



2023/2018(INI)

25.9.2023

OPINION

of the Committee on Development

for the Committee on Culture and Education

on the implementation of the current European Solidarity Corps 2021-2027
(2023/2018(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion (*): Beata Kempa

(*) Associated committee – Rule 57 of the Rules of Procedure

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Development calls on the Committee on Culture and Education, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps, the humanitarian strand of the European Solidarity Corps (ESC), offers young people opportunities to gain and develop skills while fostering innovation, resilience, solidarity and livelihoods across societies globally; whereas principled humanitarianism underpins humanitarian volunteering;
- B. whereas the implementation of the ESC humanitarian strand is still in an early stage, with the first deployments expected in June 2023, which means it can only be partially assessed;
 - 1. Emphasises the importance of volunteering in humanitarian aid operations in promoting European values, along with the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, the ‘do no harm’ approach and based on the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, which provides the framework for EU responses to humanitarian crises; recalls that, as defined in the Grand Bargain, EU volunteering programmes in humanitarian contexts must work in line with the localisation agenda;
 - 2. Welcomes the improvements in comparison with the EU Aid Volunteers initiative, particularly on simplified financial reporting and the duration of the projects available;
 - 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;

5. Calls on the Commission to maintain the importance of adequate training, security and protection of volunteers, which should be subject to regular information sharing and risk assessment, particularly in areas considered to be unstable;
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;
8. Notes that most applicants are between 19 and 23 years old; is of the opinion that the age limit should be removed to allow more experienced candidates with proven skills and experience in the field of humanitarian aid to participate without significantly affecting youth engagement in humanitarian operations; insists that the initiative should be accessible for any EU citizen or long-term resident of 18 years or over; invites the Commission to re-evaluate the age limit in this regard during the interim evaluation of the programme;
9. Notes that around two thirds of the selected projects for 2023 are development-centred; calls for a more balanced humanitarian-centred approach for future selections; calls on the Commission to consider the possibility of revising the regulation to allow

volunteering in safe zones of conflict-affected countries, subject to clear security and safety protocols, appropriate training, background checks or other measures with a view to ensuring volunteers' safety and the fulfilment of the duty of care for volunteers during all stages of the volunteering activity; insists that the deployment of volunteers be focused on pre-disaster preparedness and post-disaster recovery settings, where the conditions are more favourable for access and impact without the risk of negatively affecting the support offered by regular humanitarian staff to the affected populations.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	20.9.2023
Result of final vote	+ : 17 - : 2 0 : 0
Members present for the final vote	Hildegard Bentele, Stéphane Bijoux, Dominique Bilde, Christophe Clergeau, Ryszard Czarnecki, Mónica Silvana González, György Hölvényi, Rasa Juknevičienė, Karsten Lucke, Erik Marquardt, Janina Ochojska, Michèle Rivasi, Miguel Urbán Crespo, Bernhard Zimniok
Substitutes present for the final vote	Frances Fitzgerald, Marlene Mortler, Patrizia Toia, Carlos Zorrinho
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Róza Thun und Hohenstein

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

17	+
ECR	Ryszard Czarnecki
PPE	Hildegard Bentele, Frances Fitzgerald, György Hölvényi, Rasa Juknevičienė, Marlene Mortler, Janina Ochojska
Renew	Stéphane Bijoux, Róza Thun und Hohenstein
S&D	Christophe Clergeau, Mónica Silvana González, Karsten Lucke, Patrizia Toia, Carlos Zorrinho
The Left	Miguel Urbán Crespo
Verts/ALE	Erik Marquardt, Michèle Rivasi

2	-
ID	Dominique Bilde, Bernhard Zimniok

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention