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Committee on Culture and Education

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18/10/2023

**"Implementation of the European Solidarity Corps programme 2021-2027"**

**(2023/2018(INI) - CULT/9/11283)**

**Rapporteur:** Michaela Šojdrová

**Final version - Compromises**

*Please note that "Covers" means either specific words/sentences or the general idea taken into the compromise*

**Paragraphs**

CA 1 - Paragraph 2 - Cooperation

Covers: AM 30 Greens, AM 31 Rapp; AM 57 Greens

Paragraph 2

Calls on the Commission and NAs to strengthen the regular exchange of best practices, **to** enhance common understanding of programme procedures, deepen cooperation and improve the promotion of the programme; stresses that all relevant stakeholders, **including on local and regional levels**, (AM 30) should be involved in regular consultation on matters falling within their competence; **stresses the importance of ensuring that resources are available to a diverse range of organizations** (AM 57); **recommends to resume the regular convening of an Advisory Council of knowledgeable and experienced stakeholders, including youth organisations, coordinated by the ESC Resource Centre** (AM 30, AM 31);

CA 2 - Paragraph 3 - Supportive measures

Covers: AM 35 Renew, AM 36-37 Rapp, AM 38 Greens, AM 39 S&D, AM 42 Rapp, DEVE para 3 (part 2)

Paragraph 3

3. **Urges** (AM 39) the Commission, the Member States, NAs and engaged organisations to (AM 39) raise awareness about the programme and its individual strands, to further build its brand and to reach out to more **youth organisations and** (AM 38) young people, particularly

*the most disadvantaged in society, including those with disabilities and with fewer opportunities (DEVE para 3 part 2); calls on the Commission to provide NAs with expertise and guidance to promote the programme (AM 35); underlines that effective communication, targeted supportive measures, regular monitoring and reporting play an important role in this regard (AM 36, AM 39); highlights that increased communication and higher awareness about the programme must be complemented by an increased budget to cover new applicants and avoid a low success rate (AM 42);*

CA 3 - Paragraph 3 a new - Role of NAs

Covers: AM 34 Renew, AM 40 Greens, AM 26 Renew, AM 51 (Renew), DEVE para 3 (part 4);

Paragraph 3 a new

*3a. Calls on the NAs to develop and implement more tailor-made communication activities to reach out to young people, to utilise the potential of youth organisations (AM 40) and to strengthen their support to applicants, particularly those led by and addressing young people with fewer opportunities, (AM 34), while ensuring they are understandable and accessible (AM 26); stresses the importance (DEVE para 3 - part 4) of setting up an information campaign specifically addressed to this audience (AM 51) to create more awareness and the appropriate design of compulsory training programmes (DEVE para 3 - part 4);*

CA 4 - Paragraph 6 - new forms of volunteering (next MFF)

Covers: AM 45 S&D, AM 46 Greens, AM 32 S&D, AM 11 Renew

Paragraph 6

*6. Notes that the COVID-19 pandemic showed that the programme should be more resilient in anticipation of force majeure (AM 11); notes that young people's needs and social trends are changing; invites the Commission to explore new volunteering formats for the next programming period, such as part-time (AM 45, 46) or blended volunteering, and to provide participants and organisations with a sufficient budget; emphasizes that these formats may be used as a valuable complement to physical mobility in specific situations, but do not provide the same quality of experience and benefits, nor substitute the meaningful interaction on the ground; (AM 32);*

CA 5 - Paragraph 8 a new - Supporting organisations and trainings

Covers: AM 50 Rapporteur, AM 29 S&D, DEVE para 7 (part 2)

Paragraph 8 a new

*8a. Believes the supporting organisations should have the option of conducting preparatory seminars for their volunteers themselves, and that organisations should be able to choose whether their volunteers take part in seminars organised by them or by National Agencies (AM 50); underlines the importance of proper trainings for volunteers committed to work with vulnerable persons, in particular children (AM 29); highlights the need to facilitate the administrative procedures, in particular for smaller organisations and organisations that have not yet dealt with European programmes; calls on the Commission to issue further detailed guidance and technical assistance for applicants, in order to avoid discouraging organisations from engaging with the programme (DEVE para 7 - part 2);*

