EVENT REPORT

Annual Gathering of the European Civic Service 2026

28 – 29 May 2026 · Bobigny & Paris, France

A GREENLINK PROJECT EVENT

Connecting Europe through Youth Engagement and Mobility

Two parallel sessions in Bobigny, a public gathering at Europa Expérience, and a closing session in Paris

On 28 and 29 May 2026, the Collectif pour un Service Civique Européen (CSCE), Unis-Cité and Le Mouvement Associatif brought together young Europeans, national delegations, civic service agencies and institutional partners in Bobigny and Paris, for the Annual Gathering of the European Civic Service. This report presents the event's concept and programme, its participants, its sequences in pictures, and its outputs and conclusions.

Event description sheet

Event description sheet, following the format shared with our partners (one sheet = one event = one lump sum).

PROJECT

Participant	Collectif pour un Service Civique Européen
Pic number	901304407
Project name and acronym	GREENLINK

DESCRIPTION

Event number	3
Event name	Annual Gathering of the European Civic Service — Connecting Europe through Youth Engagement and Mobility
Type	Youth and institutional gathering — parallel working sessions, public plenary and cross-border cooperation on European civic service
Insitu / Online	Insitu
Location	Bobigny (Mairie and Seine-Saint-Denis Mission Locale) and Paris (Europa Expérience, École Militaire)
Date	28 – 29 May 2026
Website (if any)	service-civique-europeen.com
Direct link	https://www.instagram.com/p/DYkW5EeiCO3/
Total participants	285 confirmed participants, from 23 identified nationalities plus a further non-EU group (see Participants, p.4)

Concept and programme

The Annual Gathering of the European Civic Service was built around two parallel sessions on 28 May, bringing together different audiences around the same goal, before converging into a shared public moment — and a distinct public closing session the following day.

THE CONCEPT, IN BRIEF

- **A youth session,** open to all, held at the Mairie, with testimonials, personalities and trainers engaging directly with young people already active in European Civic Service.
- **An institutional cooperation session,** in parallel, at the Seine-Saint-Denis Mission Locale in Bobigny, where national delegations, civic service agencies and NGOs worked on cross-border cooperation.
- **Both sessions culminated and came together** in a shared public plenary and gathering at Europa Expérience (Offices of the European Parliament, Paris), bringing youth, delegations and the wider public together.
- **A distinct public closing session** took place the following day, 29 May, gathering a separate intergovernmental part of the programme at the École Militaire in Paris.

PROGRAMME — TWO-DAY OVERVIEW

28 May — Bobigny & Paris

10:30 AM **Opening remarks** — Benjamin Sibille (CSCE), Marie Trellu-Kane (Unis-Cité), Ella Bouquet (Erasmus+ France / Civic Service Agency), Mickaël Huet (Le Mouvement Associatif).

10:45 AM – 4:45 PM **Two parallel sessions** — a youth session at the Mairie (testimonials, personalities, trainers) and an institutional cooperation session at the Seine-Saint-Denis Mission Locale, Bobigny (national delegations, civic service agencies, NGOs).

5:00 – 6:00 PM **Plenary restitution** and discussion of adoption of joint proposals.

7:30 PM **Public gathering** at Europa Expérience, Offices of the European Parliament, Paris — the culminating, shared moment of the two parallel sessions.

29 May — Paris, École Militaire (Amphithéâtre Foch)

9:00 AM – 5:00 PM **Public closing session** — a separate intergovernmental part of the programme: institutional round tables, keynotes and the closing ceremony of the Annual Gathering.

Participants

The Annual Gathering of the European Civic Service brought together a large and genuinely international audience, across its youth session, its institutional cooperation session, and the public gathering and closing session that followed.

