



Brussels, 30.5.2017
SWD(2017) 168 final

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

**CONCEPT NOTE - MAIN ACTIONS IMPLEMENTING THE EUROPEAN
SOLIDARITY CORPS**

Accompanying the document

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

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

{COM(2017) 262 final}

{SWD(2017) 166 final}

{SWD(2017) 167 final}

- CONCEPT NOTE -

MAIN ACTIONS IMPLEMENTING THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

This concept note provides further information on the main actions implementing the European Solidarity Corps. It outlines: the key features of the different types of solidarity placements (volunteering, traineeships and jobs); the format of the solidarity projects; the European Solidarity Corps Quality Label; the networking activities and the European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre.

SOLIDARITY PLACEMENTS

European Solidarity Corps placements can take the shape of:

- A) volunteering placements,
- B) traineeship placements,
- C) jobs.

Solidarity placements supported under European Solidarity Corps may be offered in different areas, such as, but not limited to: education and training, employment, gender equality, entrepreneurship (in particular social entrepreneurship), citizenship and democratic participation, environment and natural protection, climate action, disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery (excluding immediate disaster response), 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.

For all solidarity placements, a certain level of support is provided to participating organisations. The different modalities of support depending on the financing mode and the type of activity are also listed below.

The different types of placements as well as their proposed implementation and basic eligibility criteria are described below.

A) VOLUNTEERING PLACEMENTS

1. Description of the activities

A **volunteering placement** is a full-time¹ unpaid voluntary service for a limited period (up to 12 months, see point 2 for more details), which will provide 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. In addition to the strong solidarity component of these activities, the volunteering experience will also have a solid learning and training dimension in order to enable the young volunteer(s) to gain skills and competences, which will be

¹ As a general principle, an activity carried out continuously, 5 days a week for 7 hours a day.

useful for their personal, educational, social and professional development. This will also contribute to improving their employability.

Volunteering placements under the European Solidarity Corps may be 1) cross-border activities, i.e. activities taking place in a country different from the country of origin of the participant; or 2) in-country activities, for instance to encourage and facilitate the participation of disadvantaged young people, to provide opportunities where national schemes do not exist, or to cater for priorities identified at European level within the framework of the European Solidarity Corps initiative.

Volunteering activities can be carried out either individually or in group.

As for group activities, a new feature of the European Solidarity Corps will be to support **volunteering teams**. These activities will allow groups of 10 to 40 young volunteers from different participating countries to volunteer together on community service projects for a period between 2 weeks and 2 months. In these activities, European Solidarity Corps' volunteers will carry out tasks for a project over a short period of time (usually, but not exclusively, during holidays, breaks between study periods, transition from education to work, etc.). Despite their shorter duration, these activities will be valuable both for the individuals and for the communities benefitting from this service. Examples of the valuable work that can be accomplished even over a short period of time include: e.g. restoring cultural heritage damaged by natural disaster, catering for species threatened by extinction, organising educational activities in refugee camps, etc.

The advantages of this specific type of group activities compared to standard volunteering placements include the following:

- volunteers will carry out the activity in group. This can be an incentive for youngsters who don't feel ready to embark into challenging experiences on their own;
- the activity will be shorter in duration. This can foster the participation of those youngsters who cannot commit for a long period of time – because of their studies or jobs – but still want to be of help for the community.

2. Duration

As a general rule, the duration of regular **volunteering placements** will range between a minimum of 2 months and a maximum of 12 months. In duly justified cases, notably in order to encourage the participation of young people with disabilities or disadvantaged backgrounds, short-term volunteering (2 weeks to 2 months) can be allowed.

Volunteering teams will last for a period between 2 weeks and 2 months.

3. Who can participate

Placements are offered by participating organisations² holding a valid Quality Label to European Solidarity Corps participants, i.e. young people between 18³ until 30 years who are nationals or legally residing in a participating country and have registered in the European Solidarity Corps portal.⁴

² Any public or private entity established in a participating country, or an international organisation active in the field of solidarity.

³ The registration in the European Solidarity Corps portal is possible as of 17 years of age. Young people must have turned 18 in order to start a placement.

European Solidarity Corps participants are directly contacted and selected by participating organisations through the functionalities offered by the European Solidarity Corps portal.

