners (those not yet engaged); and member states representatives (Council Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA), Council Working Party on Civil Protection (PROCIV), and Humanitarian Aid Committee (HAC)). Different tools were used such as online surveys and semi-structured phone or face-to-face interviews. Six targeted surveys were carried out and three field missions were conducted in Latin America and the Caribbean (Haiti and Ecuador), the Middle-East (Jordan and Lebanon), and South-East Asia (Myanmar and Cambodia). An open public consultation was carried out online for three months (August-October 2017) with a total of 30 responses. Three case studies on different projects carried out through the initiative (i.e. certification, deployment and technical assistance and capacity building) completed the methodological approach.

Given that the first volunteers had only been deployed end of 2016 and that none of the ongoing projects funded under the programme had come to an end during the time of the external evaluation study, the

²⁹ Impact Assessment accompanying the proposal for a Regulation establishing the EU Aid Volunteers initiative (SWD(2012)0265), 19 September 2012.

findings stated above on relevance, coherence, EU added value, effectiveness and efficiency are based to a large extent on the contributions provided in the stakeholder consultation.

1.2.2 European Solidarity Corps

The European Solidarity Corps proposed a budget of EUR 341 million for the 2018-2020 period and aims at providing 100,000 placements in that period. The main focus of the European Solidarity Corps activities is solidarity within Europe with a broader range of activities than EU Aid Volunteers but a narrower geographical scope. Young Europeans between the ages of 18-30 are eligible for deployment, while those at the age of 17 can already register on the platform and benefit from the content available. The European Solidarity Corps offers not only volunteering placements, but also traineeships and job placements, as well as solidarity projects, which enable a group of young people to directly address the needs of their community.

Its general objective, as stated in Article 3 of the proposal for a Regulation, is:

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

Before its establishment, an ex-ante evaluation was conducted³⁰, which compared two options: option 1 proposed the continued implementation of separate volunteering programmes, while option 2 proposed an integration of all programmes into the European Solidarity Corps. Below is a summary of the findings, which compared several criteria for both options:

Accessibility: option 2 was preferred, as it gave a clear and single access point for organisations and young people. This responded to stakeholders' wishes for clear and practical information and helped overcome the lack of awareness for relevant activities. An important message resulting from stakeholder consultations was the need to communicate effectively and widely on the European Solidarity Corps. Pooling activities under one legal base facilitates communicating messages around the value that the European Solidarity Corps brings to a young person's personal development and employability. Furthermore, option 2 was also the best approach to optimally diversify the menu of options offering a combination of in-country and cross-border activities of various natures.

Quality: option 2 was preferred, as it allows for a high overall quality of placements and of preparedness of the young people. Placement offers are personalised and match the skills, interests, and learning potential of the individual European Solidarity Corps participants.

Inclusiveness: this was highlighted by stakeholders as of high importance. Option 2 allows for a focus on clarity and simplicity on conditions and application procedures. It builds on the experiences with targeted inclusion efforts under Erasmus+ programme (25 % of participants of the European Voluntary Service were from disadvantaged backgrounds) and embeds the inclusiveness approach in the programme design through a dedicated inclusion strategy. This includes additional funding to enable participation of young people with fewer opportunities on equal terms as others or to support the organisations involving them.

Synergies: option 2 benefitted from synergies between the activities and their recognition, which were implemented through different programmes. It put them in one common framework and helped create new networks between people and organisations with common aspirations for solidarity and towards new communities built around solidarity.

Efficiency: option 2 was preferred, as it allows for the simultaneous decrease of management costs while reaching greater effects (more value for less money). This has been 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. Furthermore, common implementation of horizontal services like insurance, training and recognition brings higher efficiency for the programme management and for the organisations it supports, whilst not increasing average costs of placements for the organisation.

In addition, since the European Solidarity Corps is strongly based in the previous European Voluntary Service, which was implemented under Erasmus+, it is worth taking a look at the recent Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation³¹. The main results of this evaluation were presented in a Commission Report³², which highlights the effectiveness of Erasmus+ in terms of skills and competences development; its undisputable

³⁰ Ex-ante evaluation of the European Solidarity Corps (SWD(2017)166), 30 May 2017.

³¹ Highlights and main documents can be found here in the relevant website dedicated to the evaluations: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents/evaluations_en

³² Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) (SWD(2018)40), 31 January 2018.

European added value; high degree of coherence, in particular due to the pooling of programmes and the single brand name; and its efficiency and simplicity, underscoring the cost-effectiveness of mobility actions and the reduced management cost (less than half of similar national schemes).

When looking at the youth sector section of the detailed report³³, some relevant lessons can be drawn. For instance, almost a third of the respondents identified overlaps in between the youth sector of Erasmus+ and other EU funding opportunities, such as EU Aid Volunteers. This diminishes the coherence of both programmes. Also, linguistic barriers were identified as one of the main issues, which require further development of language skills. Finally, administrative burden was also noted as too heavy in the youth sector.

1.2.3 Values and mobility consultation

Finally, a mention must be made of the recent public consultation on "EU funds in the area of values and mobility"³⁴, which is relevant for both the current European Solidarity Corps and EU Aid Volunteers. The consultation drew 1,839 respondents, of which 1,199 represented an organisation. Some observations can be made that are relevant to this ex-ante evaluation. For instance, over 75 % of respondents believe that promoting solidarity, promoting social inclusion, and promoting skills development through mobility is important. However, less than 40 % of respondents believe that these issues are either fully or well addressed. Nonetheless, respondents clearly see the EU added value in this sector, as over 75 % believe that the current programmes add value compared to what Member States could achieve at national, regional and/or local levels.

Out of all respondents, 135 responded with specific focus on the EU Aid Volunteers and / or the European Solidarity Corps. Of these respondents, 82 % believe that the lack of budget to satisfy demand is one of the main obstacles preventing the current programmes from achieving their objectives at least to some extent. Also, linked to the simplification sought with the integration, it must be highlighted that over 68 % of respondents believe that a simplification of forms and grant selection processes would help in improving the results of the programmes.

2 THE OBJECTIVES

1.3. Challenges for the programmes of the next MFF

2.1.1 Main challenges

The new programme will face several challenges, which derive both from the previous programme as well as from the context of the extension of the scope to include humanitarian aid. Therefore, these main challenges can be classified into two groups: challenges inherited from the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps from 2018 onwards, and challenges arising from the extension of the scope to include activities supporting humanitarian aid.

Regarding the challenges derived from the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps, we can highlight the following³⁵:

Communications: during the transitional phase there has been some confusion amongst potential participants on the role of the European Solidarity Corps, especially in relation to the underlying programmes which were part of phase 1, as well as the differences with regards to the European Voluntary Service, under Erasmus+ or other existing programmes (such as EU Aid Volunteers).

Coherence: as put forward by the ex-ante evaluation, the two most visible EU volunteering schemes are separated.

Slow uptake in occupational strand: the traineeships and job placements being offered are fewer than anticipated. Several options will be further reflected upon to increase the number of placements offered, such as increased financial assistance or jobs of unlimited duration.

Cooperation with national schemes: the cooperation with national frameworks, initiatives and schemes, such as civic service programmes or privately run initiatives should be increased to avoid possible overlapping of programmes.

Inter-generational dimension: the logic of placing the participants in organisations is so that knowledge

³³ Combined evaluation of Erasmus + and predecessor programmes, prepared by ICF, October 2017, page 43.

³⁴ Final consolidated analysis is still pending.

³⁵ These challenges have been identified based on the Concept paper on the future of the European Solidarity Corps (11/09/2017, Ares(2017)4436748), as well as the Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation and the ex-ante evaluation accompanying the Regulation of the European Solidarity Corps cited above.

is transferred to them. In addition, several projects may take place in meeting the needs of seniors. Finally, there is a disconnection between former, current and future participants, which translates into lost expertise that is not transmitted from a generation of participants to the next. While all this will be addressed in the programme, the age limit remains at 30 years old, as the main aim of this programme is the learning and skills development of young people.

Community building: as seen above, the skills gained through the European Solidarity Corps experience should not benefit only the projects already finished, but rather be shared amongst young people and beyond. The European Solidarity Corps is missing on that knowledge and sharing of experiences that could easily and seamlessly take place through its platform and network of participants.

Establish a knowledge management system: from data collection to identification and dissemination of best practices in project management, the programme will need to better address this issue, to increase the quality of reporting of results.

Regarding the challenges deriving from the inclusion of humanitarian aid, the following can be highlighted³⁶:

Simplification of the process and procedures governing the programme: there are several reasons to suggest this is a challenge that should be addressed in the new programme. For instance, improved access to e-forms and simplifying them would increase the offers by organisations, given the simplified procedures. This was also recommended by the Mid-term evaluation of the EU Aid Volunteers, a recommendation that is in line with the results of the open public consultation, as mentioned in section 1.2.3. Another example is possible challenges arising from a complex Regulation or set of legislative acts, lacking flexibility to adapt to changing needs of the programme.

