

HEADING 1A: Competitiveness for growth and jobs

European Solidarity Corps (ESC)

Lead DG: EAC

I. Overview

What the programme is about?

The European Solidarity Corps offers young people between the ages of 18 and 30 the opportunity to take part in a wide range of solidarity activities across the EU, with the aim of creating 100 000 opportunities by the end of 2020. Since December 2016, until the adoption of the European Solidarity Corps Regulation ⁽¹⁾ on 2 October 2018, eight different programmes were mobilised to give young people the chance to take part in a range of solidarity activities addressing challenging situations across the EU. Participation not only benefits young people's personal development, active involvement in society and employability, but also assists non-governmental organisations, public bodies and companies in their efforts to cope with societal and other challenges. As well as offering volunteering, traineeships and jobs, the European Solidarity Corps also offer participants the opportunity to set up their own solidarity projects or to volunteer as a group. The Regulation adopted on 2 October 2018 put the European Solidarity Corps on a firm footing, with a budget of EUR 375.6 million for the years 2018-2020.

EU added value of the programme

The European Solidarity Corps enhances the European dimension of solidarity, complementing existing public and private policies, programmes and activities without creating competition or substitution effects. The Corps addresses unmet societal needs, which cannot be addressed by the existing volunteering activities or by other types of solidarity programmes. The EU value added of the programme derives mainly from the cross-border character of the activities, in addition to those developed at national or regional levels.

Actions to tackle socioeconomic problem areas are primarily the responsibility of the Member States and regions and must be taken closest to the citizen at national and sub-national levels. However, the EU has a role to play in identifying shared challenges, stimulating cooperation and transnational mobility, encouraging synergies, and promoting the sharing of good practices and mutual learning, and supporting a Europe-wide approach to social innovation, where there is clear value added for European solutions.

Implementation mode

The Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) leads the programme, which is implemented through:

- **Decentralised implementation:** the implementation of some actions is entrusted to National Agencies in the Member States which, according to the agreed Annual Work Programme, implement part of the annual budget. The actions implemented through this mode include volunteering, traineeships, jobs, solidarity projects, decentralised networking activities and quality label, training and evaluation, and management of the European Solidarity Corps Resource Centres.
- **Centralised implementation:** this includes actions implemented directly by the Commission or with the support of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). The actions implemented through this mode include volunteering in high priority areas, insurance, general online training, online linguistic support, centralised networking activities and quality label, as well as the development and maintenance of the European Solidarity Corps Portal and related IT tools.

II. Programme Implementation Update

Implementation status (2017-2019)

Since December 2016, until the adoption of its Regulation on 2 October 2018, the European Solidarity Corps was implemented through eight different programmes, including the Erasmus+ Volunteering action. In addition to the coordination of the activities offered to young people under these eight programmes, this period focused on the design and development of the European Solidarity Corps. In particular, attention was given to the design of the Programme, in order to have it ready for implementation as soon as the Regulation was adopted. These activities included the preparation of all required implementation documents, including the Call for Proposals Guide for organisations and participants, drafting of the Annual Work Programme as well as the set-up of the whole IT environment to support the implementation of the projects for the first calls. Furthermore, efforts were directed at promotion and outreach both towards young people and organisations.

The 2019 call for proposals was launched providing three deadlines for organisations and groups of young people to apply to National Agencies for funding for volunteering projects, traineeships and jobs or solidarity projects. The programme also supported larger scale volunteering projects in the following priority areas: European cultural heritage; social inclusion of people with fewer opportunities and response to environmental challenges and climate challenges.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2018/1475 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 October 2018 laying down the legal framework of the European Solidarity Corps and amending Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013, Regulation (EU) No 1293/2013 and Decision No 1313/2013/EU (OJ L 250, 4.10.2018, p. 1–20).

With regards to the international dimension, the European Solidarity Corps continued to support EU's cooperation with the European Neighbourhood region (Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership and Southern Mediterranean) through volunteering activities. Specific agreements were also signed with Turkey, Iceland and North Macedonia enabling their full participation in the Programme.

To ensure successful implementation, strong support and monitoring of centralised and decentralised actions has taken place and the promotion of the Programme and the opportunities continued. In this context, the European Youth Week was a major achievement and offered the opportunity for the Commission to present and promote EU youth policy priorities – such as solidarity, inclusion or participation – and the European Solidarity Corps. The event has mobilised and actively involved a wide range of young people and youth stakeholders from 29 to 30 May 2019.

In 2019, preparations for implementation of the future reinforced European Solidarity Corps started as well: design of the future actions, consultations with stakeholders, IT analysis and preparations. This covered also preparatory work for the set up of the 'European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps', the new strand under the Corps that will open new opportunities for young people to participate in solidarity activities, in the field of humanitarian aid.