Participation for individuals in any activities where the individual will have direct contact with children in the context of the European Solidarity Corps will be subject, where appropriate, to background checks with a view to ensure child safeguarding.

4. What support is offered to European Solidarity Corps participants in volunteering placements

European Solidarity Corps carrying out a placement, individually or in teams, will be entitled to the following:

QUALITY AND SUPPORT MEASURES

- **Insurance:** complementary health and accident insurance for insurance-related expenses which are not already covered by the European Health Insurance Card⁵ or other insurance schemes to which participants may be enrolled.
- **Online Linguistic Support (for cross-border placements):** European Solidarity Corps participants will be given access to an online tool allowing them to assess and improve (through an online language course) their competences in the foreign language they will use to carry out their placement abroad.
- **General Online training:** open-access training provided prior to departure via the European Solidarity Corps' portal. This is a general online induction with various modules, such as: the mission of the European Solidarity Corps, ethics and integrity of the European Solidarity Corps, including child safeguarding and child protection, roles and responsibilities of participants and placement providers, European values and democracy, inter-cultural awareness, and health and safety, etc.
- In addition, the following **specific training** to those European Solidarity Corps participants carrying out individually a cross-border placement: on-arrival training, which will serve as a welcoming training in the placement country, mentorship and continuous training, to equip the participant with the skills needed to carry out the tasks envisaged by the placement; (optional) pre-departure training, for disadvantaged young people and mid-term evaluation sessions, for participants in placements lasting more than six months.
- **European Solidarity Corps certificate:** participants will be entitled to a certificate of participation in a European Solidarity Corps' placement, to be issued compulsorily at the end of the placement by the placement provider. A standardised written report/assessment by the

⁴ The European Solidarity Corps is open for third country nationals legally residing in one of the participating countries, including beneficiaries of international protection in full respect of the principle of non-refoulement. Applicants for international protection are not covered by the scope of the European Solidarity Corps.

⁵ This is a free card that gives access to medically necessary, state-provided healthcare during a temporary stay in any of the 28 EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, under the same conditions and at the same cost (free in some countries) as people insured in that country. More information on the card and on how to obtain it is available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=559>.

participating organisation could be an integral part of the final European Solidarity Corps certificate.

- **Post placement support:** participants will be provided with guidance and support services at the end of their placement, with a view to encourage their continued involvement in the European Solidarity Corps initiative (alumni network; training/mentoring to future Corps participants), as well as providing them with career guidance and/or support to sustainable labour market integration in their home country or other.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO COVER THE COSTS OF THE EXPERIENCE

European Solidarity Corps participants will also receive a financial contribution to cover:

- Travel costs;
- Subsistence costs, including a pocket money;
- Additional expenses (for disadvantaged young people).

B) TRAINEESHIP PLACEMENTS

1. Description of the activities

For the purposes of the European Solidarity Corps Regulation, 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.

A traineeship may be undertaken either in a country other than the country of residence (cross-border) or in the country of residence of the participant (in-country).

Traineeships that are part of curricula of formal education or vocational education and training, as well as traineeships whose completion is a mandatory requirement to access a specific profession (e.g. medicine, architecture, etc.) are not supported under the European Solidarity Corps.

2. Duration

As a general rule, the duration of **traineeship placements** will range from 2 to 6 months, in line with the Quality Framework for Traineeships. A longer duration of up to 12 months can be justified⁶, taking into account the nature of the task and national practices.

3. Who can participate

Placements are offered - by participating organisations⁷ holding a valid Quality Label - to European Solidarity Corps participants, i.e. young people between 18⁸ until 30 years who are nationals or legally residing in a participating country and have registered in the European Solidarity Corps portal⁹.

⁶ See Recommendation 10 of Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships (2014/C 88/01; further referred to as the QFT).

⁷ Any public or private entity established in a participating country, or an international organisation active in the field of solidarity.

European Solidarity Corps participants are directly contacted and selected by participating organisations, once they have obtained a valid European Solidarity Corps Quality Label, through the functionalities offered by the European Solidarity Corps portal.

Participation for individuals in any activities where the individual will have direct contact with children in the context of the European Solidarity Corps will be subject, where appropriate, to background checks with a view to ensure child safeguarding.