Improving promotion and communication: there is a risk of both potential participants and organisations not being aware or interested in the programme. The Mid-term evaluation of the EU Aid Volunteers also recommended several measures to increase the reach of communications, which should be addressed to improve the future promotion of the programme.

Deployment of volunteers to humanitarian aid activities: one of the main challenges of including in the programme deployments in support of humanitarian aid activities is the lengthy timeline between the time candidates sign up and when they are deployed. Under EU Aid Volunteers, candidates need to apply to a vacancy posted by the organisation, which then evaluates the candidates, selects them, and then deploys them. A roster of candidates approach has been suggested by the Mid-term evaluation, and the implementation of the new programme will need to make sure that participants for humanitarian aid activities do not face additional barriers compared to participants in other fields. This, in addition to changes in EU Aid Volunteers procedures, would decrease the time between vacancy announcement and deployment, which in turn would reduce drop-outs of candidates for humanitarian aid activities.

2.1.2 Baseline

This ex-ante evaluation proposes an extended scope of the European Solidarity Corps, including support to humanitarian aid activities. In order to be able to measure the results of the extension of the scope, a baseline scenario has been considered, consisting of the European Solidarity Corps remaining with a scope without support to humanitarian aid activities, and a continuing existence of the EU Aid Volunteers as a separate entity.

Based on the findings of the interim evaluation of EU Aid Volunteers and consultation with stakeholders, the programme activities would need to be simplified to increase the interest of organisations to offer placements for volunteers. These simplifications would entail changes in the legislative base with regard to the certification of sending and hosting organisations, training of candidate volunteers, and deployment of volunteers, as well as administrative simplifications with a view to the implementation of the initiative (e.g. several calls per year or multiannual call, options to enable fast deployments if needs arise, etc.).

For the European Solidarity Corps, following the policy recommendations presented during the Gothenburg Summit of 17 November 2017, it could be considered that for the period 2012-2027 a substantial leap of solidarity opportunities on the ground for young people will be offered, increasing the target to about 1.5 million solidarity opportunities. This would require a significant increase compared to the current levels of budget, and therefore will not be considered as an option. The baseline will be considered as a similar level of budget and results as for the current programme (which would provide around 250,000 opportunities).

The evaluation of the impact resulting from the extension of the European Solidarity Corps as opposed to

³⁶ These challenges are drawn from the findings of the Mid-term evaluation of the EU Aid Volunteers, 2017.

this baseline scenario will be done using efficiency measures as described in section 5.2.

2.1.3 Differences in legal bases

The current European Solidarity Corps is based on articles 165(4) and 166(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which is in part 3 (dealing with "Union policies and internal actions"), while the EU Aid Volunteers is based on article 214 (5), which is in part 5 (dealing with "External action by the Union").

This differences in the legal bases on which the programmes are currently based has been taken into account when drafting the proposal for a Regulation. In order to cater for the specificities of deployments to humanitarian aid related activities, the relevant actions to be undertaken for each case are addressed under two separate chapters in the proposal.

1.4. Objectives of the programmes of the next MFF

2.2.1 General objective

The general objective of the EU Aid Volunteers is currently stated in article 4 of its Regulation:

*The objective of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative shall be to contribute to strengthening the Union's capacity to provide needs-based humanitarian aid aimed at **preserving life, preventing and alleviating human suffering and maintaining human dignity** and to strengthening the capacity and resilience of vulnerable or disaster-affected communities in third countries, particularly by means of **disaster preparedness, disaster risk reduction and by enhancing the link between relief, rehabilitation and development**. That objective shall be attained through the added value of joint contributions of EU Aid Volunteers, **expressing the Union's values and solidarity with people in need and visibly promoting a sense of European citizenship**.*

As for the European Solidarity Corps Regulation, its article 2, paragraph 1 specifies the definition of solidarity activity as an activity addressing unmet societal needs in the following areas:

... education and training, employment, gender equality, entrepreneurship, in particular social entrepreneurship, citizenship and democratic participation, environment and nature protection, climate action, disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery, agriculture and rural development, provision of food and non-food items, health and wellbeing, creativity and culture, physical education and sport, social assistance and welfare, reception and integration of third-country nationals, territorial cooperation and cohesion;

The objective of the EU Aid Volunteers is thus fully aligned with the areas covered by the activities of the European Solidarity Corps³⁷. This allows for an integration into the European Solidarity Corps objectives without loss of EU Aid Volunteers' objectives.

Therefore, the main overall general objective of the programme will require only two small modifications of the general objective of the European Solidarity Corps, to cater for the increased geographical scope as well as the different origin of the legal bases of each of the current programmes. As such, article 3 of the European Solidarity Corps Regulation shall read³⁸ (new additions in bold):

*To enhance the engagement of young people and organisations in accessible and high quality solidarity activities as a means to contribute to strengthening cohesion, solidarity and democracy in Europe **and abroad**, addressing societal **and humanitarian** challenges on the ground, with particular effort to promote social inclusion.*

Nonetheless, in order to guarantee that the EU Aid Volunteers is not simply diluted into the European Solidarity Corps, as well as to guarantee that its original legal base (article 214(5)) and previous objectives are respected, a separate chapter in the proposed Regulation has been drafted to give strength to the particularities of such deployments. This is reflected in the Programme structure suggested in section 3.

2.2.2 Specific objective

To reach the general objective described above, the following specific objectives will be pursued:

To provide young people, including those with fewer opportunities, with easily accessible

³⁷ See article 2(1) of the European Solidarity Corps Regulation.

³⁸ The General and Specific objectives are adapted from Council of the European Union, General Approach, 20 November 2017.

opportunities for engagement in solidarity activities in Europe and abroad while improving and properly validating their competences as well as facilitating their employability and transition into the labour market.

The success criteria of this specific objective of the extended European Solidarity Corps are further developed in section 5 of this ex-ante evaluation.

The objective includes all the cross-cutting Multiannual Financial Framework objectives:

Flexibility: the specific objective allows for the programme to quickly react to changes in the needs of society. Indeed, the objective is concrete enough so it can be targeted, and its performance monitored and evaluated. However, at the same time, it covers broad areas such as “*solidarity activities*”, which gives the Erasmus National Agencies and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency the possibility to readjust in the implementation of the programme, in particular with regards to priority areas. Furthermore, the integration under the European Solidarity Corps would mean only one legal base for all volunteering (both inside and outside the EU) and occupational placements. This would ensure the implementation is flexible to possible changes in the needs of the organisations and final beneficiaries, as well as flexibility in better addressing the needs of the participants, in particular with regards to training and skills development.

Coherence and synergies: the inclusion of EU Aid Volunteers activities into the European Solidarity Corps programme would achieve improved synergies that could also aim at achieving more clarity and coherence for EU citizens who are interested to participate in solidarity activities, including volunteering inside or outside the EU. Creating a ‘one-stop-shop’ for different solidarity opportunities provided by the EU would result in opportunities for joint promotion (branding) and the creation of a unique and global EU volunteering scheme.

Simplification: the placements and deployments offered under the extended European Solidarity Corps will be made more “*accessible*” to young people. As mentioned earlier, this will be achieved by simplifying the rules and procedures currently in place, aligning them to the current European Solidarity Corps procedures. For participants, the integration would imply a simplification, as it would allow for European solidarity to be approached in a holistic way under one EU instrument, covering activities both within and beyond EU borders (humanitarian aid dimension added). For organisations, the simplification of rules of the existing schemes and establishment of a single implementation procedure would translate into less administrative burden, red tape, and barriers for smaller organisations, as well as guaranteeing faster deployments.

Focus on performance: several measures are in place to guarantee that the “*solidarity and humanitarian aid activities that are offered [...] are properly validated...*”. Participants would benefit from the efforts and the knowledge of both programmes that would be pulled together and improve their training and skills development. For organisations, because it enables them to better tailor the projects to the needs on the ground, with an improved mechanism for the sharing of best practices. These improvements will raise the quality of the programme overall. In addition, thanks to the cost savings and enhanced efficiency, coupled with the simplification of procedures and the improved communication, the integration would contribute to an increased number of volunteers through one single instrument.

Relevance, effectiveness, and EU added value: the mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ clearly showed the relevance, effectiveness, and EU added value of the programme. The European Solidarity Corps, since it incorporates most of what used to be the European Voluntary Service, benefits as well from these. As for the EU Aid Volunteers, its mid-term evaluation showed possible improvements to its effectiveness. These will be addressed by the extended European Solidarity Corps, by incorporating humanitarian aid related placements to the delivery mechanisms already established.