Key achievements

- The 2019 call created more than 21,000 opportunities for young people to engage in solidarity activities. The interest in Solidarity Projects – providing funding for young people to initiate and implement projects to tackle a social need in their local community has seen an important increase.
- The European Youth Week gathered some 120,000 participants to over 1,000 events, carried out in 35 countries and organised by National Agencies, Eurodesks, Commission Representations, youth civil society and other partners. It provided a valuable opportunity to promote the EU Youth Strategy and the opportunities offered by the European Solidarity Corps.
- The European Solidarity Network was successfully launched in March 2019 and will continue to expand and develop tools to help create a network of communities around the European Solidarity Corps.
- Since the launch of the pilot phase of the Programme in December 2016, more than 191,000 young people have registered in the Portal, and about 34,500 were deployed, demonstrating their great interest in getting involved in solidarity work across Europe.

Forthcoming implementation

The Annual Work Programmes for 2020 was adopted after consultation with Member States. It provides details on the main actions to be implemented in the upcoming year, the priorities where relevant and the budget distribution per action and country.

In 2020, the European Solidarity Corps will continue supporting solidarity activities enabling young people to constructively engage in and contribute to strengthening cohesion, solidarity and democracy while acquiring and developing skills and competences.

As in 2019, the call for proposals foresees three deadlines for actions to be implemented through National Agencies. In order to allow organisations and participants to implement activities where solidarity is most needed, decentralised actions do not have a specific focus. Volunteering, traineeships and jobs projects can take place in a broad range of areas such as in the fields of environmental protection, climate change mitigation, culture, helping refugees, children or the elderly.

In addition to these decentralised actions, the action Volunteering Teams in High Priority Areas will be implemented by EACEA. In 2020, the call will focus on response to environmental and climate challenges (excluding immediate disaster response); projects building inclusive societies including through bridging the intergenerational and social divide or addressing challenges linked to geographical remoteness and projects aimed at improving mental health and well-being.

The first modules of the General Online Training available for European Solidarity Corps young registrants will be made available in spring 2020.

Outlook for the 2021-2027 period

For the next long-term EU budget 2021-2027, the Commission presented on June 2018 its proposal for a new programme for the European Solidarity Corps beyond 2020, with a budget to broaden the opportunities it offers. The new programme will create at least **350,000 opportunities** for young people to **support communities in need** between 2021 and 2027 through **volunteering, traineeships and job placements**.

The proposal builds on the achievements of the Corps in its first years of existence and further consolidates efforts to have **one single entry point** for young people ready to engage in solidarity. In particular, the Corps will also include volunteering activities in support of **humanitarian aid operations in non-EU countries** where humanitarian aid activities and operations take place. This well-established EU scheme for humanitarian aid has so far operated under the name EU Aid Volunteers.

The European Solidarity Corps opportunities under the humanitarian aid strand will be similar to the ones offered under the current EU Aid Volunteers, and include tasks carried out by the participants such as **communication activities** (events, social media, etc.) or **administration activities** (budgeting, financial management, project management, etc.). In addition, these activities take place in countries that have been deemed safe for deployment by the Commission, and are carried out in experienced humanitarian aid organisations.

III. Programme key facts and performance framework

1. Financial programming

Legal Basis	Period of application	Reference Amount (EUR million)
Regulation (EU) 2018/1475 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 October 2018 laying down the legal framework of the European Solidarity Corps and amending Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013, Regulation (EU) No 1293/2013 and Decision No 1313/2013/EU	2018 – 2020	375,6

	Financial Programming (EUR million)							Total Programme
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Administrative support					4,2	3,7	3,0	10,8
Operational appropriations					38,2	138,8	162,2	339,2
Executive Agency					0,4	0,9	0,9	2,2
Total					42,8	143,3	166,1	352,2
<i>Contribution from other Programmes *</i>					5,3	3,5	3,5	12,3

*Contribution from the technical assistance allocated to the European Social Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, LIFE Programme, the Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

2. Implementation rates

	2019				2020			
	CA	Impl. Rate	PA	Impl. Rate	CA	Impl. Rate	PA	Impl. Rate
Voted appropriations	143,325	100,00 %	108,050	97,28 %	166,088	35,14 %	153,900	1,95 %
Authorised appropriations (*)	151,104	97,84 %	122,768	88,75 %	169,583	34,55 %	164,533	2,92 %

(*) Authorised appropriations include voted appropriations, appropriations originating from assigned revenues (internal and external) as well as carried-over and reconstituted appropriations; the execution rate is calculated on 15 April 2020

3. Performance information

Programme performance

The European Solidarity Corps builds on the achievements of the European Voluntary Service and on a first phase of the European Solidarity Corps, launched in December 2016, whereby different Union programmes have been mobilised to offer volunteering, traineeship or job activities to young people across the EU and enabled the creation of some 32,000 solidarity opportunities.