4. What support is offered to European Solidarity Corps participants in traineeship placements

European Solidarity Corps participants carrying out a traineeship placement will be entitled to the following:

QUALITY AND SUPPORT MEASURES

- **Insurance:** complementary health and accident insurance for insurance-related expenses which are not already covered by the European Health Insurance Card¹⁰ or other insurance schemes to which participants may be enrolled.
- **Online Linguistic Support (for cross-border placements):** European Solidarity Corps participants will be given access to an online tool allowing them to assess and improve (through an online language course) their competences in the foreign language they will use to carry out their placement abroad.
- **General Online training:** an open-access training provided prior to departure via the European Solidarity Corps' portal. This is a general online induction with various modules, such as: the mission of the European Solidarity Corps, ethics and integrity of the European Solidarity Corps, including child safeguarding and child protection, roles and responsibilities of participants and placement providers, European values and democracy, inter-cultural awareness and health and safety, etc.
- In addition, the following **specific training** to those European Solidarity Corps participants carrying out individually a cross-border placement: on-arrival training, which will serve as a welcoming training in the placement country, mentorship and continuous training in the job, to equip the participant with the skills needed to carry out the tasks envisaged by the placement; (optional) pre-departure training, for disadvantaged young people and mid-term evaluation sessions, for participants in placements lasting more than six months.

⁸ The registration in the European Solidarity Corps portal is possible as of 17 years of age. Young people must have turned 18 in order to start a placement.

⁹ The European Solidarity Corps is open for third country nationals legally residing in one of the participating countries, including beneficiaries of international protection in full respect of the principle of non-refoulement. Applicants for international protection are not covered by the scope of the European Solidarity Corps.

¹⁰ This is a free card that gives access to medically necessary, state-provided healthcare during a temporary stay in any of the 28 EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, under the same conditions and at the same cost (free in some countries) as people insured in that country. More information on the card and on how to obtain it is available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=559>.

- **European Solidarity Corps Certificate:** participants will be entitled to a certificate of participation in a European Solidarity Corps' placement, to be issued compulsorily at the end of the placement by the placement provider. A standardised written report/assessment by the participating organisation could be an integral part of the final European Solidarity Corps certificate.
- **Post placement support:** participants will be provided with guidance and support services at the end of their placement, with a view to encourage their continued involvement in the European Solidarity Corps initiative (alumni network; training/mentoring to future Corps participants), as well as providing them with career guidance and/or support to sustainable labour market integration in their home country or other.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO COVER THE COSTS OF THE EXPERIENCE

Besides the remuneration covered by the participating organisation, European Solidarity Corps participants will receive a financial contribution to cover:

- Travel costs (for both in-country and cross-border placements), including travel and accommodation to do an interview, relocation allowance and return travel allowance;
- Additional expenses (for disadvantaged young people).

C) JOBS

1. Description of the activities

For the purposes of the European Solidarity Corps Regulation, a job is understood as a period of work of 2 to 12 months, remunerated by the participating organisation employing the Corps participant, carried out in a participating country and based on an employment contract in accordance with the national regulatory framework of that participating country.

A European Solidarity Corps job may be undertaken either in a country other than the country of residence (cross-border) or in the country of residence of the participant (in-country).

Jobs will be based on an employment contract established in accordance with the national regulatory framework of the hosting 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.

2. Duration

The duration of the support offered to **jobs placements** under European Solidarity Corps, will range between a minimum of 2 months and a maximum of 12 months, in compliance with relevant national legislation in terms of jobs duration.

3. Who can participate

Placements are offered - by participating organisations¹¹ holding a valid Quality Label - to European Solidarity Corps participants, i.e. young people between 18¹² and 30 years of age who are nationals or legally residing in a participating country and have registered in the European Solidarity Corps portal¹³.

European Solidarity Corps participants are directly contacted and selected by participating organisations, once they have obtained a valid European Solidarity Corps Quality Label, through the functionalities offered by the European Solidarity Corps portal.

Participation for individuals in any activities where the individual will have direct contact with children in the context of the European Solidarity Corps will be subject, where appropriate, to background checks with a view to ensure child safeguarding.