2.2.3 Operational objectives

The specific objective will be pursued through the operational objectives below.

1 - Engagement of young people and organisations

1. Provision of volunteering placements
2. Provision of traineeships and jobs placements
3. Provision of opportunities for young to develop their own grass-root solidarity projects
4. Creating opportunities for networking activities

2 - Quality and support

1. Enhancing and guaranteeing the quality of the placements – Quality Label
2. Training and capacity building activities
3. Providing horizontal support measures such as insurance, recognition and online services
4. Communication and awareness raising activities

Based on these operational objectives, the structure chosen for the Programme (see section 3) highlights the separation of 1 - Engagement of young people and organisations, tailoring it to the different needs of each type of activity, making a clear distinction between humanitarian aid activities and the rest. This distinction is nonetheless excluded from the delivery mechanism (see section 4) chosen, to guarantee the benefits of a single mechanism, highlighted above.

3 PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND PRIORITIES

Taking into account the need for stability and predictability, the programme structure of the extended European Solidarity Corps will be built around two chapters, supported by common horizontal actions:

| Participation of young people in solidarity activities addressing societal challenges | European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps |
|---|--|
| <p>1a: Engagement of young people and organisations in solidarity activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteering placements • Traineeships and jobs placements • Grass-root solidarity projects • Networking activities | <p>1b: Engagement of young people and organisations in support of humanitarian aid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteering placements in humanitarian aid • Networking activities |
| <p style="text-align: center;">2: Networking activities, quality and support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Label • Capacity building and training activities • Horizontal support measures • Communication and awareness raising activities | |

As it can be seen, deployments for humanitarian aid related projects are considered under a separate action to tailor for its particularities.

A unique and global EU scheme for solidarity by young persons, with the integration of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative into the volunteering strand of the European Solidarity Corps, would improve the overall implementation results. This integration would:

- be based on the general and specific objectives of the Solidarity Corps as stated above, but with the general objective widened to include activities of the European Solidarity Corps outside the EU³⁹.
- enlarge the scope of humanitarian aid activities to all activities that fall under the objectives of the European Solidarity Corps.
- comply with the age range of the European Solidarity Corps⁴⁰.
- be integrated in a common roster⁴¹.
- have single branding and communication activities⁴².

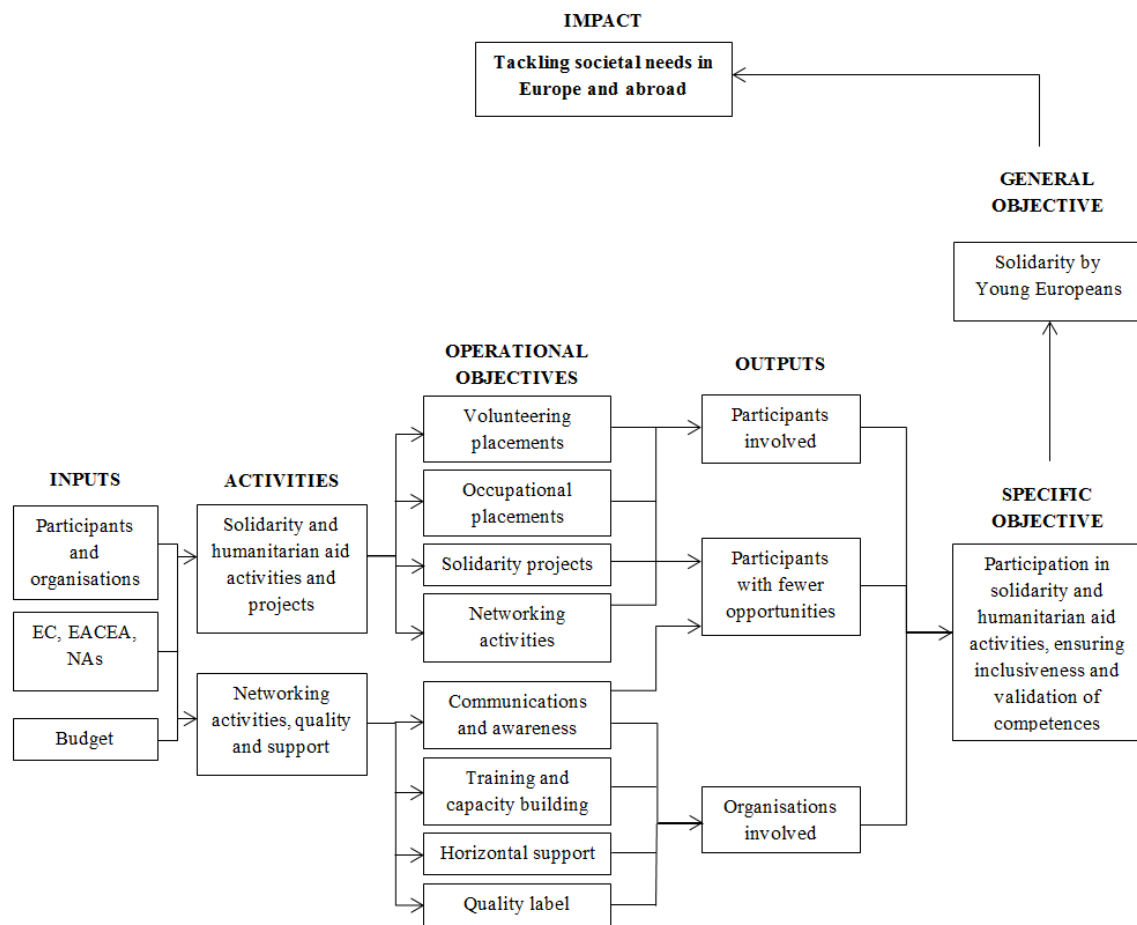
³⁹ In line with recommendation R1.1 of the Mid-term evaluation of the EU Aid Volunteers.

⁴⁰ This will not decrease the potential candidates for activities outside the EU to a large degree. As of today around 60% of deployed volunteers under EU Aid Volunteers are within the age range permitted under the European Solidarity Corps (see Mid-term evaluation report, page 19). Furthermore, it is believed that the remaining positions could easily be filled with candidates falling within the age range of the European Solidarity Corps.

⁴¹ In line with recommendations R1.5 and R4.2.

- have a single implementation mechanism, including the use of the same e-form for Quality Label and funding application for all organisations and projects⁴³.
- have some distinct features with regard to the accreditation of organisations, safety and security obligations. In particular, continuous monitoring is planned under the Quality label processes, which include possible checks and monitoring missions (if needed) after the award of the Quality Label, to ensure high standards remain the norm in the organisation⁴⁴.
- training and evaluation cycle for all participants, including training prior to deployment, on-arrival, at mid-term, and after return.
- include activities that used to be implemented under EU Aid Volunteers into existing tools under European Solidarity Corps to allow for the dissemination of lessons learned and good practices⁴⁵.
- bring significant synergies and cost savings via maintaining a single set of tools and systems.

Below is a simplified intervention logic based on the objectives to be achieved:



Given that both programmes, the European Solidarity Corps and the EU Aid Volunteers initiative will have carried out their activities already before 2021, a critical mass in terms of engagement of organisations to provide placements, interest of young people to participate in the enhanced programme, and number of projects implemented (in order to gather sufficient knowhow and feedback from stakeholders) will most likely be achieved. However, in order to keep the same level of cost efficiency and results, the budget for the next Multiannual Financial Framework cannot be lower than current levels of funding, as this would render the extended European Solidarity Corps inefficient.

EU added value would be achieved through centralised management of a global EU volunteering scheme. This will allow the application of the same procedures for organisations in the entire EU, third countries associated to the programme and from some European Solidarity Corps' third countries not associated to

⁴² In line with recommendations R2.2, R4.5, and R4.6.

⁴³ In line with recommendations R5.1.

⁴⁴ In line with recommendations R1.2.

⁴⁵ In line with recommendations R4.9.

the programme to participate in the EU based and global activities of the extended European Solidarity Corps.

Stakeholders that participated in the open public consultation on the EU Aid Volunteers initiative's mid-term evaluation had different opinions on whether the needs addressed through an external volunteering scheme could instead be achieved through Member States' national volunteering schemes or volunteering schemes run by other actors, e.g. United Nations Volunteers or Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers. While 36.8 % of the respondents share this view (they agreed fully or to a large extent with the statement), the same number of respondents (36.9 %) agreed only to some extent or not at all.

Stakeholders agreed though that an international volunteering scheme increases opportunities for neighbouring countries to work together, because they need to form consortia and participate in joint capacity building activities. It also enhances cooperation between organisations of varying backgrounds and sizes (e.g. humanitarian actors, civil protection actors, development actors, volunteering organisations). An enlargement of the scope to cover solidarity activities more broadly will therefore provide opportunities for an ever greater variety of actors.