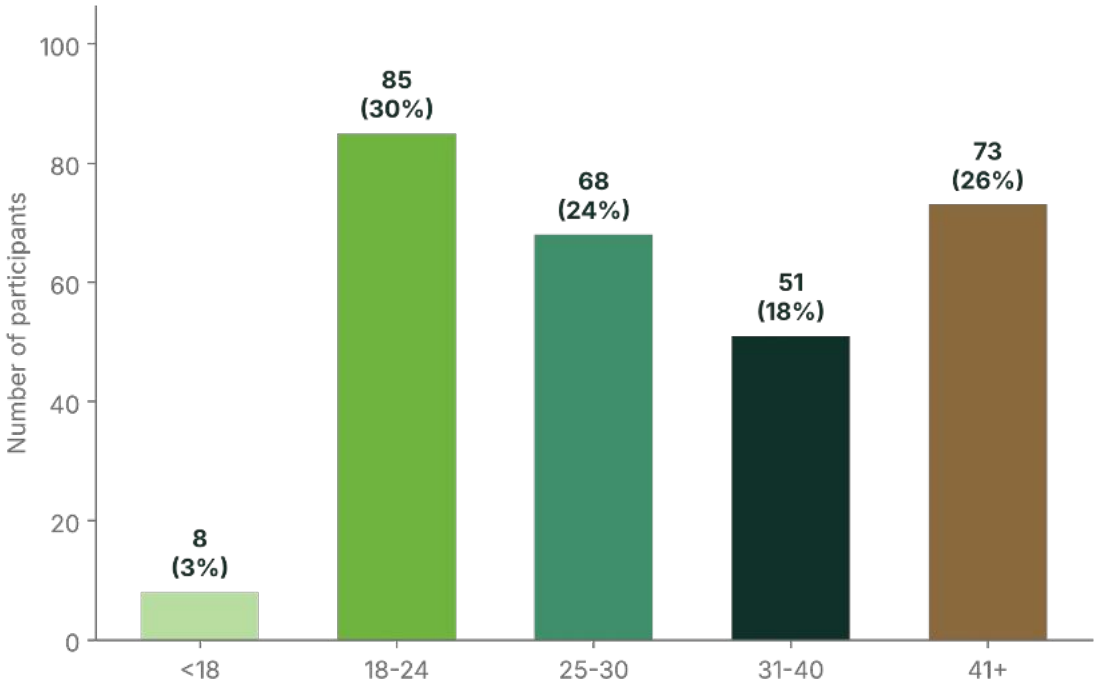
285	23	61%
CONFIRMED PARTICIPANTS	NATIONALITIES IDENTIFIED	WOMEN

GENDER BREAKDOWN



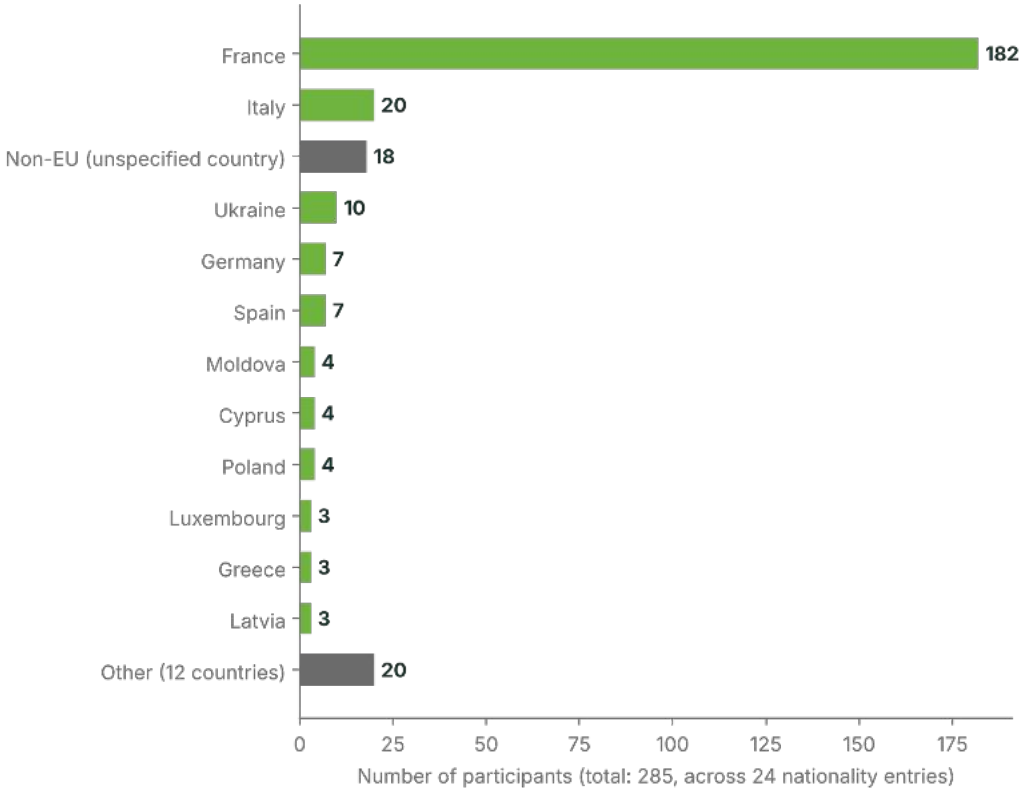
Gender breakdown — 285 confirmed participants.

AGE BREAKDOWN



Age breakdown, calculated as of 28 May 2026.