The European Solidarity Corps has existed as an independent funding programme since October 2018. It offers support for projects revolving around a range of solidarity (in the form of individual or team volunteering, traineeships, jobs and solidarity projects) involving young people between 18 and 30 years of age.

After one year of implementation, the first calls resulted in some 27,000 opportunities for young people to constructively engage in and contribute to strengthening cohesion, solidarity and democracy in Europe, while developing their skills and competences at the same time. The number of available opportunities is quickly and steadily increasing as the programme reaches its ‘cruising speed’.

The European Solidarity Corps proved particularly successful in providing opportunities to address horizontal priorities such as for instance inclusion (with more than 30 % of participants with fewer opportunities) or climate change (13 % of projects supported under the European Solidarity Corps address climate action, environment and nature protection) so far.

Traineeships and Jobs represent the biggest novelty under the European Solidarity Corps. Specific efforts are dedicated to promotion, ensuring understanding of the opportunities, reaching out to the relevant stakeholders and training the potential applicants. While the Action takes-up gradually, the level of demand for Quality Label for the occupational strand is satisfactory and indicates a positive future trend.

The success of the Corps in terms of the uptake by young people is also a testimony of its significance as more than 200,000 youngsters from across the EU have registered for participation in the Corps.

General objectives

General Objective 1: 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

Specific objectives

Specific Objective 1: to provide young people, with the support of organisations, with easily accessible opportunities for engagement in solidarity activities while improving their skills and competences for personal, educational, social, civic and professional development, as well as their employability and facilitating transition to regular employment

Indicator 1: number of participants in volunteering

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
	Milestones foreseen							2020
					8 400	24 600	28 900	61 900
	Actual results							
					3 103	9 318		

Comment: Due to late adoption of the regulation, only one call was launched in 2018 for projects starting as from 2019. Therefore, considering the limited number of results for 2018, for the purpose of this exercise, data is provided for both call years 2018-2019.

Source: ESC Qlikview dashboard

Indicator 2: number of participants in traineeships

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
	Milestones foreseen							2020
	Actual results							
					31	133		

Comment: Due to late adoption of the regulation, only one call was launched in 2018 for projects starting as from 2019. Therefore, considering the limited number of results for 2018, for the purpose of this exercise, data is provided for both call years 2018-2019.

Source: ESC Qlikview dashboard

Indicator 3: number of participants in jobs

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
	Milestones foreseen							2020
	Actual results							
					122	130		

Comment: Due to late adoption of the regulation, only one call was launched in 2018 for projects starting as from 2019. Therefore, considering the limited number of results for 2018, for the purpose of this exercise, data is provided for both call years 2018-2019.

Source: ESC Qlikview dashboard

Indicator 4: number of participants in solidarity projects

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
	Milestones foreseen							2020
					5 400	6 200	7 300	18 900
	Actual results							
					1 045	2 958		

Comment: Due to late adoption of the regulation, only one call was launched in 2018 for projects starting as from 2019. Therefore, considering the limited number of results for 2018, for the purpose of this exercise, data is provided for both call years 2018-2019.

Expenditure related outputs

Outputs	Budget line	Budget 2020	
		Number	EUR million
Participants in volunteering	15 05 01 (€109 million) ⁽²⁾	28 900	94.5
Participants in traineeships and jobs		4 100	9.2
Participants in solidarity projects		7 300	8.8
Total			112.5

⁽²⁾ Contributions from other programmes in 2020: LIFE Programme and the Union Civil Protection Mechanism look as follow: 07 02 07 (€1 million), 34 02 05 (€0,5 million), 23 03 01 03 (€2 million).

Outputs		Number of outputs foreseen (F) and produced (P)						
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 ⁽³⁾	2020
Participants in volunteering	F					8 400	24 600	28 900
	P					3 103 (revised)	9 318	
Participants in traineeships and jobs	F					3 200	3 900	4 100
	P					153(revised)	263	
Participants in solidarity projects	F					5 400	6 200	7 300
	P					1 045 (revised)	2 958	

Specific Objective 2: to ensure that the solidarity activities that are offered to the European Solidarity Corps participants contribute to addressing concrete societal challenges and strengthening communities, and are of high quality and properly validated

Indicator 1: number of participants reporting positive learning outcomes

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
	Milestones foreseen							2020
	Actual results							66 750
						2 857		

Comment: Considering the short duration of the European Solidarity Corps (end 2018-2020), targets for these indicators have been set over the whole programming period.

