

Joint proposals, promoting EU mobility for all through volunteering

Along the years, EU mobility has affirmed itself as a key instrument for building up European belonging and solidarity, learning about the other Europeans culture and languages, but also one of the most successful policies in bringing up in the youth autonomy and recognized skills, maximizing their later professional and civic insertion. Besides those successes where Erasmus shines, accessing EU mobility through structured volunteering, like proposed by the European Solidarity Corps, or for a few Member States currently, national civic services, sometimes interconnected, brings a further added value, as a major tool of key European and national priorities mobilization, and one of the most cost efficient Youth policy existing yet. It showcases some of the highest results in terms of eventual professional insertion, lifelong citizen participation and engagement, and by essence remains one of the only schemes truly accessible to all willing to contribute, without ahead restriction of skills, studies, foreign languages acquisitions, or economic, social or health conditions. Interconnecting strong, ambitious, far reaching, European volunteering, with existing national and local civic service volunteering schemes, bringing together locally already hundreds of thousands youth each year, appears to be the key of building up a true universal access, not of few lucky ones, nor from some Member States more active in Youth policies, but of all EU youth (5 Millions/ Year): a second EU mobility pillar alongside Erasmus.

This requires strong policy effort to develop voluntary civic service at all levels in Europe:

i) qualitatively (more inclusive schemes and pathways, and with improved common standards)

ii) quantitatively (synergies ensuring access to all volunteers and reaching out gradually to a whole generation)

European Solidarity Corps as a clear pillar of EU mobility

With the adoption of renewed budget and programs within a reunified Erasmus, the European Solidarity Corps, must remain a clear specific priority. It should become a true second pillar of EU mobility access, alongside Erasmus. Scaling its budget up to 10 times more missions and one billion Euro each year would only allow it to answer the current number of candidates.

Generalizing European Solidarity Corps in Country, as a test try where needed

One quarter of EU Member States have currently and genuinely structured, funded, widely reaching local and national civic service volunteering schemes, complementary to the European Solidarity Corps, but more than half experiment and test them. Access to the European Solidarity Corps in Country scheme ensures the ability of all countries to pilot in a European coordinated way limited testing of local structured volunteering, before developing them at national level. A maintained "in country" European Solidarity Corps, of 20% of the global ESC budget (with no national limit), should ideally propose in all countries lacking yet national schemes, a pathway, where youth starts a 6 months minimum mission at home, before continuing in European mobility.

Common European standards for "National" Solidarity Corps (civic service)

The European Solidarity Corps, as all local and national existing civic service equivalent (that could be designated as National Solidarity Corps) share common features, setting them apart from training, internships, jobs and employment, and most specifically forms of punctual uncovered volunteering they tend legally to be confused with. A loose EU baseline recognition, set on observed commonalities, of minimum standards for rights, duties, age range, duration, participant status, financial model of coverage of full time or strong partial time youth commitment, mentoring, and recognition, in accomplishing those type of general interest missions, could set a form of base model. It encourages and helps new countries to develop it, fosters interconnectivity, while allowing each country to deploy its own, adapted to local realities.

A coalition, associating States, Agencies, Territories, major NGOs and major volunteers' hosting stakeholders, and volunteers themselves

Regular meetups of all stakeholders, would foster exchange of best practices, mutual acknowledgement, recognition, pooling of tools, methods, and eventually the number of cross exchange of volunteers, in reciprocity and articulated around the synergy and operational and budget articulation of National and European Solidarity Corps.

Mobilize Youth in joint volunteering on major European, social and environmental challenges between willing countries, affirm volunteering as a systematic policy implementation tool

Youth policy of volunteering should be recognized as societal and democratic resilience far reaching tools, by leveraging this multifactoring impacting and cost-effective scheme potential in delivering public policies. Short term this could be exemplified around agreed key priorities of voluntary cooperating Member States. Solidarity Corps Volunteers could be deployed jointly and visibly on high stakes such as 1) climate and environmental action, 2) international solidarity, notably with Ukraine 3) Intergenerational solidarity with elders, 4) or major sport or cultural events, like the diverse European Years or 2030 Winter Olympics. Eventually, as it is the case within the UN, the EU could systematize the use of National and European Solidarity Corps volunteering as systematically mobilized in the delivery of part of all its actions, call for projects, subsidies and policies, as a true major implementation instrument through citizens' mobilization.

Eventually, all this should converge towards a common European action plan, at EU or multilateral level, on cooperation of all existing civic services, new national and local schemes, but also European instruments, as well as guidelines for better mobility and volunteering engagement.

Signatories (combined they cover over 50 000/year long term national or European volunteers).

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