NATIONALITIES REPRESENTED

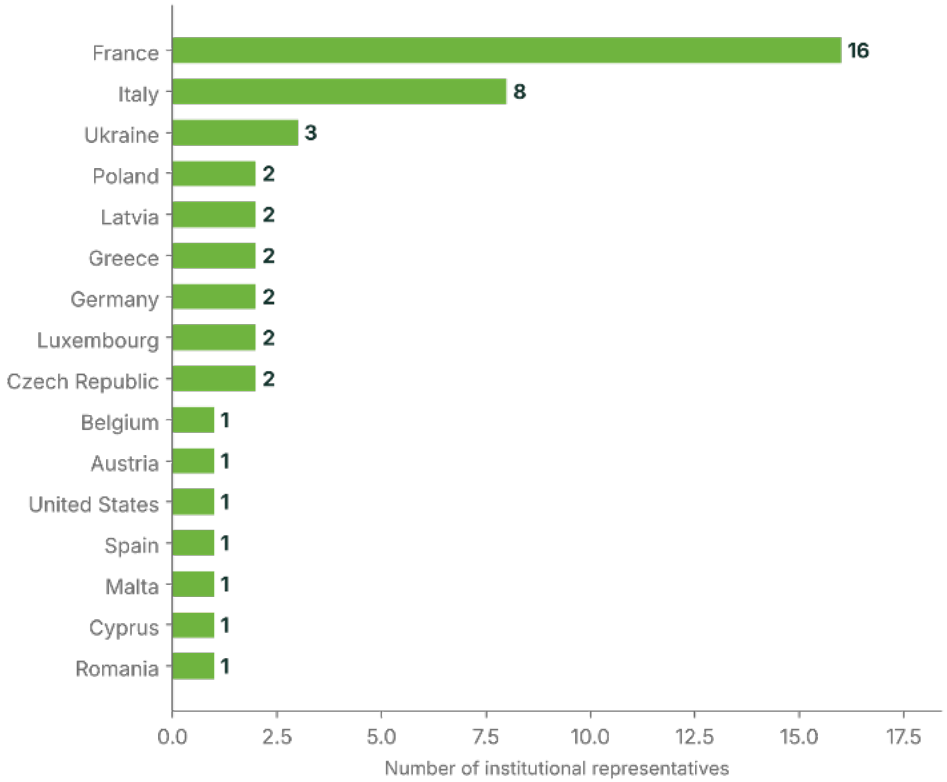


All 285 confirmed participants: 267 across 23 identified nationalities (top 11 shown individually; 12 further nationalities grouped as "Other"), plus 18 recorded under a general "Non-EU" category in the registration system.

Source: consolidated registration export, CSCE (updated listing, October 2026). Nationality, gender and date of birth were provided by all 285 confirmed participants ("Registered" or "Scanned" status); 13 additional invitees marked "To invite" at export time are excluded from these figures. In this update, the registration system records some participants' country under a general "Non-EU" category rather than a specific country.

INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATIVES BY COUNTRY

Alongside the general participant registration above, an official participant list of national delegations, civic service agencies, NGOs and EU institutional guests was kept separately. It lists 46 institutional representatives from 16 countries.



Institutional representatives by country — 46 listed delegates, 16 countries (source: official participant list).

Countries represented at delegation level: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Romania, Spain, Ukraine, United States.

Youth civic service volunteers

Open to all and held at the Mairie, the youth session brought together young people already active in European Civic Service with personalities and trainers, for a day of testimonials, exchanges and hands-on workshops on civic engagement and European mobility.

[CONTENT TO BE ADDED — detailed description, speakers, themes covered and outcomes of the youth session to be inserted here.]



[Caption to be added]



[Caption to be added]



[Caption to be added]

Cross-border cooperation on civic service

In parallel to the youth session, national delegations, civic service agencies and NGOs met at the Seine-Saint-Denis Mission Locale in Bobigny, for two thematic working sessions on cross-border cooperation: one gathering countries with an existing civic service scheme, and one gathering countries developing a new one. Full minutes, SWOT analyses and agreed next steps are presented in the Annex (p.14).



Group photo of national delegations and agency representatives.



A delegate addresses the plenary.



Working group discussion.



Delegates around the table during the country session.



National presentation: "Voluntary Service in Luxembourg" (Service National de la Jeunesse).



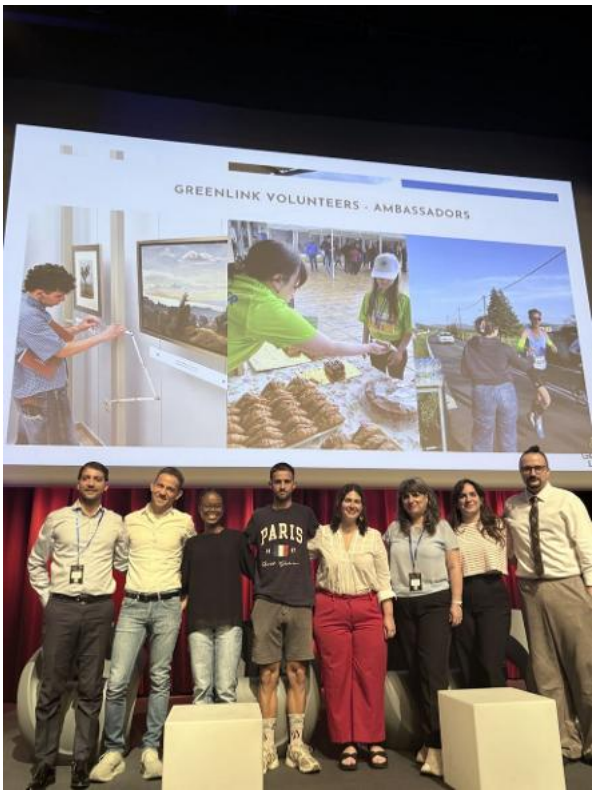
A delegate presents her country's civic service framework.

