

Bruxelles, 10/10/2017

Intervention of Konstantinos Moschochoritis, Secretary General of INTERSOS - Summary

As a humanitarian aid organization, we put solidarity at the core of our intervention, especially at a time when the idea of NGOs and mutual help are under strain given recent events affecting our countries. The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) represent a praiseworthy initiative, not only because it addresses young Europeans but also because it helps fostering and sharing the values of solidarity, mutual respect and cooperation, and equality –to cite but a few.

While it remains a commendable proposal, the ESC presents some critical issues that requires further clarification. First of all, in its definitions it is sometimes vague: It is not clear who can become a participating organization and how “quality label” is defined. For example, could a school or a private clinic be part of the programme? Furthermore, the financial procedure requires transferral from other existing funds (FSE) –but what then stays uncovered?

Secondly, it risks being culturally ambiguous: while the idea of a common civic engagement is surely positive, it could be risky to delineate the “world of solidarity”: this could be understood as charity where solidarity becomes a choice of volunteering rather than a duty of the State.

Putting together volunteering and paid work risks a departure from the original purpose, i.e. to allow young people to give their help for the benefit of those most in need while acquiring experience and skills. Whereas being paid for such an activity is not at all wrong, in this particular case it should not be part of the initiative.

Solidarity does not necessarily mean volunteering but if the idea is to promote the value of it, we should risk that young people enrol in this activity to get (under)paid.