Indicator 2: percentage of participants whose learning outcomes have been recognised through a certificate such as Youthpass, or another type of formal recognition of their participation in the European Solidarity Corps

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
	Milestones foreseen							2020
	Actual results							100 %
						100 %	100 %	
						72 %		

Comment: These are provisional figures as most of the projects funded in 2018 and 2019 are still ongoing (figures provided cover about 1 % of granted projects and about 10 % of granted participants). A meaningful comparison of results against milestones is, therefore, not yet possible.

Indicator 3: number of organisations holding a quality label

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
	Milestones foreseen							2020
	Actual results							
					398	1 083		

Comment: Due to late adoption of the regulation, only one call was launched in 2018 for projects starting as from 2019. Therefore, considering the limited number of results for 2018, for the purpose of this exercise, data is provided for both call years 2018-2019.

Source: ESC Qlikview dashboard

Indicator 4: overall satisfaction rate of participants with regard to the quality of activities

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
	Milestones foreseen							2020
	Actual results							90 %
						90 %		
						88 %		

Comment: These are provisional figures as most of the projects funded in 2018 and 2019 are still ongoing (figures provided cover about 1 % of granted projects and about 10 % of granted participants). A meaningful comparison of results against milestones is, therefore, not yet possible.

Expenditure related outputs

Outputs	Budget line	Budget 2020
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⁽³⁾ The information has been extracted on 6 February 2020. The final values will be provided when the projects have been finalized.

		Number	EUR million
Participants receiving general online training	15 05 01 (EUR 46.3 million)	58 500	2.8
Participants in cross-border activities receiving specific trainings		21 900	21.9
Participants in cross-border activities receiving online linguistic support		13 300	0.6
Participants enrolled in the European Solidarity Corps insurance		30 200	7.5
Participants receiving a certificate		33 300	0.2
Organisations receiving quality label		3 900	1.8
European Solidarity Corps Portal		1	0.5
Resource Centre		1	0.3
National Agencies receiving a Management fee		28	10.8
Total			46.4

Outputs		Number of outputs foreseen (F) and produced (P)						
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Participants receiving general online training	F					0	50 700	58 500
	P					-	- ⁽⁴⁾	
Participants in cross-border activities receiving specific trainings	F					3 000	18 700	21 900
	P					-	12 211	
Participants in cross-border activities receiving online linguistic support	F					0	12 000	13 300
	P					-	5 516	
Participants enrolled in the European Solidarity Corps insurance	F					0	25 700	30 200
	P					-	12 846	
Participants receiving a certificate	F					16 700	452	33 300
	P					-		
Organisations receiving quality label	F					3 700	3 400	3 900
	P					-	1 058	
European Solidarity Corps Portal	F					1	1	1
	P					-	1	
Resource Centre	F					1	1	1
	P					-		
National Agencies receiving a Management fee	F					28	28	28
	P					-	31	

Specific Objective 3: to ensure that particular efforts are made to promote social inclusion and equal opportunities, in particular for the participation of young people with fewer opportunities, through a range of special measures such as appropriate formats of solidarity activities and personalised support

Indicator 1: number of participating young people with fewer opportunities								
Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
	Milestones foreseen							2020
					25 %	25 %	25 %	25 %
	Actual results							
						32 %		

Comment: Actual participants are considered for actions ESC11-13-21-31. Final figures will be updated ones all projects are finalised. These are provisional figures as most of the projects funded in 2018 and 2019 are still ongoing (figures provided cover about 1 % of granted projects and about 10 % of granted participants). A meaningful comparison of results against milestones is, therefore, not yet possible.

Expenditure related outputs

Outputs		Number of outputs foreseen (F) and produced (P)						
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Percentage of participants with fewer opportunities	F					25 %	25 %	25 %
	P						31,9 % ⁽⁵⁾	

⁽⁴⁾ General online training is still phasing in. There are no reliable available figures at this stage.

⁽⁵⁾ Actual participants are considered for actions ESC11-13-21-31. Final figures will be updated ones all projects are finalised.

Specific Objective 4: to contribute to European cooperation relevant to young people and to raise awareness of its positive impact

Indicator 1: number of people supported directly or indirectly through solidarity activities

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
Milestones foreseen								2020
Actual results								200 000
						5 419		

Comment: Considering the short duration of the European Solidarity Corps (end 2018-2020), targets for these indicators have been set over the whole programming period.