A shared, public culmination

The two parallel sessions came together in the evening of 28 May, at Europa Expérience (Offices of the European Parliament, Paris), for a shared public gathering: the GREENLINK project and its youth ambassadors were presented to the full audience of the day, alongside the Annual Gathering's wider partners.



Presentation of the GREENLINK project and its target participants.



"GREENLINK Volunteers — Ambassadors": the project's youth ambassadors and field actions.

[PHOTO TO BE ADDED — Europa Expérience, full room]

Closing session

The following day, 29 May, a separate intergovernmental part of the programme gathered at the École Militaire (Amphithéâtre Foch) in Paris, for the Annual Gathering's public closing session: institutional round tables, keynotes and the presentation of the CSCE's annual report and joint declarations.



Closing "Thank you" slide, with the Annual Gathering's institutional partners.

[PHOTO TO BE ADDED — École Militaire, full room]

Outputs and key takeaways

- 285 confirmed participants from 23 identified nationalities (plus a further non-EU group), across a youth session, an institutional cooperation session, a public gathering and a closing session — a genuinely European, multi-generational event.
- The institutional cooperation session translated shared diagnosis into concrete SWOT analyses, operational parameters and agreed next steps across 13 countries represented at delegation level (full minutes in Annex, p.14).
- The youth session engaged young Europeans already active in civic service directly with personalities, trainers and testimonials — the human, engagement-facing core of the Annual Gathering.
- Both sessions converged publicly at Europa Expérience, then at the École Militaire closing session the next day — giving the whole programme strong public and institutional visibility.
- Concrete, actionable follow-up: a joint advocacy proposal, monthly cooperation meetings, an 'Agenda 2030 of Civic Service', and an Annual Civic Service Assembly (see Debrief, p.13).

Debrief — from the gathering's outcomes

Following the Annual Gathering, the participating organisations and delegations formalised their shared conclusions into a public, bilingual (EN/FR) “Joint Advocacy Proposal, promoting EU mobility for all through volunteering”. It translates the institutional cooperation session's findings into five advocacy pillars for EU decision-makers.

FIVE ADVOCACY PILLARS

- **A clear second pillar of EU mobility —** the European Solidarity Corps should become a true second pillar of EU mobility access alongside Erasmus; scaling its budget up to ten times more missions (c. €1 billion/year) would only meet current demand.
- **“In-country” ESC as a Europe-wide testing tool —** a maintained in-country European Solidarity Corps track (c. 20% of the global ESC budget) so youth in countries without a national scheme can complete a first, minimum six-month mission at home before continuing into European mobility.
- **Common European standards for “national solidarity corps” —** a loose EU baseline for rights, duties, age range, duration, participant status, financial coverage, mentoring and recognition, as a reference model for countries designing new schemes.
- **A coalition of States, agencies, territories, NGOs and volunteers —** regular meet-ups of all stakeholders to exchange best practices, mutual recognition and tools, articulated around the operational and budget synergy of national and European solidarity corps.
- **Volunteering as a systematic policy delivery tool —** joint, visible deployment of volunteers on shared European priorities (climate action, solidarity with Ukraine, intergenerational solidarity, flagship sport/cultural events such as the 2030 Winter Olympics), moving eventually towards a common European action plan.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR GREENLINK

Together, the youth session, the institutional cooperation session and the public gatherings that followed gave GREENLINK's objectives — citizenship, equality and cross-border civic engagement for European youth — a concrete, visible and participatory expression, reaching young people directly as well as the institutions that shape their mobility opportunities.

ANNEX

Detailed minutes — institutional cooperation session

The following pages reproduce in full the minutes of the two thematic working groups held during the institutional cooperation session in Bobigny on 28 May: cross-border cooperation between countries with an existing civic service, and the development of a civic service programme in countries without one. These detailed exchanges are provided here as supporting material to the concept, metrics and outputs presented earlier in this report.

Cross border cooperations in the framework of civic service

Participating delegations: Italy, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria, Germany.

Facilitators: Boris Jaros (Honorary President, CSCE), Benjamin Sibille (Founder and Director, CSCE).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The working group brought together inputs from Italy, Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Austria and Germany to discuss how existing civic service volunteering and youth mobility can be better aligned and cooperation instruments scaled. The discussion highlighted a strong shared reality and spirit in terms of civic service instruments, base of cooperation networks, EU funding instruments and city-level infrastructures, while also identifying governance fragmentation, legal complexity and uneven implementation models as central barriers.

A common direction emerged around building a more interoperable framework for volunteering and youth mobility, on a bilateral basis moving if possible quickly towards multilateral cooperation, and that can eventually be a role model for new countries willing to develop such youth civic service volunteering schemes. The framework should leverage existing EU and local assets, support a gradual two-step mobility model, and combine practical implementation tools with a stronger shared narrative on the value of volunteering.

The most immediate need is to move from a shared diagnosis to a structured country mapping exercise, while bringing cooperation from dialogue to reality — managing, even if only in pilot forms, to actually put jointly youth on the ground, and use this field feedback and experience to foster further governance and structural cooperation. This should clarify legal, administrative, financial and operational conditions in each country and identify where pilot models of cooperation or new volunteering instruments can realistically transition into policy instruments. Common advocacy obtaining strong EU instruments, such as the European Solidarity Corps, can only facilitate such developments.