Finally, a recent Eurobarometer showed that 11 % of those young people who have volunteered over the past 12 months did so to "change something in another part of the world". This highlights the relevance of the extension of the geographical scope of the European Solidarity Corps⁴⁶.

4 DELIVERY MECHANISMS OF THE INTENDED FUNDING

The delivery mechanism to be used is the same as is currently in place in the European Solidarity Corps. Before specifying it, it is worth taking a look at how several aspects of the integrated programme will work.

4.1 Eligibility

Participants: in order to streamline both programmes and to underline the political focus on the engagement with young people, as well as to align with the relevant articles of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (in particular 214(5)), a common age limit of maximum 30 years is proposed. This is in line with the European Solidarity Corps current age limit and, as mentioned above, would include the large majority of volunteers as currently deployed by EU Aid Volunteers.

Organisations: any organisation can apply for a Quality Label, as a pre-condition to participate in the programme and request funding. Specific requirements for organisations active in humanitarian aid could be envisaged as part of this process, in particular with regards to safety and security.

Remit and types of activities: the extended programme should be aligned with the areas of activities described in the current European Solidarity Corps Regulation:

... developed in relation to different areas, such as education and training, employment, gender equality, entrepreneurship, in particular social entrepreneurship, citizenship and democratic participation, environment and nature protection, climate action, disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery, agriculture and rural development, provision of food and non-food items, health and wellbeing, creativity and culture, physical education and sport, social assistance and welfare, reception and integration of third-country nationals, territorial cooperation and cohesion.

The majority of these areas are also covered under EU Aid Volunteers activities. Humanitarian aid related activities include disaster risk management, which is also possible under the Corps. Another area to be considered for activities for the future humanitarian volunteering placements is addressing root-causes for migration in source countries, by improving the socio-economic context of local communities. Participation in conflict/war areas should however continue to be excluded as the potential danger for the participants is too high. Response to emergency situations is currently excluded from all schemes, but a rapid response function of the extended European Solidarity Corps will be developed to cater for the rapid deployment of volunteers to support the recovery after emergencies such as natural disasters.

4.2 Geographical scope

⁴⁶ Flash Eurobarometer 455, Briefing note, January 2018, page 5.

a. Participants

The extended European Solidarity Corps will be open to nationals and residents of Member States and third countries associated to the programme and third countries not associated to the programme, such as Neighbouring Partner Countries and countries covered by the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance, but nationals and residents of Neighbouring Partner Countries and countries covered by the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance could participate only in activities in the Member States and in third countries associated to the programme. Nationals and residents of Member States and third countries associated to the programme would be able to participate in volunteering worldwide. A limited participation of young nationals from receiving third countries could be explored, always as complementary to the deployment of nationals of the previously mentioned countries. Finally, job and traineeship placements are open to nationals and residents of Member States.

Participants doing volunteering with a humanitarian aid purpose may be required to have more intense training and sometimes previous experience or a certain profile compared to participants in other volunteering activities part of the Corps.

b. Organisations

The extended European Solidarity Corps will be open to organisations based in Member States, third countries associated to the programme, and some third countries not associated to the programme under certain conditions. In particular, organisations in some Neighbouring Partner Countries could participate as supporting and host organisations, while organisations based in other third countries may only participate as host organisations.

c. Activities

In general, the extended European Solidarity Corps will keep the broader geographical scope of the EU Aid Volunteers with clear distinction of the geographical scope for each activity type (i.e. volunteering worldwide scope; occupational activities only within EU). Thus, it covers, in the humanitarian field, all countries worldwide except in conflict zones. For all other volunteering opportunities, potentially all countries participating today in Erasmus+ would be included. Finally, jobs and traineeships opportunities will be on offer only in EU Member States.

4.3 Types of placements

Three types of placements are foreseen:

Volunteering: a volunteering placement is a full-time unpaid voluntary service for a limited period (up to 12 months), which provides young people with the opportunity to contribute to the daily work of organisations active in solidarity-related fields, to the ultimate benefit of the communities within which the activities will be carried out. Volunteering activities can be carried out either individually or in group. These activities can also take the form of support to humanitarian aid projects in several countries around the world.

Traineeships: a traineeship is understood as a period of work practice of between 2 to a maximum of 12 months, remunerated by the organisation hosting the Corps participant. It is based on a written traineeship agreement, which includes a learning and training component, and is undertaken in order to gain practical and professional experience with a view to improving employability and facilitating transition to regular employment. Traineeships that are part of curricula of formal or vocational education and training, as well as traineeships whose completion is a mandatory requirement to access a specific profession are not supported under the European Solidarity Corps.

Jobs: a job is understood as a period of work of 2 to 12 months, remunerated by the participating organisation employing the Corps participant, based on an employment contract in accordance with the national regulatory framework of the participating country. The job will be of good quality (in terms of skills and training opportunities, working conditions, promotion of gender equality). The aim is to provide Corps participants with a job within organisations (NGOs, public authorities or private companies) operating in solidarity-related sectors, which will provide them with the skills and experience that will strengthen their employability and support their transition into the labour market. At societal level, the aim is to address unmet demand for labour in solidarity-related sectors and promote solidarity across Member States.

4.4 Implementation

The extended European Solidarity Corps will be implemented by the Commission, the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency and National Agencies, as currently done under European Solidarity Corps. Regarding the accreditation process/quality assurance, a Quality Label has been set up and will be maintained, but expanded with questions required for humanitarian activities, as well as for

enhanced safety and security measures needed in some countries.

This choice of using the European Solidarity Corps mechanisms is mainly due to the possibility of using the Erasmus structures, which have proved so successful in the past, counting on the national experience and know-how from the Erasmus National Agencies. This mechanism allows for flexibility, as the legal base allows for tailored implementation of the programme, while at the same time guaranteeing its stability. Furthermore, it is expected that this funding mechanism should remain the most efficient regardless of the amount (provided the critical mass in section 3 is achieved).

The delivery mechanism chosen fully respects the requirements of subsidiarity and proportionality. With regards to subsidiarity, the EU has a role to play in supporting a Europe-wide approach to solidarity. EU action through the extended 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. 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.

Furthermore, the extended European Solidarity Corps will offer a single entry point to high quality volunteering (also beyond the EU) and occupational solidarity placements for young people across the EU, whereas currently these are only accessible via a several programmes. 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.

With regards to proportionality, while the targets and budget remain unknown, it can be said that the extended European Solidarity Corps does comply with this requirement. As seen by the current number of potential candidates in European Solidarity Corps (over 55,000 registered candidates) and placements accepted (over 3,500), there is a great demand for placements, in particular volunteering⁴⁷. This demand can only be met through the use of EU funds, as it will allow for all young Europeans to have the same chances of finding an appealing opportunity. Finally, it should be highlighted that the extended European Solidarity Corps would be able to easily absorb the EUR 6.8 billion required to reach 1.5 million solidarity opportunities, mainly due to the great demand for volunteering opportunities.

4.5 Risk assessment

A risk assessment has been conducted for the extended European Solidarity Corps, which highlighted the following risks:

| Risk | Probability | Effect | Mitigating measure |
|---|--------------------|---------------|--|
| There are not enough young people registered in the database with necessary motivation for solidarity activities. | Low | High | <p>Communication activities towards young people.</p> <p>Continuous development of the European Solidarity Corps portal in line with the user's feedback.</p> <p>Community Building activities of already registered young people.</p> <p>General induction training ensuring awareness about the mission of the European Solidarity Corps and the possible type of solidarity activities.</p> |
| Not enough offers from organisations or offers that do not match the interests of the young European Solidarity Corps participants. | Medium | High | <p>Communication activities towards organisations.</p> <p>Networking activities among organisations to enable peer learning and sharing of good experience.</p> <p>Guidance and support for organisations through the implementing structures.</p> |

⁴⁷ Data as of 3 April 2018

| | | | |
|--|-----|--------|---|
| Involvement of 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. |
| Fraud committed by participants leads to an increased cost of insurance overall. | Low | Low | Monitoring of cases through regular reporting from insurance contractor. Improved communication on the required procedures to claim expenses through insurance. Highlight importance of European Health Insurance Card. |
| Rapidly changing environment in a third country renders the deployment of a volunteer dangerous. | Low | Medium | Regularly monitor the situation in countries where there are ongoing activities. Plan for possible required evacuations. |
| Dilution of humanitarian aid activities within the other European Solidarity Corps activities. | Low | Low | Clear distinction in the Regulation between volunteering activities in and outside the field of humanitarian aid. |

5 HOW WILL PERFORMANCE BE MONITORED AND EVALUATED?

The monitoring and evaluation of the European Solidarity Corps programme in achieving the objectives will consist of permanent monitoring to assess progress and an evaluation to assess the existing evidence on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, EU added value of the programme results, with an efficiency analysis based on a comparison with the baseline option, as explained in section 5.2.