Expenditure related outputs

Outputs	Budget line	Budget 2020	
		Number	EUR million
Participants in networking activities	15 05 01 (EUR 6.9 million)	34 500	6.9
Total			6.9

Outputs	Number of outputs foreseen (F) and produced (P)						
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Participants in networking activities	F				18 500	30 300	34 500
	P				5 275 (revised)	12 599 ⁽⁶⁾	

4. Contribution to Europe 2020 Strategy and mainstreaming of policies

Contribution to mainstreaming of climate action

Relevant objective/output

Relevant objective/output	Budget 2019	Budget 2020
projects with climate relevance	56 909 827,0	0,0
Total	56 909 827,0	0,0

Programming climate action

2014-2018	2019-2020 estimates		Total
2018	2019	2020	
	56 909 827,0	0,0	56 909 827,0

(*)The appropriations for the year 2014 have been reviewed to take account of the transfer to subsequent years of the allocations not used in 2014 (reprogramming exercise carried-out in 2015 in accordance with Article 19 of the Multiannual Financial Framework Regulation).

Justification

The European Solidarity Corps contributes to mainstreaming of climate action by targeting organisations and young people wishing to tackle current societal challenges, including climate action, through projects that benefit people and communities across Europe and beyond. A coefficient of 40 % is applied to the relevant projects budget, in accordance to the EU Rio marker methodology.

Young people between 18 and 30 can take part in a wide range of solidarity activities, tackling societal challenges and supporting vulnerable people, contributing to positive change in communities across Europe and beyond, while gaining valuable skills. Climate action, environment and nature protection are increasingly popular Solidarity Corps.

A strategic approach towards carbon neutral and more environmentally friendly post 2020 EU programmes for education, training, youth, sport and solidarity is under preparation. Meanwhile, the European Solidarity Corps already supports sustainability and climate action in the following ways:

- supporting projects with the theme of climate action and sustainability;

⁽⁶⁾ Source ESC dashboard 06 February 2020

- assigning a dedicated priority in its specific calls for ‘volunteering teams in high-priority areas’ to climate change and sustainability;
- promoting sustainable awareness among Corps participants.

Gender mainstreaming

The European Solidarity Corps aims to promote social inclusion by facilitating the access to young people with fewer opportunities. Young people with fewer opportunities are young people who need additional support due to the fact that they are at a disadvantage compared to their peers because of various obstacles, such as discrimination because of gender.

5. Programme contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals

SDG 1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Through its activities to achieve social inclusion through solidarity activities, the European Solidarity Corps contributes to SDG 1, in particular its target of reducing at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

SDG 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

The European Solidarity Corps aims, amongst other things, at developing the skills and competences of participants for professional, social and civic development. In addition, given its strong focus on inclusion, this is also achieved for young people with fewer opportunities, including young people with disabilities.

SDG 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

The European Solidarity Corps aims at removing social obstacles for participation in it for people facing discrimination because of gender, among other reasons.

SDG 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

All the actions of the European Solidarity Corps contribute to increase the employability of the young people that participate in it, as shown by several studies. This is achieved through a combination of outcomes, e.g. the acquisition of new skills, increased autonomy, increased knowledge of foreign languages, etc. Furthermore, solidarity projects can help further the entrepreneurial and innovative spirit of young participants. Finally, the emphasis on inclusion aims to ensure that all can reap these benefits irrespective of disadvantage.

SDG 10 Reduce inequality within and among countries

Special attention is paid to ensure that activities supported by the European Solidarity Corps are accessible to all young people, notably the most disadvantaged ones. To this end, special measures are in place to promote social inclusion, the participation of disadvantaged young people, as well as to take into account the constraints imposed by the remoteness of the outermost regions of the Union and the Overseas Countries and Territories. Similarly, the participating countries should endeavour to adopt all appropriate measures to remove legal and administrative obstacles to the proper functioning of the European Solidarity Corps. These include resolving, where possible, and without prejudice to the Schengen acquis and Union law on the entry and residence of third-country nationals, administrative issues that create difficulties in obtaining visas and residence permits.

SDG 11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

The European Solidarity Corps will also support strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard Europe’s cultural heritage, as well as improving participants cultural development.

SDG 16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

The European Solidarity Corps has created a one-stop-shop for all solidarity opportunities funded by the European Union, which increases the effectiveness of the use of public funds. Thorough monitoring and evaluation of the programme also guarantees the results are transparent and accessible to all. Finally, through the review of open consultations, fora and dedicated meetings, the Commission regularly consults key stakeholders, thus supporting participatory and inclusive decision-making.

The projects implemented under the European Solidarity Corps may also contribute to other SDGs depending on its objectives. This will be monitored throughout the programme period.