CONTEXT

- Existing cooperation networks and city-level infrastructures, as well as some national bilateral cooperation, already provide a practical base for cross-border collaboration.
- Several EU programmes and funding instruments are relevant to youth volunteering and mobility, including CERV, INTERREG (notably for cross-border and neighbouring cooperation on exchanges of volunteers), ALMA and the European Solidarity Corps.
- Across countries, there is a shared challenge of moving from pilot projects of cooperation to more stable policy frameworks, which can also be observed where civic service is not yet stabilized as a local policy.
- Differences in governance models, legal frameworks and administrative procedures make direct replication of a given cooperation, even bilateral, difficult without structured mapping and adaptation.
- The European Solidarity Corps is precious, as the only shared reality and cooperation level accessible by all Member States: articulating it with local and national frameworks remains a challenge to tackle, but has strong potential.

IDENTIFIED BEST PRACTICES

- **Luxembourg:** volunteering in civic service is more or less a right — all willing will access a mission, with budget re-evaluated if needed. Integrated within the Ministry of Education, every youth in difficulty, especially dropping out and NEETs, is reached out to be proposed a mission.
- **Italy:** a relatively centralised approach — training frameworks, processes and content co-developed by the State, alongside a national platform of major hosting organisations and a youth council participating in overall governance.
- **Germany & Austria:** major civil-society structures at federal/federative level, labelled and empowered by the State, receive funding, dispatch it to hosting structures and youth engaged, and ensure quality, preparation, training and overall management.
- **France & Belgium:** entry into civic service remains flexible, with contractualisation always associating the programme authority, the youth volunteer, and the hosting structure; recruitment is fluid and regular, with networks dispatching and administratively managing youth.
- **Luxembourg (ESC synergy):** European Solidarity Corps is regularly completed by national funding to ensure coverage at least equivalent to local engagement (notably social insurance); budget fungibility between schemes is tested, and labelling of a national network is acknowledged for all its sub-locations and teams.

SWOT ANALYSIS — CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

STRENGTHS (Internal)

- Same basic principles shared by all civic service schemes: missions of general interest, coverage of volunteers' needs, a pedagogical and a "service contribution" component.
- Shared pattern of moving from pilot projects to policy change, locally, nationally and in bilateral/multilateral cooperation.
- Strong redundancy and transferability of expertise, resources and know-how between local/national and European volunteering.
- Potential of a two-step mobility model: closer/local engagement first, then further European or international mobility.
- European Solidarity Corps can support in-country or shorter-duration formats in countries without a local/national scheme.
- City infrastructures can facilitate mobility — local youth programmes, training facilities, public and social housing (Garage Erasmus, Erasmus House Milan), school partnerships.
- Clear complementary distribution of roles: States (interoperability, priorities), collectivities/regions/cities (pooled resources), NGOs and public-service deliverers (missions, training, management).
- Huge potential in sharing good practices, and in shared impact measures and methodology for greater EU-level credibility.

WEAKNESSES (Internal)

- Governance complexity around policy instruments; responsibilities can be split and hard to share; transition from pilots to policy lacks a governance framework and political carry-on.
- Divergences across countries in centralisation, governance layers and association involvement.
- Different practices across countries, regions and EU programmes (volunteer management, group size, age/coverage criteria).
- Limited mobility incentives/attractivity for youth in border and neighbouring-country regions — precisely where cross cooperation is easiest.
- Interoperability challenges, especially operating the European Solidarity Corps beyond a stand-alone tool.
- Short planning horizons and limited funding predictability.
- Mechanisms designed for local/national deployment can be incompatible with cross exchanges (residency criteria, missing housing/language/transport coverage).
- Different volunteering philosophies and visions, including articulation with military service.
- Accommodation and budget constraints differ across cities and countries, sometimes unmanageable.

OPPORTUNITIES (External)

- Momentum from the new EU youth strategy and the EU budget debate, potentially also at national level.
- Political will to advance volunteering in the face of major international, European and local challenges, and a deteriorating economic trend making mobilisation more impactful.
- Potential to address social diversity and move beyond uneven perceptions of volunteering target groups.
- Huge potential for joint bilateral, multilateral or European deployment on shared priorities: sports, climate & biodiversity action, civil protection, foreign solidarity (e.g. Ukraine).
- Possible links to flagship events such as the Olympics or other major sport events.
- Common storytelling around volunteering; existing cooperation networks including Town Twinning.
- Multiple EU programmes with youth priorities (INTERREG, ALMA) and funding instruments (CERV, INTERREG).
- Almost every public action, policy or call for projects could be at least partially delivered through civic service and volunteering.

THREATS (External)

- Differences in legal frameworks and administrative complexity: visas, residence permits, social security, accreditation.
- Public mindset around volunteering, target groups, added value and narrative.
- Political incentives and budget conditions may shift if government or EU priorities change.
- Debate on military service not thought of as a universal mobilisation of society, tending to be opposed to civic service, or seeing civil volunteering as a "peace luxury".