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 monitoring and evaluation will be conducted at three levels: participants, organisations, and management of the programme (European Commission, the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, and Erasmus National Agencies). The first two levels will focus on the effectiveness of the programme, while the management level will measure its efficiency. In addition, the future evaluations will also analyse the impact in the communities in which the solidarity activities take place. Preliminary drafts of the monitoring framework and a suggested evaluation matrix have been included in Annexes 4 and 5.

5.1 Effectiveness measures

The indicators that will be collected are:

- **number of participants in solidarity activities:** this includes volunteering placements (in-country and cross-border), traineeship and job placements, and participants in solidarity projects. This indicator includes the deployment of volunteers in support of humanitarian action.
- **percentage of participants from a fewer opportunities background:** this indicator allows the measuring of the inclusiveness of the programme.
- **number of organisations holding a European Solidarity Corps Quality Label.**

The first indicator will allow for the constant monitoring of the progress on the target of solidarity activities. In addition, it is a good indicator to compare performance across implementing countries, which would allow for informed programming decisions in terms of concentrating efforts (in particular communications) in the least performing countries.

The second indicator is related to the inclusiveness of the programme, embedded in the specific objective. Young Europeans with fewer opportunities should be able to participate in the activities of the European Solidarity Corps. In order to measure the effectiveness of promotion and support measures aimed at these young persons, this indicator measures the inclusiveness of the programme by analysing the number of participants from fewer opportunities backgrounds participating in the activities.

The third indicator is related to both amount and quality of opportunities, and is therefore directly related to the specific objective. It is related to the amount of placements in the sense that, the more organisations get awarded a Quality Label, the more organisations can apply for funds and offer solidarity opportunities. It is also related to quality, as the Quality Label is the accreditation process that guarantees that the organisations offering placements have high standards and are able to offer a placement that ensures a learning environment for the participant.

The table in Annex 4 summarises the monitoring of indicators, and explains what data is collected, and how. It includes both the three key performance indicators as suggested for the Regulation, as well as underlying indicators that contribute to the key performance indicators. While only the former appear in the regulation, a continuous monitoring of the others will also take place, to be able to respond to changing needs of both organisations and participants. Regarding the link between indicators and objectives, each indicator monitors the implementation of at least one operation objective as described in section 2.2.3. Targets for the key indicators are provided further below.

The choice of indicators, in particular its number (only three) is based on experience from both EU Aid Volunteers and the current European Solidarity Corps. In the case of the former, too many indicators were taken, and in some cases gathering the data to monitor them proved impossible⁴⁸. On the other hand, while the indicators for the current European Solidarity Corps are easy to monitor, they do not take into account the satisfaction of the participants nor the inclusiveness of the programme.

All three indicators meet the criteria to be considered "racer" indicators, since they are relevant (i.e. closely linked to the objectives), accepted (by staff), credible (in the case of the net promoter score, a detailed definition might be required when reporting on it), easy to monitor (as we'll see next), and robust. The collection of data is possible and seamless within the delivery mechanisms already in place. The first and third indicators are collected through E+ Link, an IT tool that contains the relevant data of organisations and projects under European Solidarity Corps, from the moment organisations apply for the Quality Label, until the project is closed. The second indicator will be collected through the Mobility Tool, an IT tool used by organisations to encode information about the placement and the participant. For all indicators, there is already data collected for organisations and projects (both programmes) and for satisfaction (only European Solidarity Corps).

Provisional targets are shown below for two scenarios. In the first one, the budget is estimated as remaining at the same annual equivalent that that of the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework, and takes into consideration an increase in placements due to increased coherence and more refined implementation modalities building on experience gathered. In the second scenario, there is an increase of 20 % in the budget. As it can be seen below, a 20 % increase in budget translates into a higher increase in total opportunities, due to the economies of scale and increased efficiency mentioned above.

Scenario 1: remain with same budget estimates (around EUR 1.1 billion)⁴⁹

| | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| # participants | 34,000 | 34,500 | 35,000 | 35,500 | 36,000 | 37,000 | 38,000 |
| % partic. fewer opportunities | 25 % | 25 % | 25 % | 25 % | 25 % | 25 % | 25 % |
| # Quality Label | 2,500 | 2,500 | 2,000 | 2,000 | 2,000 | 2,000 | 2,000 |

Scenario 2: 20% increase in budget (around EUR 1.3 billion)

| | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|

⁴⁸ See page 69 of the Mid-term evaluation of EU Aid Volunteers.

⁴⁹ The targets suffer from a "handicap" due to unrealised economies of scale and large proportion of indirect costs. Therefore, the relationship between budget and outputs is not one to one.

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| # participants | 43,000 | 45,000 | 48,000 | 52,000 | 56,000 | 61,000 | 70,000 |
| % partic. fewer opportunities | 25 % | 25 % | 25 % | 25 % | 25 % | 25 % | 25 % |
| # Quality Label | 3,000 | 3,000 | 2,500 | 2,500 | 2,000 | 2,000 | 2,000 |

Given the proposed budget of EUR 1.26 billion, the expected targets are:

Actual: 15% increase in budget (EUR 1.26 billion)

| | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| # participants | 41,000 | 42,500 | 45,000 | 48,000 | 52,000 | 57,500 | 64,000 |
| % partic. fewer opportunities | 25 % | 25 % | 25 % | 25 % | 25 % | 25 % | 25 % |
| # Quality Label | 3,000 | 2,800 | 2,400 | 2,200 | 2,000 | 2,000 | 2,000 |

5.2 Efficiency measures

In order to evaluate the increased efficiency of the extended European Solidarity Corps, the following indicators will be used internally to monitor the impact of the integration. Baselines will be prepared before the integration for both programmes as separate entities (based on past evidence). These internal indicators will be closely monitored throughout the implementation of the project.

- **Insurance, cost per participant:** this indicator will allow us to evaluate the savings achieved through a common contract with insurance, as opposed to having two contracts. The joint average cost will be compared to the average costs of both programmes as separate entities, to determine the overhead savings and potential savings in the average variable cost per participant,
- **Management fee per participant:** this indicator will allow us to evaluate the increased efficiency in the use of management fee. The baseline will be calculated for both the former EU Aid Volunteers (management costs of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) and for the pre-integration European Solidarity Corps (National Agencies and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency), and then compared to the management fee of the extended European Solidarity Corps.
- **Maintenance of website (overall and per participant):** this indicator will help us monitor the realised savings with regards to the maintenance of the platform. Maintenance of one platform instead of two will decrease the overall cost.
- **Outreach and communications (cost per participant, reach):** these will allow us to analyse both the effectiveness of the communication (in terms of the number of young people and organisations reached) and its efficiency (in terms of cost per participant). The baseline, however, can only be estimated, as these were not monitored in the pre-existing programmes.

5.3 Monitoring and evaluation framework

At the latest six months after the entry into force of the Regulation laying down the legal framework of the extended European Solidarity Corps, the Commission shall establish a detailed programme for monitoring its outputs, results and impacts. This monitoring framework will be based on the suggested list of monitoring indicators as it appears in Annex 4.

In 2027 the Commission will publish a Report taking stock of the progress made towards achieving its results. The Commission will perform an independent evaluation four years after the 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 needs 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.

Annex 5 shows a suggested evaluation matrix, to be further developed once the evaluation is prepared. 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, i.e. by panels of designated stakeholders or staff. The focus will be on the continuous process of the extended European Solidarity Corps monitoring and management and will be used to help assess the performance of the extended European Solidarity Corps as a whole. Finally, the evaluation will also assess the economic, social and environmental impacts of the European Solidarity Corps activities.

Annex 1: Procedural information

1. LEAD DG(S), DeCIDE PLANNING/CWP REFERENCES

- DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) is the lead DG for the European Solidarity Corps post 2020 MFF programme.
- The Decide Planning reference is PLAN/2018/XXX – EAC – EXTENDED EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS PROGRAMME.

ORGANISATION AND TIMING

This ex-ante evaluation has been steered by DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture since February 2018. It has been under the scrutiny of an inter-service steering group (ISSG) comprising representatives of SJ, SG, DGs BUDG, HOME, NEAR, REGIO, AGRI, DIGIT, DEVCO, ECHO, EMPL, GROW, JRC and ENV.

The ISSG on the upcoming MFF proposals in the area of learning mobility has been chaired by the SG. The ISSG reviewed the draft ex-ante evaluation, its executive summary and a concept note Staff Working Documents as well as the draft Regulation of the extended European Solidarity Corps.

ISSG meetings took place on: 28 February, 22 March and 17 April 2018.

