

PROPOSALS
of an international civil society conference
for the improvement of the European Solidarity Corps initiative

Budapest, 12 December 2017

Within the project „Practice Solidarity and Shape Europe!“ supported by the Europe for Citizens programme an international civil society conference was organised in Budapest, Hungary on 12 December 2017 under the title „Hand in hand: Solidarity and Volunteering. Learn and promote the European Solidarity Corps initiative“. The more than 80 participants came from 13 countries.

Participants were briefed about the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) initiative: it was announced by Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission in his State of the Union speech in September 2016 and officially launched in December 2016. The Budapest event offered a good possibility to put forward proposals aimed at further development and improvement of the ESC system.

As the result of a rich discussion participants came to the conclusion that

1. the European Solidarity Corps as a new initiative of the European Commission deserves support; however in many aspects it is still in the making and serious efforts are needed to make it a full success during the 2018-2020 period; the experiences and results of the current first phase should be built in;
2. the ESC's focus on young people aged 18-30 is vital for the future of Europe; through concrete activities they learn what European citizenship and identity is and how to respect and put into practice commonly shared European values; in this regard the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU promoting and protecting human dignity deserves special attention;
3. overlapping with other already functioning and well-defined EU programmes eg. European Voluntary Service or EU Aid Volunteers should be avoided; ESC programmes should clearly demonstrate their independent, value-added character;
4. not neglecting the European dimension and character of the ESC initiative activities on local level, in local communities have special importance;
5. the funding of ESC as a new initiative cannot be done at the detriment of current youth and/or volunteering programmes; today's provisional arrangement should be replaced by a new budget line with „fresh money“;
6. ESC volunteers should be connected with each other both online and offline thereby increasing the exchange and learning potential of their participation prior, during and after their ESC involvement;
7. stakeholders including civil society organisations should be invited in the management and monitoring process of the ESC; the entire system should be kept simple and transparent;
8. an intensive and tailor-made communication strategy is needed to make the ESC initiative better known especially among young people.

Participants positively evaluated the role of the European House as host organisation and were of the opinion that similar programmes should be organised in other Member States.

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