KEY INTERPRETATION

- The enabling conditions are already present: networks, EU instruments, city infrastructures and good practices exist, as well as budget and frameworks with existing civic service schemes.
- The main bottleneck is not only funding, but the lack of interoperability between governance models, legal regimes and operational practices: a collective answer for joint European impact needs strong mutual recognition, increased cooperation and interoperability, bringing together public authorities, territorial and civil society actors and hosting facilities.
- A stronger European Solidarity Corps brings powerful collective impact through a shared, homogeneous tool, but stronger integration with and between national schemes has even stronger potential.
- A shared narrative is strategic: communication around volunteering should address value, recognition of skills, social diversity and public perception, and showcase it as a major instrument of public policy delivery.

CORE FRAMEWORK DESIGN — AGREED PARAMETERS

Leverage existing instruments	Connect national civic service schemes between them and with EU instruments (CERV, INTERREG, ALMA, European Solidarity Corps) rather than creating a fully separate structure from zero.
Use a two-step mobility model	Support progressive participation: closer/local/national/shorter mobility first, then further/longer European mobility once trust, readiness and support systems are established — enabling reciprocity ("one youth exchange for one received").
Combine institutional and association-level perspectives	Keep each sphere in its role, but connect inter-institutional and inter-association discussions — both are necessary for real-life impact and to fuel a positive feedback loop.
Prioritize interoperability	Clarify how different instruments, governance systems and administrative procedures can work together.
Anchor implementation in cities	Use local infrastructures, municipal housing arrangements, social housing partnerships, schools and existing mobility hubs.
Develop shared thematic entry points	Sports, climate & biodiversity, civil protection and flagship-event-linked opportunities — for political carry-on and visibility as a public policy delivery solution.
Build common tools	Impact methodology, training processes and content, and other best-practice exchanges, generating major economies of scale from European cooperation.
Build a common narrative	Communicate the value of volunteering, recognition of acquired skills, social diversity and European cooperation through shared storytelling.

NEXT STEPS — AGREED ACTIONS

Action	Lead / contributors	Output	Priority	Impact
Complete country mapping for all six countries.	Country representatives with coordination team.	Validated country fiches (governance, legal/admin, operational, funding).	High	Low short-term, but fosters long-term cooperation and is a model for new countries.
Identify existing instruments that can be activated or combined.	Programme and policy leads, with major implementers.	Instrument matrix (local, national, ALMA, ESC, CERV, Interreg, Horizon, Life, Creative Europe).	High	High — 6 States already involve more youth in civic service than EU27 Erasmus + ESC combined.
Define the two-step mobility pathway.	Framework design group.	Draft mobility pathway (local/national + further/longer options).	High	High — strongest observed impact on inclusivity of European mobility.
Map accommodation, training, transport and city-infrastructure solutions that could be pooled.	City partners, municipalities, schools, housing actors.	Operational inventory of potential housing/support models.	Medium	Medium — cannot create cross exchanges alone but sharply cuts their cost.
Develop shared storytelling and communication messages.	Communication leads and association partners.	Narrative brief on value, target groups, skills recognition, social diversity.	Medium	Medium — increases attractiveness, notably in border regions.
Select common thematic priorities.	All partners.	Shortlist (sports, climate & biodiversity, civil protection) with joint deployment goals.	Medium	High short-term — justifies political and resource carry-on.
Clarify policy-transition pathway.	Institutional stakeholders.	Roadmap from pilot experimentation to policy adoption/integration.	High	High, long-term.

LONG-TERM VISION

The long-term vision is to create a more coherent European volunteering exchanges, civic service cooperation and youth mobility ecosystem that remains adaptable to national contexts while offering young people clearer, more inclusive and more recognisable pathways into European engagement, built on interoperability.

- Move from isolated pilot projects to stable, interoperable cooperation models.
- Strengthen cooperation between institutions, associations, cities and schools.
- Reduce barriers created by legal, administrative and funding fragmentation.
- Make volunteering more inclusive by addressing perceptions of target groups and supporting social diversity.
- Improve public recognition of volunteering, including acquired skills and civic value.

In the desired future state, young people access volunteering through a transparent, progressive pathway centred on their experience and commitment to general interest. Municipalities provide practical support, European and national instruments are better connected, and common storytelling helps explain the social, civic and skills value of volunteering. Country-specific differences remain, but they are mapped, managed and integrated into a shared operational framework.

Development of a civic service program

Designing a Transferable Framework for Youth Civic Engagement across the European Union.

Participating delegations: Cyprus (Marios Nicolaou, Panayiotis Theodorou) · Czech Republic (Vladimir Skuta) · Greece–Tripoli (Dimitra Anagnostopoulou) · Latvia (Anete Gaike) · Malta (Julian Dingli, Agnieszka Lewkowicz) · Romania (Victor Ionescu) · Spain (Juan de Lucas Osorio, Jorge Hermida). Observers/resource persons from France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria.