4. What support is offered to European Solidarity Corps participants in jobs

In addition to the various social protection and labour rights associated to having a regular employment contract, European Solidarity Corps participants carrying out a job placement will be entitled to the following:

QUALITY AND SUPPORT MEASURES

- **Insurance:** complementary health and accident insurance for insurance-related expenses which are not already covered by the European Health Insurance Card¹⁴ or other insurance schemes to which participants may be enrolled.
- **Online Linguistic Support (for cross-border placements):** European Solidarity Corps participants will be given access to an online tool allowing them to assess and improve (through an online language course) their competences in the foreign language they will use to carry out their placement abroad.
- **General Online training:** open-access training provided prior to departure via the European Solidarity Corps' portal. This is a general online induction with various modules, such as: the mission of the European Solidarity Corps, ethics and integrity of the European Solidarity Corps, including child safeguarding and child protection, roles and responsibilities of participants and placement providers, European values and democracy, inter-cultural awareness and health and safety, etc.

¹¹ Any public or private entity established in a participating country, or an international organisation active in the field of solidarity.

¹² The registration in the European Solidarity Corps portal is possible as of 17 years of age. Young people must have turned 18 in order to start a placement.

¹³ The European Solidarity Corps is open for third country nationals legally residing in one of the participating countries, including beneficiaries of international protection in full respect of the principle of non-refoulement. Applicants for international protection are not covered by the scope of the European Solidarity Corps.

¹⁴ This is a free card that gives access to medically necessary, state-provided healthcare during a temporary stay in any of the 28 EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, under the same conditions and at the same cost (free in some countries) as people insured in that country. More information on the card and on how to obtain it is available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=559>.

- In addition, the following **specific training** to those European Solidarity Corps participants carrying out individually a cross-border placement: on-arrival training, which will serve as a welcoming training in the placement country, mentorship and continuous training in the job, to equip the participant with the skills needed to carry out the tasks envisaged by the placement; (optional) pre-departure training, for disadvantaged young people and mid-term evaluation sessions, for participants in placements lasting more than six months.
- **European Solidarity Corps certificate:** participants will be entitled to a certificate of participation in a European Solidarity Corps' placement, to be issued compulsorily at the end of the placement by the placement provider. A standardised written report/assessment by the participating organisation could be an integral part of the final European Solidarity Corps certificate.
- **Post placement support:** participants will be provided with guidance and support services at the end of their placement, with a view to encourage their continued involvement in the European Solidarity Corps initiative (alumni network; training/mentoring to future Corps participants), as well as providing them with career guidance and/or support to sustainable labour market integration in their home country or other.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO COVER THE COSTS OF THE EXPERIENCE

Besides the salary covered by the participating organisation, (the wage conditions will be set in accordance with national laws, regulations and collective agreements), European Solidarity Corps participants will receive a financial contribution to cover:

- Travel costs (for both in-country and cross-border placements), including travel and accommodation to do an interview, relocation allowance and return travel allowance;
- Additional expenses (for disadvantaged young people).

<h3>Support provided to organisations participating in all types of Solidarity Placements</h3>

A participating organisation willing to offer a placement must guarantee that the European Solidarity Corps participants receive all the support described in the relevant chapter 4 above, in relation to the type of placement offered. To do so they may:

1. Apply for and receive a co-financing provided through funds of the European Solidarity Corps;
2. Apply for and receive a co-financing provided through other EU programmes and funds which support activities that are relevant to the scope and objectives of the European Solidarity Corps;
3. Cover the costs of the placement through own funds or other sources of financing at national, regional or local level.

1. Co-financing from the European Solidarity Corps funding scheme

A participating organisation, holding a valid Quality Label, may apply for a grant under the European Solidarity Corps funding scheme. As a general rule, the grant request will be submitted¹⁵ to the National Agency of the country where the organisation is based. Grant requests for 1) placements organised by Europe-wide or international organisations, and 2) activities of volunteering teams in priority fields identified at European level will be submitted to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission.

In virtue of a thorough certification process (see separate fiche on the European Solidarity Corps Quality Label), the template for the submission of a grant request will be simple and easy-to-fill-in.