CA 6 - Paragraph 9 - Inclusion, fewer opportunities

Covers: AM 53 S&D, AM 54 Greens, DEVE para 3 (part 3), DEVE para 3 (part 5)

#### Paragraph 9

9. Welcomes the programme's inclusive ***objectives*** and the implementation guidelines for its inclusion and diversity strategy; ***urges the Commission and Member States to implement the strategy with utmost care and attention, in particular to support organisations in reaching out to more participants with fewer opportunities and to monitor its implementation carefully*** (AM 53); ***calls on the Commission and the NAs*** (AM 54) ***to strengthen their support to applicants,*** (AM 34) ***to develop mechanisms and tools to ensure effective and meaningful inclusion of people with fewer opportunities*** (AM 54), ***in particular by facilitating networking between organisations working with these groups*** (DEVE para 3 - part 5) ***and offering training and language courses, insurance, administrative and post-activity support to participants*** (DEVE para 3 - part 3);

→ Corresponding recital H - see below

CA 7 - Paragraph 9 a new - Flexible approach and supporting measures

Covers: AM 52 Renew, AM 55 S&D

#### Paragraph 9 a new

***9 a. Calls on the Commission to consider adopting a more flexible approach to individual volunteering, enabling participants to mix and match countries, areas of activity and experiences*** (AM 55); ***notes the inadequacy of the current search and match tools on the platform, which do not allow to use its potential sufficiently*** (AM 52);

CA 8 - Paragraph 10 a new - Citizenship education

Covers: AM 15 S&D, AM 28 (part 1) S&D, AM 59 S&D, AM 60 S&D

#### Paragraph 10 a new

***10a. Insists that volunteering within the ESC must include learning and training components*** (AM 28); ***notes that a very limited number of actions dealt directly with citizenship education*** (AM 15); ***calls to reinforce the knowledge of volunteers on the European Union, including through a module on European citizenship, to be taken as a training course prior or in parallel to the solidarity experience, in order to reinforce the EU added value of the programme*** (AM 59); ***calls on the Commission to deepen the solidarity experience by fostering visits of volunteers to sites of memory in the host country, in particular, sites of special significance for the history of the Union*** (AM 60);

CA 9 - Paragraph 11 a (new) - Data collection

Covers: AM 63 Greens, DEVE para 4 (part 2), DEVE para 4 (part 3)

#### Paragraph 11 a (new)

**11 a. Recalls the importance of data collection and reporting, in order to assess and communicate the impact of the programme (DEVE para 4 - part 2) and make available its data on the programme implementation while respecting fully the fundamental rights of privacy and protection of personal data, (AM 63), including participants' (DEVE para 4 - part 2) data disaggregated by relevant categories such as age group or gender (AM 63) and the types of organisations engaging with the programme (DEVE para 4 - part 3);**

→ Corresponding recital H a new (see below)

CA 10 - Paragraph 12 - Recognition of learning outcomes + Paragraph 12 a new: Transition into labour market

Covers: AM 28 S&D (part 2), AM 64 Renew, AM 65 Renew, AM 66 Rapp, AM 67 Greens, DEVE para 3 - part 6

Paragraph 12

12. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to facilitate the expansion of mutual recognition of learning outcomes from volunteering activities, ***including soft and professional skills*** (AM 64 and AM 67), by registering them in Europass, by encouraging higher ***and vocational*** education institutions to award credits ***for these activities, such as*** under the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS credits) ***and the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) and, where possible, record these experiences as digital credentials or micro-credentials*** (AM 66); ***calls for more cooperation with educational institutions in creating these synergies*** (AM 65); ***reiterates that volunteering shall not be a substitute for traineeships or jobs, nor be equated with employment*** (AM 28 - part 2);