Facilitators: Marinella Linati (Director Institutions/Italy, CSCE), Anastasie Danset (Board member, CSCE), Marie Trellu-Kane (co-Founder, Unis-Cité).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the institutional cooperation session, representatives from 12 European countries met for a working group on the design and implementation of a Civic Service framework, among them some without a current structured, compensated volunteering framework ("civic service"). The session brought together delegations from countries that do not yet have a structured national civic service system, alongside observers and resource persons from countries with established models (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria).

The meeting was structured around existing French- and EU-supported pilots of such schemes, and their potential future development, through a SWOT analysis exercise, working group discussions, and a plenary session on next steps. It focused on the practical challenges of establishing structured youth civic engagement programmes and on building a shared European framework that respects national diversity while enabling cross-border coordination.

CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

The working group is part of a broader European initiative to design a Civic Service model for young people, with a standard programme duration of 6 to 12 months. Several delegations also discussed the viability of shorter 1–2 month pilots in contexts with limited institutional capacity or political readiness.

- Review and map existing national youth volunteering systems across participating countries.
- Identify legal, financial, and cultural barriers to implementation.
- Design a transferable European framework adaptable to each national context, with potential cooperation and EU best-practice transfers.
- Define concrete next steps for coalition-building and programme development.

A foundational point of agreement: a civic service programme must include a defined duration; partial financial support (stipend/allowance) enabling full-time or strong partial-time inclusion; mentoring and training; and formal recognition through certificates or skills validation. Activities must serve the public interest through NGOs, municipalities or community organisations.

SWOT ANALYSIS — CREATION OF A CIVIC SERVICE

STRENGTHS (Internal)

- Spain and many other Member States: active in-country European Solidarity Corps (ESC) programmes testing local volunteering schemes at small scale.
- Cyprus: existing NGO infrastructure with potential for EU-funded pilots (ALMA and in-country ESC).
- Malta (Julian Dingli): database system matching young people with NGOs; strong NGO-institution coordination.
- Malta: mandatory CSR module at university/master level (unpaid but structured).
- Interest and demonstrated need from NGOs to engage young volunteers.
- Several countries already familiar with EU youth programme architecture (ESF+, ESC).

WEAKNESSES (Internal)

- In-country ESC programmes: limited budget; some countries (e.g. Poland) still forbid their use despite lacking local schemes.
- Greece (Dimitra Anagnostopoulou, Municipality of Tripoli): significant difficulties recruiting volunteers, cultural/mentality barriers, widespread confusion about what civic service means.
- In some countries, the terms 'volunteering' or 'civic service' cannot legally or culturally be used without triggering definitional problems or historical grievances.
- Volunteering is not perceived as a positive commitment in several national contexts.
- Fragmented national legislation; some countries forbid stipending volunteering.
- Unstable, competitive funding opportunities preventing long-term development of volunteering habits.
- Even when NEET-targeted funds exist, reaching the actual target group is difficult (e.g. Romania).
- Lack of connection between local and national governance levels.
- Lack of human resources able to manage and mentor volunteers (e.g. Poland).

OPPORTUNITIES (External)

- Opportunity to agree on a common European definition of civic service.
- Positive recognised impact on unemployment and effective re/upskilling, especially for the most fragile and NEETs.
- Legal framework design covering funding, health insurance, stipend and social contributions.
- Civic service as a tool for intercultural reconciliation (e.g. bicommunal initiatives in Cyprus, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot youth).
- Structure: creating a coordinating body/mentoring system linking NGOs, municipalities and volunteers.
- Effective tool to address national urgencies (refugee crisis, natural disasters, environmental awareness) and reinforce national resilience.
- Possibilities for the EU Commission and countries with national schemes to transfer best practices and accompany new ones.

THREATS (External)

- Short-term, informal volunteering activities already exist and may be confused with a civic service programme.
- Risk of civic service being perceived as disguised unpaid labour.
- Over-reliance on EU funding without national sustainability mechanisms.