Successful applicants will receive:

- free services for participants in their placements:
 - for all placements: general online training, provided by the Executive Agency of the European Commission, as well as support for the certificate and recognition of experience, provided by the European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre;
 - for cross border placements: insurance and linguistic support provided by the Executive Agency of the European Commission, as well as specific training¹⁶ provided by a National Agency.
- financial support for other expenses:
 - participants' costs: travel (for both in-country and cross-border placements), subsistence (only for volunteering placements); additional expenses arising when engaging disadvantaged young people, insurance (for in-country placements);
 - organisational support (for volunteering placements): including a financial contribution to cover costs such as administrative tasks, specific training¹⁷ and mentorship, coordination tasks (in case of consortia of participating organisations), a contribution for costs related to staff carrying out these tasks..
 - Integration programme (for traineeships placements and jobs): including a financial contribution to cover costs such as administrative tasks, on-the-job and continuous training, mentorship, coordination tasks (in case of consortia of participating organisations), a contribution for costs related to staff carrying out these tasks (full coverage of the remuneration/salary of the European Solidarity Corps participant in traineeships and jobs is excluded).

2. Co-financing from other EU programmes and funds

Participating organisations, which are beneficiaries of other EU programmes or funds may use part of their EU grant to offer placements that are in scope of the European Solidarity Corps initiative, provided that these participating organisations obtain a valid European Solidarity Corps Quality Label.

¹⁵ With multiple submission deadlines per year.

¹⁶ On the job training, on arrival and, if relevant, mid-term evaluation.

¹⁷ Continuous training and, if relevant, pre-departure training.

In such cases, the European Solidarity Corps funding scheme will provide:

- general online training, provided by the Executive Agency of the European Commission;
- for cross-border placements, insurance and linguistic support provided by the Executive Agency of the European Commission;
- support for the certificate and recognition of experience, provided by the European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre.

Other EU programmes and funds must provide at least the same provisions offered by the European Solidarity Corps funding scheme, for all costs directly related to the participants:

- travel;
- insurance (for in-country placements);
- subsistence (only for volunteering placements);
- specific training and mentorship;
- post-placement support;
- additional expenses (for disadvantaged young people).

For traineeships, the remuneration to the participant is to be covered by the participating organisation.

In case of jobs, the salary is in principle to be covered by the participating organisations, and the wage conditions will be set in accordance with national laws, regulations and collective agreements.

3. Financing from sources other than EU Funds

Participating organisations, holding a valid Quality Label, may decide to offer placements which are financed through their own resources and/or through contributions from public/private, local/regional/national donors that wish to adhere to the European Solidarity Corps initiative.

In such cases, the European Solidarity Corps funding scheme will provide:

- general online training, provided by the Executive Agency of the European Commission;
- insurance and linguistic support provided by the Executive Agency of the European Commission;
- support for the certificate and recognition of experience, provided by the European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre.

Through own funds or other sources, participating organisations must ensure that the European Solidarity Corps participants will receive the same support offered under chapters 1 and 2 of this section, for all costs directly related to their participation:

- travel;
- insurance (for in-country placements);
- subsistence (only for volunteering placements);
- specific training and mentorship;
- post-placement support;
- additional expenses (for disadvantaged young people).

EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS QUALITY LABEL

1. Description of the activities

All organisations willing to implement placements and projects under the European Solidarity Corps must show they are able to do so in full respect of the rules of the European Solidarity Corps and with the principles and requirements of the European Solidarity Corps' Charter.

The European Solidarity Corps Quality Label is attributed by a National Agency or by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency following a procedure that foresees, where appropriate 1) the assessment of information provided by the organisation through a form, and 2) an on-site visit to the organisation offering placements - to the intermediary organisation applying for a Quality Label on behalf of other organisations - to further assess whether appropriate qualitative standards are in place.

The modalities for attributing a Quality Label may differ according to the profile of organisations wishing to be involved in the European Solidarity Corps. Simplified procedures may be applied for organisations already participating in other EU programmes and funds and for public authorities.

The attribution of a Quality Label is a procedure that ensures high standards in the implementation of their activities and placements organised in the framework of the European Solidarity Corps.

For an organisation, being holder of a Quality Label is a prerequisite for participation, but does not automatically lead to funding.

2. Duration

As a general rule, once granted, the Quality Label will be valid for the entire duration of the European Solidarity Corps. However, to make sure that the qualitative standards for organising a placement are constantly met, the award of the label:

- will be re-assessed periodically;
- will be re-assessed in case of complaints by participants or third parties;
- may be revoked, following the re-assessment.

3. Implementation modalities: who can apply? How? Where?

Who can apply?

Any public or private - profit or no-profit - body willing to participate in the European Solidarity Corps and established in a participating country may apply to obtain a European Solidarity Corps Quality Label.

How to apply?