EVIDENCE, SOURCES AND QUALITY

The data sources from which the evidence was drawn for the purposes of this ex-ante evaluation covered:

- the ex-ante evaluation accompanying the 2017 proposal for a Regulation for the European Solidarity Corps;
- the mid-term evaluation of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative;
- evaluation of the EU Aid Volunteers pilot action;
- the Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes mid-term evaluation, with a particular focus on the Youth sector; and
- the input received following the Open Public Consultation in the area of Values and Mobility.

A description of the stakeholder consultation activities is provided in Annex 2, while Annex 3 summarises the main evaluations analysed.

Annex 2: Stakeholder consultation

Open Public Consultation on EU funds in the area of values and mobility

In view of the preparation by the European Commission of the next generation of EU spending programmes post 2020, an open public consultation was launched by the European Commission on 10 January running up until 9 March 2018. The objective was to collect the views of all interested parties on current programmes' performance and future challenges for Europe, as well as on how to make the most of every euro of the EU budget.

The open consultation focused on a cluster of EU funding programmes. The analysis done for the purpose of drafting this ex-ante evaluation only covers the replies relevant to the extended European Solidarity Corps and does not offer a comprehensive overview of results for all programmes.

The consultation drew 1,839 respondents, of which 1,199 represented an organisation. Some observations can be made that are relevant to this ex-ante evaluation. For instance, over 75 % of respondents believe that promoting solidarity, promoting social inclusion, and promoting skills development through mobility is important. However, less than 40 % of respondents believe that these issues are either fully or well addressed. Nonetheless, respondents clearly see the EU added value in this sector, as over 75 % believe that the current programmes add value compared to what Member States could achieve at national, regional and/or local levels.

Out of all respondents, 135 responded with specific focus on the EU Aid Volunteers and / or the European Solidarity Corps. Of these respondents, 82 % believe that the lack of budget to satisfy demand is one of the main obstacles preventing the current programmes from achieving their objectives at least to some extent. Also, linked to the simplification sought with the integration, it must be highlighted that over 68 % of respondents believe that a simplification of forms and grant selection processes would help in improving the results of the programmes.

Annex 3: Evaluation results

Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) (January 2018)⁵⁰

The evaluation found that all the evaluated predecessor programmes were/are highly effective, whereas Erasmus+ is more coherent, more relevant and only partly more efficient than its predecessors. The Regulatory Scrutiny Board gave a positive opinion, with comments to improve the document. The following summarises the results obtained:

Effectiveness and European added value

- 1) The evaluation finds that the Erasmus+ programme is highly valued by the general public as well as by its stakeholders.
- 2) Though less visible, the evaluation confirms the systemic effect of the evaluated programmes on education, training, youth and sport policies and systems, directly through the critical mass reached at least in the higher education sector.
- 3) The evaluation considers there is potential for better definition of actions to maximise the programme's impact in Adult Education, sport, Jean Monnet activities and the Student Loan Guarantee Facility.
- 4) The evaluation highlights the strong European added value of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes, compared to what could have been achieved with similar programmes focused on separate geographical areas.
- 5) The evaluation concludes that, in the absence of Erasmus+ and its predecessors, there would be clear negative effects on learning mobility abroad, transnational cooperation among organisations, including with partner countries (now referred to as third countries not associated to the programme), integration between European countries as well as the attitude of participants towards the EU.

Erasmus+ is more coherent, more relevant and only partly more efficient than its predecessors

- 1) The main structural change of the Erasmus+ programme, compared to its predecessors, is its integrated nature which has contributed to enhance the programme's internal coherence.
- 2) In terms of policy relevance, the evaluation shows that stakeholders see Erasmus+ as being more clearly aligned with EU policies and priorities than predecessor programmes. However, a majority of Programme countries (now referred to as Member States and third countries associated to the programme) call for more flexibility at national level.
- 3) The evaluation found a high complementary between Erasmus+ and other EU policies and programmes relevant to education, training, youth and sport.
- 4) When it comes to budget, the evaluation concludes that more is needed for the programme to reach a critical mass in sectors other than higher education.
- 5) The evaluation shows that Erasmus+ mobility actions are clearly cost-effective, especially learners' mobility. The management costs (6% of Erasmus+ administrative and operational budget) are deemed reasonable, especially when compared to similar national schemes (14% in average).
- 6) In terms of programme management, the division of responsibilities, as inherited from predecessor programmes, between the Commission, National Authorities, National Agencies and EACEA, is overall clear and fit for purpose.
- 7) However, there is clearly a repeated call for further simplification.

⁵⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/eval/swd-e-plus-mte.pdf>

Interim evaluation of the implementation of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative (November 2017)⁵¹

An interim evaluation of the initiative was carried out in 2017 according to the requirements in the legal base. A study carried out by an external contractor assessed the relevance, coherence, EU added value, effectiveness and efficiency. The findings of the study are stated below.

Relevance

When analysing the relevance of the EUAV Initiative, the external evaluation team concentrated on assessing the relevance of the five established operational objectives of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative against the different needs identified. The evaluation concludes that the Initiative is highly relevant. First, the needs highlighted in the Impact Assessment are being directly addressed by the actions of EU Aid Volunteers. Second, the objectives are relevant to their intended stakeholders, particularly in regard to strengthening capacity. Third, all the types of action identified in the Regulation help to fulfil the objectives to an extent which justifies their funding by the EU Aid Volunteers initiative. It is understood that not all objectives are formulated to be relevant to every stakeholder, and not every type of funded action is constructed to be relevant to every objective.

Coherence

The external evaluation study's analysis of the coherence of EUAV with other related EU activities (emergency humanitarian response, development assistance, civil protection) revealed room for improvement. The Initiative is not fully aligned with the main EU humanitarian aid processes (e.g. global needs analysis, planning of actions and engagement of professional sector actors). To date there is only informal coordination with the EU development actors, and the evaluation has identified potential opportunities for cooperation and alignment, especially as regards contributing to the implementation of the EU's Joint Strategic Approach to Resilience. With respect to civil protection, EU Aid Volunteers shows a few examples of cooperation with EU civil protection actors (i.e. one EU national civil protection body active in an EUAV funded project and another certified as an EUAV sending organisation), but there is also a potential for improved coherence in this area.

EU Added Value

The external study concluded that the centralised management of EUAV by the Commission provides added value in terms of an integrated transnational approach, a budget for EU level technical assistance and more project opportunities. The standard of volunteer management established by EUAV can be called a European standard as it is mandatory for all deployment grant applicants, and promoted at EU level. The quality of training provided by EU Aid Volunteers to their volunteers is also a clear added value compared to other existing volunteering schemes. There is, however, no evidence that the EU Aid Volunteers initiative has significantly enhanced EU visibility and image at public level in the EU so far. A significant proportion of interviewed stakeholders, survey respondents and also some Member States' representatives do not fully agree with the statement that "What EU Aid Volunteers aims to achieve cannot be achieved by other Member States' initiatives".

Effectiveness

The external study found that the effectiveness of EU Aid Volunteers varies between the different elements of the initiative. Those elements of EU Aid Volunteers related to processes and administration show good effectiveness levels, e.g. implementation framework, processes and procedures, contract management, technical and procedural information to stakeholders, training of volunteers and skills development. To date the Initiative shows limited effectiveness in relation to "outreach" components such as the engagement of professional humanitarian actors, the external communication of the Union's humanitarian principles, or the enhancement of coherence and consistency of volunteering across Member States. With respect to deployment (a core aspect of EU Aid Volunteers, where figures are significantly below target), the EU Aid Volunteers Initiative has not proved effective during the first half of its first implementation cycle.

Efficiency

With regard to efficiency the study compiled by the external contractor concludes that the Regulations which govern EU Aid Volunteers, and therefore dictate the processes to be followed by EU Aid Volunteers partners, are often perceived as complex, e.g. the need for certification, list of eligible countries, list of eligible activities, and long periods before deployment. Based on findings, the external study concluded that DG ECHO, together with the Executive Agency EACEA, have managed to establish a functioning implementation framework where continuous attempts to reduce complexity have led to visible improvements over time such as the reduction of the number of partners required for EU Aid Volunteers grant application. The established monitoring framework is complex but workable, although some unviable

⁵¹ http://ec.europa.eu/echo/funding-evaluations/evaluations/thematic-evaluations_en

indicators should be reviewed. As stated above, the evaluation identified cost-conscious behaviours (i) within DG ECHO / EACEA, for example requesting grant applicants to expressly comment on cost-effectiveness, and (ii) through service contracts: those drawn up for training and insurance of volunteers mostly use variable cost positions. Overall, the establishment and the implementation of the Initiative, based on the requirements laid down in the EU Aid Volunteers Regulations, can be deemed to be efficient.