Paragraph 12 a new (covers: DEVE para 3 - part 6)

***Underlines the need to support the transition of volunteers into the labour market; emphasises, in this context, the need to increase the resources for long-term support and capacity building for vulnerable volunteers*** (DEVE para 3 - part 6);

CA 11 - Paragraph 14 - Increased budget

Covers: AM 71 Renew, AM 76 S&D, AM 44

Paragraph 14

14. ***Considering the unfulfilled demand of the ESC, the increasing requests for solidarity after recurrent crises, and the cost-effectiveness of actions to foster peace and prevent conflict***, (AM 76) calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide the European Solidarity Corps with an adequate budget that will be able to accommodate increasing interest in the programme, ***more flexibility in the budget allocation between the project strands*** (AM 44) and allow it to address unexpected challenges, such as rising inflation and higher living costs; ***calls in this regard to at least double the budget of the European Solidarity Corps in the next MFF 2028 - 2034***, (AM 71 and AM 76);

→ Corresponding recital J - see below

CA 12 - Paragraph 14 a new - Synergies with EU programmes

Covers: AM 33 Rapp, AM 73 S&D, AM 79 Renew

Paragraph 14 a new

14 a. *Requests the Commission to assess options for a more integrated approach towards Youth activities across EU programmes (AM 33); calls on the Commission to facilitate creating more synergies with other EU programmes, notably Erasmus+, Horizon Europe and to explore the development of synergies with the European Social Fund and with Union actions on disaster relief;* (AM 73 and AM 79)

CA 13 - Paragraph 15 - Inflation

Covers: AM 72 The Left, AM 74 The Left, AM 77 S&D

Paragraph 15

15. Calls on the Commission to address other budgetary issues, such as discrepancies between NAs in handling applications, by establishing specific centralised grants, managed by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency, for individual volunteering and solidarity projects for European organisations and networks, by recommending a minimum amount to be paid by host organisations to their partner/supporting organisations, by removing or increasing the current funding cap for coordination costs, *adjusting flat rates and lump sums taking into account inflation* (AM 77), *the country where the project is taking place* (AM 72) *and the social and economic context of potential applicants*, (AM 74) and by securing regular funding for quality label holders for long-term financial planning purposes; believes that these measures will help organisations and national agencies to provide more opportunities and fulfil the programme's potential;

## Recitals

CA 14 - Recital H - Fewer opportunities

Covers: AM 16 S&D, AM 17 Renew, AM 18 Greens

Recital H

H. whereas one of the main policy priorities is to include young people with fewer opportunities; whereas in 2021-2022, a total of 14 060 participants belonged to this category, of whom 8 622 were awarded places as individual volunteers and 5 438 were awarded places on volunteering teams; *whereas inclusivity, also in rural areas, should remain a high priority of the programme, and more efforts should be devoted to ensure geographical balance in the participation of people from disadvantaged backgrounds across the Union;* (AM 16) *expects continued efforts to reach out to youth and provide them the support needed* (AM 17); *whereas, in some cases, the ambiguous use of the term "inclusion of people with fewer opportunities" can create challenges and affect the meaningful implementation* (AM 18);

CA 15 - Recital H a new - Data collection recital

Covers: AM 19 (Greens), AM 20 (Greens), AM 21 (Greens), DEVE para 4 (part 1)

Recital H a new

***H. Whereas the last publicly available ESC annual report refers to the 2018-2019 period (DEVE para 4 part 1); whereas the EU Youth Strategy affirms that evidence-based youth policy-making and knowledge building is pivotal while contributing to the larger public debate (AM 19); whereas the dashboard created for the Youth Strategy and the datasets available on Eurostat are fragmented, non-comparable, and not easily accessible (AM 20); whereas, age-disaggregated or gender-disaggregated data is key to fostering understanding of the needs of different groups of young people; (AM 21) whereas sensitive data about the participation of volunteers should be processed in full respect of the national and European legislative frameworks on privacy and the protection of personal data;***