As a general rule, organisations willing to participate in the European Solidarity Corps will first need to submit an application form to request the Quality Label. This application would be submitted to and assessed by:

1. the National Agency of the country where the organisation is based, in case of:

- national/local organisations running European Solidarity Corps placements with the financial support of the European Solidarity Corps or from other funding sources which do not depend from the EU budget.
2. the Education, Audio visual and Culture Executive Agency based in Brussels, in case of:
- Europe-wide networks or platforms of organisations;
 - Organisations in charge of implementing national schemes or EU shared management funds (e.g. National Civic Services, managing authorities, etc.)
 - Organisations running European Solidarity Corps placements with the financial support of other EU programmes/financial instruments.

The modalities for attributing a Quality Label may differ according to the profile of organisations wishing to be involved in the European Solidarity Corps. Simplified procedures may be applied for organisations already participating in other EU programmes and funds.

What happens when an organisation obtains the Quality Label?

Once granted, the Quality Label will entitle organisations to:

- access to the European Solidarity Corps' database of registered individuals in order to identify potential participants for their placements;
- submit an application to request a grant under the European Solidarity Corps funding scheme in order to cover the costs of the placements they intend to organise;
- in case of placements from funding sources which do not depend from the European Solidarity Corps budget, request additional services to be provided in support of the placements (e.g. online training, linguistic support, insurance).

SOLIDARITY PROJECTS

1. Description of the activities

Solidarity projects are local initiatives, set up and carried out by groups of minimum 5 European Solidarity Corps participants. They are youth-led volunteering activities where European Solidarity Corps participants actively in designing and implementing their own ideas for the benefit of their local communities. They are aimed at equipping European Solidarity Corps with the necessary resources (seed money) and support to be themselves drivers of solidarity actions. In the medium term, solidarity projects can also be a first step into encouraging European Solidarity Corps members to engage in self-employment or setting up associations, NGOs or other bodies active in the solidarity, no-profit and youth sectors.

Contrary to volunteering placements, the activities are typically project-based, meaning that European Solidarity Corps participants define autonomously the amount of time spent in carrying out their tasks, in relation to the goals and scheduled deliveries of the project.

Solidarity projects typically happen in the country of residence of the European Solidarity Corps participants. Similarly to the in-country volunteering placements, this gives an incentive for the participation of disadvantaged young people, who may encounter more difficulties to engage in cross-border placements, but still want to contribute to their society.

Solidarity projects should be of an innovative character and demonstrate a clear European added value, i.e. address priorities identified at European level within the framework of the European Solidarity Corps initiative/ have a European dimension, clearly motivated by the project promoters when requesting a grant and support activities which are not financed through existing domestic schemes.

To guarantee their quality and minimize the financial risks of a solidarity project, the European Solidarity Corps participants actively involved in it are supported, guided and accompanied either by a European Solidarity Corps participating organisation or by the National Agency that has awarded the grant.

2. Duration

Solidarity projects last between 2 and 12 months. Within this time frame, the participation of each individual is flexible and defined in relation to the scope and nature of the project (e.g. different forms of discontinuous volunteering happening on evenings, during weekends, etc.).

3. Who can participate

Any European Solidarity Corps participant may propose a project idea to other participants through the European Solidarity Corps portal.

If other participants (at least four) show interest in the initiative, the group may decide to further elaborate the idea and apply – directly or with the administrative support of a participating organisation - for a grant under the European Solidarity Corps funding scheme.

Grant applications are submitted to the National Agency of the country where the activity takes place. They are assessed against qualitative criteria of relevance, European dimension, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

4. What support is offered to European Solidarity Corps participants

If their grant application is successful, the group of European Solidarity Corps taking part in the solidarity project is entitled to receive:

QUALITY AND SUPPORT MEASURES

- **General Online training:** open-access training provided via the European Solidarity Corps' portal. This is a general online induction with various modules, such as: the mission of the European Solidarity Corps, ethics and integrity of the European Solidarity Corps, roles and responsibilities of participants, European values and democracy, entrepreneurship and project management, health and safety, etc.
- **European Solidarity Corps certificate:** participants will be entitled to a certificate of participation in a European Solidarity Corps' solidarity project. The European Solidarity Corps' participants who so wish will have the opportunity to receive a certificate identifying and documenting the main learning outcomes of their experience.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO COVER THE COSTS OF THE PROJECT

European Solidarity Corps participants will also receive a financial contribution to cover:

- Project costs (seed money in support of activities directly related to the implementation of the project)
- Insurance
- Additional expenses (for disadvantaged young people).