Evaluation of the pilot action of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative (July 2014)⁵²

The pilot action of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative (2011-2014) was evaluated by an external contractor and presented in a study in July 2014. The purpose of the pilot action was to guide the development of the Regulation to establish the initiative and to inform the development of standards and systems around specific dimensions (training, certification mechanism, deployment set-up, data-base) of the future EU Aid Volunteers scheme.

Overall evaluation findings of this study are stated below.

The effectiveness of the pilot action

The purpose of the EU Aid Volunteers Pilot Action was to fund projects that would ‘test’ different models or methods of implementing the distinct dimensions of EU Aid Volunteers initiative. The pilot action was effective in testing these. Indeed, almost all of the different aspects now included in the new Regulation were first ‘tested’ through the pilot actions. Overall, the pilot action was also robust to the extent that multiple models / approaches were trialled for each ‘dimension’ of the EU Aid Volunteers. The evaluation team considered that only three dimensions were not explicitly tested (database model of deployment, exchange of staff and volunteers, certification mechanisms) and that in these cases, comprehensive lessons have not been generated to inform the practical delivery of these aspects of the programme.

Lessons were generated in relation to all the remaining dimensions. Some of the most relevant relate to suitability and usefulness of different profiles of volunteer, key volunteer competences, the understanding and definition of ‘expert volunteer’, methods for volunteer selection, volunteer training and preparation, volunteer management in the field, capacity-building and security.

Coherence and complementarity with other programmes

The EU Aid Volunteers concept is coherent with regulatory frameworks guiding DG ECHO’s work, in particular Regulation 1257/1996 and the Decision establishing the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. It also coheres with the agenda to professionalise the Humanitarian Aid sector. Some EU Aid Volunteers projects were clearly development projects, but – if carefully managed – similar projects in the future could provide a useful opportunity for exploring, implementing and possibly standardising practices on LRRD.

Eleven out of the twelve lead sending organisations, as well as several partners were already either running or participating in other volunteering programmes at the time of their involvement in the EU Aid Volunteers initiative. In some EU Aid Volunteers pilot projects the objectives, approach to recruitment, training and/or deployment was very similar, if not identical, to the existing programmes of the sending organisation involved. These sending organisations report that participation in the EU Aid Volunteers allowed them to recruit ‘new’ profiles of volunteer and design different missions from their usual programme and thus enrich their portfolio of volunteering activities (e.g. it allowed them to deploy junior volunteers instead of expert volunteers, or deploy internationally instead of in Europe). This situation thus presents risk that EU Aid Volunteers is used as additional funding source to expand existing schemes, possibly at the expense of new organisations without an established programme.

EU Aid Volunteers volunteers complemented the work of local staff either by helping staff to build new skills, filling technical gaps and/or providing additional manpower. However, there is a risk of overlap: one eighth to one fifth of volunteers surveyed and one fifth of hosting organisations thought that their work had sometimes replaced or duplicated the work of local staff. Such situations were avoided when sending organisations designed volunteer interventions in partnership with the hosting organisation(s) and – where possible – the volunteer(s). Organisations participating in the pilot action have suggested that the DG ECHO field offices could have promoted complementarity by increasing visibility of the EU Aid Volunteers and supporting synergies with ongoing humanitarian work in-country.

EU added value

The key added value of the EU Aid Volunteers Pilot Action was its trans-national dimension, both for the organisations and the volunteers involved. The possibility to work with DG ECHO project and to build partnerships with organisations from other EU Member States was reported by sending organisations interviewed as one of the key reasons for having participated. 76% (54 out of a total of 71) of volunteers

⁵² <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2232eef0-241a-4f8c-b455-bf067bce477b>

surveyed considered that participation in the EU AV Pilot Action increased, to some extent or to a large extent, their feeling of belonging to a European Humanitarian Aid force, and to the EU more generally. Only 18% replied 'not at all' to this statement. These findings were confirmed by volunteers participating in the Facebook focus group and some of the volunteers interviewed. This sentiment was generated when volunteers from different EU countries were deployed together at the same time and were trained together. However, evidence shows that under some projects, volunteers' 'loyalty' was first and foremost to their sending and/or hosting organisation.

The EU Aid Volunteers Pilot Action has had a notable added value for the twelve (out of 39) participating sending organisations from EU13. For these organisations, the EU Aid Volunteers Pilot Action provided an opportunity to learn more about HA provision abroad, especially if this was spread over more than one call, raised their profile at Member State level and increased their credibility within the international HA sector.

By contrast, accessibility to the EU Aid Volunteers for potential volunteers from EU13 is still very limited. This is due in a great part to the absence of a historical investment in the EU13 region, but also language and financial barriers and in some cases due to inadequate targeting of candidate volunteers at recruitment stage. This is a key area for improvement in the future initiative.

Relevance

All of the pilot projects were implemented in communities at risk of (or currently experiencing) a humanitarian crisis / natural disaster. However, as the pilot projects did not select target communities on the basis of a Global Needs Assessment (e.g. in alignment with methods used by DG ECHO in its annual Strategy), it is not possible to assert whether they addressed the needs of the most in need of the interventions or otherwise the most relevant. Overall, the EU Aid Volunteers initiative is not the most relevant way to address the immediate humanitarian needs of local communities in the short-term, because volunteers do not always have either the most relevant technical or professional expertise to enable them to deliver aid in the most effective and efficient way.

Equally, the EU Aid Volunteers Pilot Action did not necessarily target local organisations that were the most in need, given that hosting organisations were mainly selected on the basis of existing relationships rather than a wider assessment. However, given the time and practical constraints this is a logical approach. Furthermore, selected hosting organisations report that sending organisations were overall effective in assessing and addressing their needs.

Cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness

The total EU funding available for the EU Aid Volunteers Pilot Action was 4.5 million euro with the planned value of the 12 pilot projects together amounting to 6.5 million euro (including co-financing). The average project value was EUR 0.54 million per project.

Projects were implemented without any major financial difficulties, although in a number of cases the initially planned budget allocations for certain types of expenditure or activities had to be revised in particular, to increase the human resources for organisational and coordination activities, working with partners from different EU Member States and deploying volunteers in multiple third countries. One project reported underspend (84% of the project value was spent upon completion) and the budget of another project was reduced by DG ECHO. Considering the fact that most of the organisations were deploying volunteers of different nationalities (and different administrative regulations) together for the first time and in view of the pilot nature of the programme, some level of re-budgeting is understandable, but some of the overruns and unexpected costs could have been prevented through better and more careful planning beforehand, or by setting aside a contingency as part of the budget.

The greatest proportion of project budgets went on staff, followed by volunteer expenses, training, logistics, then equipment, security, communications and monitoring and evaluation. The budget allocated to communication and visibility activities was surprisingly low – in four projects it represented less than 1 % of the total planned budget and this may account for what appears to be a low impact on increasing the visibility of the programme in hosting countries. Very little also went to the local offices (average 2.38 % range 0 % - 7.67 % in 2011 and 2012) and hosting organisations had mixed views on the fairness of the budget distributed to them with some considering more could have been spent.

The average cost per volunteer placement based on all 12 pilot projects was EUR 4,414 per month, with variations reflecting often the type of placement (requiring a highly experienced volunteer or not) and the type of project (short-term specific missions or not). Reliable benchmarking with other voluntary schemes has not been possible within the scope of this evaluation, but considering that this average costs comprise all project-related expenditure, ranging from design and development, administration, travel and subsistence to recruitment, selection, training, monitoring and evaluation, etc., this cost seems to be reasonable and is likely to further decrease in the new EU Aid Volunteers initiative.

Impact

The evaluation has provided indications of the direct impact that the programme may have on those participating in it. Based on the outcomes and results of the pilot action, it seems likely that the EU Aid Volunteers could have a strong impact on participating volunteers in (i) increasing their willingness to work in the humanitarian aid / civil protection sector in the future; and (ii) improving their skills. Many of those who volunteered through the EUAV Pilot Action went on to find jobs in the sector, but this was largely within the sending organisations that recruited them and the direct pathway from EUAV volunteering to employment is less direct / guaranteed than e.g. traineeship / internship schemes. Hosting organisations overall felt that the EUAV Pilot Action had a positive impact on their capacity, with success in building capacity depending on the hosting organisation's sense of ownership of the project and investment in it.

On a more global scale, the capacity of the EUAV to (i) provide additional capacity to the EU in delivering aid and (ii) improve the visibility of the EU humanitarian principles is likely to be limited. During the period 2014 to 2020, DG ECHO intends to train 4,800 candidate volunteers, offer 2,000 humanitarian apprenticeships, and offer 3,950 deployments through the initiative averaging at around 658 deployments per year. By contrast, the UN Volunteers initiative, which also aims to increase the capacity of the agency to provide humanitarian response, deploys up to 8,000 volunteers per year. The EU Aid Volunteers in numbers alone is therefore unlikely to have a tangible impact on the EU provision of Humanitarian Aid.