COUNTRY MAPPING — CURRENT STATE AND KEY INPUTS

- **Reference models (France, Italy, Germany):** France's Service Civique (6–12 months, state-funded stipends, strong legal recognition, large NGO ecosystem) was cited as the primary reference model. Germany's Bundesfreiwilligendienst provides structured mentoring and integration with educational pathways. Italy's Servizio Civile Universale — presented by Laura Massoli (Head, Italian Civic Service Office) and Mario Orlando (Vice President, National Youth Council for Civic Service) — combines a national legal framework, structured stipends, and strong civil-society integration; Stefano Campanari (ScambiEuropei ETS) presented Italy's cross-border exchange experience.
- **Spain:** represented by Andalusia (Juan de Lucas Osorio, Arrabal Aid) and Madrid (Jorge Hermida, Coordinadora Vallecas). Relatively strong ecosystem via ESC in-country programmes and ESF+ access; regional autonomy creates fragmentation and unequal access.
- **Malta:** represented by Julian Dingli (CEO, CORE Platform). Strong NGO/public-institution coordination, functioning database, mandatory university-level NGO placement; main gap: no long-term legal framework or stipend mechanism.
- **Cyprus:** represented by Marios Nicolaou (Human Resource Development Authority) and Panayiotis Theodorou (Politistiki Ergastiri). No legal framework yet distinguishing civic service from employment/volunteering; strong potential for EU-funded bicommunal pilots; absence of legal recognition is the primary barrier.
- **Romania:** represented by Victor Ionescu (Senior Adviser, Ministry of Youth, Labour and Social Affairs). Partial development with experimental funding; some programmes reclassify participants to work around legal constraints; gap between project design and local implementation.
- **Greece:** represented by Dimitra Anagnostopoulou (Municipality of Tripoli). The most challenging context identified: budget constraints, cultural scepticism, conceptual confusion, and absence of a stable legal framework; engagement typically limited to 1–2 months.
- **Latvia:** represented by Anete Gaike (Ministry of Welfare). Limited civic service tradition, smaller NGO ecosystem, highly dependent on EU funding; main opportunity via employability/NEET frameworks.
- **Poland:** represented by Agnieszka Lewkowicz (Stowarzyszenie Centrum Wolontariatu). Active civil society but no structural institutionalisation at national level; risk of high administrative burden for hosting organisations.
- **Czech Republic:** represented by Vladimir Skuta (Tmelník). Contextual input aligned with broader cross-cutting themes: legal ambiguity and funding fragility common to the wider group.

CORE FRAMEWORK DESIGN — AGREED PARAMETERS

Target group	Flexible age range depending on national context. Reference ranges: France 16–25; Italy 18–28; Germany 18+ (no upper limit). For new frameworks, core reference is 18–25, adapted for NEETs, at-risk and older youth in transition. Priority access for NEETs/vulnerable groups, open access maintained. General core target: 18–30.
Duration	Standard 6–12 months; optional 1–2 month pilots for limited-capacity contexts.
Participant status	Legally distinct category (neither employee, unpaid volunteer, trainee nor intern); insurance, social protections, clear allowance rules. Short term, often via internship law; an EU definition could help change local labour law to introduce the civic service concept.
Financial model	Modest stipend/allowance; hybrid funding (ESF+, ESC, national co-financing, municipal contributions). Long-term sustainability requires state-level commitment beyond EU funding.
Mentoring	Mandatory; every participant assigned a designated mentor, a task supervisor, and a structured learning plan — without which programmes risk becoming exploitative or unstructured.
Recognition	EU-compatible certificate of civic competencies aligned with European employability frameworks.

NEXT STEPS — AGREED ACTIONS

- **5.1 Establish a Common Civic Service Framework —** a shared baseline model (reference architecture, not a mandatory structure) defining minimum standards for age range, duration, participant status, financial model, mentoring and recognition, allowing national adaptation.
- **5.2 Monthly Cooperation and Online Meetings —** structured monthly online coordination with a fixed agenda; thematic working groups on legal frameworks, funding models, mentoring systems, evaluation and youth inclusion.
- **5.3 Develop an 'Agenda 2030 of Civic Service' —** a strategic roadmap articulating long-term vision, milestones and political strategy — a baseline for countries still developing schemes and a reference for those accompanying them, including maximal use of the in-country European Solidarity Corps.
- **5.4 Information Sharing on Pilot Projects —** a shared documentation platform collecting case studies, legal templates, funding guides and evaluation reports, so successful pilots become evidence bases for policy change.
- **5.5 Annual Civic Service Assembly —** an annual in-person or hybrid Assembly bringing together established-system countries (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria) and countries developing new frameworks, for structured knowledge exchange and peer review.

STRATEGIC APPROACH — IMPLEMENTATION PRINCIPLES

The working group confirmed a preference for a bottom-up rather than top-down implementation strategy: NGO-led pilots, followed by impact evaluation, then municipal adoption, and eventually national policy integration — considered more realistic where political will is limited or civic service is politically sensitive.

The group also agreed on a 'soft influence' approach: framing civic service as a youth employability and skills-development tool, rather than a volunteering reform, is more likely to generate political acceptance than direct lobbying. Bilateral quiet diplomacy between ministries and agencies, and success stories from Italy, France and comparable countries, are the preferred methods.

KEY RISKS AND MITIGATION PRIORITIES

- Legal ambiguity: participants must not fall into a grey zone between worker and volunteer — clear legal status is non-negotiable.
- Funding fragility: dependence on short-term EU grants without national sustainability commitments.
- NGO capacity limits: insufficient training in hosting, mentoring and programme management.
- Cultural perception: civic service seen as 'not real work' or disguised free labour — requires sustained communication and reframing.
- Governance fragmentation: weak coordination between national, regional and municipal levels undermines implementation quality.

LONG-TERM VISION

If successfully structured, the long-term objective is a civic service ecosystem in which every participating country has at least one national scheme or active pilot; youth can move between countries under compatible frameworks; civic service is formally recognised across Europe as a stage of youth development; and EU funding acts as a stabilising mechanism rather than the primary financing source — creating a parallel civic layer to education and employment systems across Europe.

Partners & consortium

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