5. What is the role of participating organisations?

Participating organisations may want to offer a support to European Solidarity Corps participants in implementing their solidarity project.

To do so they may apply on their behalf for a grant under the European Solidarity Corps. Their main role will be to:

- support the group in administrative and financial tasks related to the management of the grant;
- offer support and guidance in project life-cycle management;
- offer support in the recognition of competences acquired by through the project.

To carry out these tasks, a participating organisation will receive a financial incentive from the European Solidarity Corps funding scheme.

NETWORKING ACTIVITIES

1. Description of the activities

The European Solidarity Corps will support a series of activities aimed at:

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

Typical activities could be:

- support for the establishment and activities of alumni networks (i.e. European Solidarity Corps members having taken part in placements or projects);
- organisation of annual events for post-placement support (with the involvement of Public Employment Services and stakeholders active in the labour market);
- seminars and other activities to facilitate contacts and exchanges of best practices between participating organisations, the establishment of new consortia, the involvement of newcomer organisations;
- networking activities to raise awareness of the Corps among public authorities – at European national, regional and local level - and potential private donors with a view to attract funding and investments in the European Solidarity Corps initiative;
- other activities aimed at the exchange of best practices and networking.

2. Description of the activities

Depending on the nature and the target of the activities, different complementary implementation modes (both indirect and direct management) could be envisaged.

An amount of the European Solidarity Corps budget dedicated to networking activities could be distributed to National Agencies in each programme country in order to organise activities at national level. The European Commission could manage directly a part of the budget with a view to organising events at European level, in order to further disseminate and strengthen the impact of the European Solidarity Corps initiative. These activities could also take the shape of consultation fora aimed at assessing the perspective of stakeholders concerning the implementation of the initiative.

EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS RESOURCE CENTRE

A European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre, hosted in one of the National Agencies implementing the European Solidarity Corps, will be identified to assist the implementing bodies (National Agencies/Education Audio visual and Culture Executive Agency/European Commission), the participating organisations and the young people taking part in the European Solidarity Corps in order to raise the quality of the implementation and of the activities of the European Solidarity Corps.

Once identified, the Resource Centre will support the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps by providing learning resources to European Solidarity Corps participants, training and contact-making activities for organisations, as well as supporting the National Agencies with measures and resources aimed at achieving a harmonious and high quality roll-out of the European Solidarity Corps throughout Europe.

To pursue this mission, the Resource Centre will carry out a series of tasks such as developing learning resources and pedagogic materials, feeding the European Solidarity Corps portal with information useful for participants and organisations, etc. The Resource Centre will, at the same time, act as central point of support to bring together National Agencies to reflect on and improve certain aspects related to the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps (such as training of staff of National Agencies, support National Agencies in reaching new public targets to be involved in the initiative, etc.).

The activities of the Resource Centre may have a competence-based focus (aimed at improving certain capacities of participants, organisations and/or staff of National Agencies), as well as focusing on transversal topics such as ensuring the inclusion dimension of the programme, fostering diversity and tolerance in the activities and, in general, supporting the awareness and respect of the European Solidarity Corps principles.

Areas where the Resource Centre could typically play a role:

- **European Solidarity Corps certificate:** the Resource Centre could be a central point for developing the certificates for European Solidarity Corps participants having taken part in Corps activities, as well as in developing process to help participants describe their learning outcomes.
- **Organisation of networking events:** these activities could, for example, take the shape of annual conferences of European Solidarity Corps Alumni, where alumni could exchange best practices at European level, as well as put forward proposals for improvement. They could also organise, in cooperation with the National Agencies, contact-making activities for organisations, in order to attract them into the initiative.
- **Communication activities:** the resource centre, by not being directly involved in the administrative management of the funds, can concentrate part of its tasks to develop communication materials, in cooperation with staff from the National Agencies, to promote the added value of participating in the European Solidarity Corps, as well as to raise the quality of the activities.

- **Training activities:** in cooperation with National Agencies if relevant, the Resource Centre can develop specific training materials and events for participants, organisations and staff of National Agencies, both for communication and quality purposes.