CA 16 - Recital J - Budget

Covers: AM 24 Greens, AM 78 S&D

Recital J

***J. whereas the importance of the programme's objectives, that of contributing to social cohesion, fostering understanding among Europeans and preventing conflict through solidarity, has proven the value of the European Solidarity Corps programme as a self-standing programme, which merits reinforced budget as to live up to its true potential (AM 78); whereas the overall budget of EUR 1.033 billion for 2021-2027 has a flat-rate profile and cannot cope with the high demand, the rising costs of living, inflation rates and other challenges; whereas the budget constraints may damage the quality and inclusivity of the projects and may make the programme less attractive (AM 24);***

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**DEVE paragraphs partially covered by CAs are marked below. The parts in bold-italics and all other provisions from the DEVE final opinion will be added separately (adopted without a vote due to DEVE exclusive competence), except for DEVE para 8, which will be put to vote.**

3. ***Welcomes the high number of young people interested in the humanitarian aid strand, with over 42 000 expressions of interests received by May 2023;*** strongly supports the efforts to increase engagement, as effectively as possible, among vulnerable young people, with particular attention to the most disadvantaged in society, including those with disabilities and with fewer opportunities; ***calls*** for concrete action to ensure these young people are included in a meaningful way, in particular by offering training and language courses, insurance, administrative and post-activity support to participants, as well as the validation of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired through their European Solidarity Corps experience; ***stresses***, in this regard, the importance of targeted communication campaigns to create more awareness and the appropriate design of compulsory training programmes, including capacity building, in order to reinforce their impact and the subsequent placements, making sure that both are accessible to all citizens; ***underlines*** the need to support the facilitation of networking between organisations working with vulnerable young people and participating organisations under the European Solidarity Corps, as well as the transition of



volunteers into the labour market; emphasises, in this context, the need to increase the resources for long-term support and capacity building when engaging vulnerable volunteers;

4. **Notes** that the last publicly available ESC annual report refers to the 2018-2019 period; **recalls** the importance of data collection and reporting in order to assess and communicate the impact of the programme; **encourages** the Commission to publish annual reports for the current programme, including but not limited to, gender-disaggregated data on participants and the types of organisations engaging with the programme, also with a view to assessing its inclusivity;

6. **Is concerned about the lengthy volunteer selection procedure, in particular with regard to waiting times for mandatory in-person training, which could lead to candidates dropping out and losing interest; stresses that volunteers should be able to complete their mandatory training at the beginning of their deployment so that they can become operational faster; underlines, however, that the selection procedure must be carried out in full respect for the principles of non-discrimination and equality; stresses the need to ensure the efficient selection, training and deployment of volunteers in order to respond faster to local needs and improve support to local organisations; underlines that humanitarian operations require an adequate learning and training phase tailored to the local context, which must be in line with humanitarian aid principles and linked to projects in which volunteers will be involved to the benefit of both volunteers and hosting organisations; emphasises, in this context, the value of local staff and volunteers to ensure the continuity of the work in the organisations; insists that humanitarian volunteers should not replace or duplicate the work of national staff in host organisations or carry out roles that could be filled by local volunteers, but rather strengthen the work of national staff and local volunteers instead;**

7. **Recognises the need to carefully and properly check the organisations taking part in the programme, both for the safety of participants and the provision of quality skills training; calls on the Commission to allow organisations which were holders of a label certificate under the EU Aid Volunteers initiative, and organisations which are signatories to a framework partnership agreement (FPA) between NGOs and the Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations to benefit from a simplified procedure for obtaining the Quality Label required by the new programme; takes note of the complexity of the Quality Label application process, in particular for the humanitarian strand and for organisations not familiar with EU funding programmes; underlines the need to facilitate the administrative procedures, in particular for smaller organisations and organisations that have not yet dealt with European programmes; calls on the Commission to issue further detailed guidance and technical assistance for applicants, in order to avoid discouraging organisations from engaging with the programme;**