Whilst pilot projects have tested new standards and approaches to volunteers' management and preparation, with some adapting their existing protocols and procedures, it is not possible to assess neither whether they will keep using these in the future, nor whether these standards will have a wider impact beyond the EU Aid Volunteers.

Annex 4: Suggested detailed monitoring framework

| # | Specific objective (SO) / Operational objective (OO) | Indicator and definition | Unit of measurement | Data source | Frequency of measurement |
|-----|--|---|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | SO | number of participants in solidarity activities | number of participants | Mobility Tool | continuous |
| 1.1 | OO – 1.1 | number of participants in volunteering (non-humanitarian aid) | number of participants | Mobility Tool | continuous |
| 1.2 | OO – 1.1 | number of participants in volunteering (humanitarian aid) | number of participants | Mobility Tool | continuous |
| 1.3 | OO – 1.2 | number of participants in traineeship placements | number of participants | Mobility Tool | continuous |
| 1.4 | OO – 1.2 | number of participants in job placements | number of participants | Mobility Tool | continuous |
| 1.5 | OO – 1.3 | number of participants in solidarity projects | number of participants | Mobility Tool | continuous |
| 1.6 | OO – 1.4 | number of participants in networking activities | number of participants | Mobility Tool | quarterly |
| 1.7 | OO – 1.4 | percentage of participants from previous years, as opposed to participants who have just finished their placement (former participant / all participants) | percentage | Mobility Tool | quarterly |
| 1.8 | OO – 2.3 | percentage of participants that undergo online training | percentage (per training module) | European Solidarity Corps platform | continuous |
| 1.9 | OO – 2.3 | percentage of eligible participants covered by insurance | percentage | contractor reports | quarterly |

| | | | | | |
|------|----------|---|---------------------|-------------------|------------|
| | | scheme | | | |
| 1.10 | OO – 2.1 | net promoter score, participants | percentage | Mobility Tool | continuous |
| 2 | SO | percentage of participants from a fewer opportunities background | percentage | Mobility Tool | continuous |
| 2.1 | OO – 1.1 | percentage of participants from a fewer opportunities background in volunteering (non-humanitarian aid) | percentage | Mobility Tool | continuous |
| 2.2 | OO – 1.1 | percentage of participants from a fewer opportunities background in volunteering (humanitarian aid) | percentage | Mobility Tool | continuous |
| 2.3 | OO – 1.2 | percentage of participants from a fewer opportunities background in traineeship placements | percentage | Mobility Tool | continuous |
| 2.4 | OO – 1.2 | percentage of participants from a fewer opportunities background in job placements | percentage | Mobility Tool | continuous |
| 2.5 | OO – 1.3 | percentage of participants from a fewer opportunities background in solidarity projects | percentage | Mobility Tool | continuous |
| 2.6 | OO – 1.4 | percentage of participants from a fewer opportunities background in networking activities | percentage | Mobility Tool | quarterly |
| 2.7 | OO – 2.4 | number of promotional campaigns targeting young people from a fewer opportunities background | number of campaigns | NA yearly reports | yearly |

| | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| 3 | SO OO – 2.1 | number of organisations holding a European Solidarity Corps Quality Label | number of organisations | E+ Link | continuous |
| 3.1 | OO – 2.1, 2.2 | number of trainings for newly accredited organisations per NA | number of trainings | NA yearly reports | yearly |
| 3.2 | OO – 2.2 | number of annual events for accredited organisations per NA | number of trainings | NA yearly reports | yearly |
| 3.3 | OO – 2.2 | percentage of organisations (out of total organisations) that state that the programme has improved the quality of its activities "to some extent" or "to a great extent". | percentage | Mobility Tool | continuous |
| 3.4 | OO – 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 | number of projects | number of projects | E+ Link | continuous |
| 3.5 | OO – 2.1 | net promoter score, organisations | percentage | Mobility Tool | continuous |

Annex 5: Suggested evaluation matrix

The table below shows a preliminary draft of a suggested evaluation matrix, that may be used to plan the future evaluations, starting with the mid-term evaluation. The judgement criteria and indicators have been omitted at this stage, as this represents a preliminary suggestion to be revisited when planning the evaluation. All the relevant evaluation criteria are addressed by the proposed matrix: effectiveness is covered by questions marked 1, efficiency by questions marked 2, relevance by questions marked 3, coherence by questions marked 4, and EU added value by questions marked 5.

| Question | Sub-question | Potential data sources |
|---|---|------------------------------|
| 1. To what extent is the programme delivering the expected outputs, results and impacts? | 1.1 What are the long-term impacts of the programme? | 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 12. |
| | 1.2 What negative and positive factors seem to be influencing outputs, results and impacts? | 1, 3, 8, 10 and 11. |
| | 1.3 What are the differences in impact of programme actions on young people from fewer opportunities backgrounds who traditionally do not engage in transnational activities as compared to other young people that benefit from the programme? | 2, 3, 6, 7, 8 and 12. |
| | 1.4 What have been the unintended effects and their magnitude of the programme if any? | 2, 3, 8 and 9. |
| | 1.5 To what extent are the effects likely to last after the intervention ends? | 1, 2, 7, 8, 9 and 11. |
| | 1.6 How effective are the forms of cooperation and the types of actions under the programme? | 6, 10 and 11. |
| 2. To what extent is the programme cost-effective? | 2.1 Are there positive/negative effects that existed in the previous programmes, but that no longer exist with the new programme? | 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10. |
| | 2.2 To what extent is the size of budget appropriate and proportionate to what the programme set out to achieve? | 5, 6, 8 and 10. |
| | 2.3 To what extent the programme has achieved further efficiency in terms of horizontal and management support? In particular, with regards to insurance, maintenance cost of the platform, management fee, simplified processes for application and accreditation and communications and outreach. | 6, 10 and 11. |
| | 2.4 Are there differences in efficiency of programme management and implementation between National Agencies and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency? | 2, 6 and 10. |
| 3. To what extent is the programme relevant? | 3.1 To what extent are needs of different stakeholders and sectors addressed by programme objectives? How successful is the programme in attracting and reaching target audiences and groups within different fields of the programme's scope? | 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. |
| | 3.2 In case some target groups (such as young people from fewer opportunities backgrounds) are not sufficiently reached, what factors are limiting their access and what actions could be taken to remedy this? | 3, 4 and 7. |
| 4. To what extent is this | 4.1 To what extent are the centralised and decentralised actions coherent? How do they interact/complement each other? | 2, 5, 6 and 10. |

| | | |
|--|---|------------------------|
| programme coherent with programmes with similar or complementary objectives? | 4.2 To what extent is the programme coherent with relevant EU policies? In particular, with regards to education, humanitarian aid and neighbourhood policies. | 1, 2, 3, 6, 11 and 12. |
| | 4.3 To what extent does the programme design (including needs, objectives, activities, outputs and effects) provide appropriate links and support to the EU policy agendas. | 2, 3, 6, 11 and 12. |
| | 4.4 To what extent is the programme coherent with various interventions pursued at national and international level which have similar objectives? | 1, 2, 5, 7 and 8. |
| 5. What is the additional value resulting from EU intervention compared to what could reasonably have been expected from Member States? | 5.1 What does the programme offer in addition to other similar schemes available at national level? | 5, 7 and 8. |
| | 5.2 What would be the most likely consequences of stopping the programme? | 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8. |

The following list of potential data sources was identified for future evaluations:

1. Desk research: review of other evaluations, NA yearly reports (since 2014), studies, academic papers at EU, national and international level, etc;
2. Interviews of key informants: semi-guided interviews of selected stakeholders in all sectors, at EU level and in multiple locations;
3. Open public consultation: to gather the opinions and perspectives of the general public and other stakeholders;
4. Social media analysis: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and the European Solidarity Corps app to be analysed;
5. Benchmarking with comparable national programmes: strategic, process and/or financial benchmarking against national or international schemes sharing some similarities with the European Solidarity Corps;
6. Programme data: gathered by IT tools, mainly E+Link, Mobility Tool and the European Solidarity Corps platform;
7. Participants surveys and control groups: surveys targeting both participants and eligible young people that did not participate, to compare some individual characteristics such as employability, skills, knowledge, attitude, values, etc;
8. Organisations surveys: surveys to organisations participating in the European Solidarity Corps.
9. Beneficiary surveys: end beneficiaries of solidarity activities;
10. Agencies survey: agency staff in charge of programme implementation (including National Agencies and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency);
11. Experts (project assessors) survey: assessors supporting Quality Label accreditation, project selection and those supporting evaluation of final reports (centralised and decentralised projects);
12. Case studies: cases mainly at organisation level to assess spill over effects and changes at organisation and system levels.