

**Question for written answer E-6056/2010
to the Council**
Rule 117
Christophe Béchu (PPE)

Subject: Harnessing the potential of young Europeans: the European civilian service

While the Erasmus Programme enables many Europeans to increase their awareness of the European Union and steep themselves in the riches of different cultures, there are still too few young people participating in it. There can be many reasons for this: either their studies do not allow, or they do not have the financial means (despite help in the form of grants), or they do not speak any other language sufficiently well to follow courses abroad for a whole semester.

There is, however, a need for Europe among the young, and for them to live elsewhere, understand others and think along lines other than national ones. The EU has created a community of 450 million people, but is marked by its members' striking ignorance of one another.

It is essential to promote better communication with young people on the Union, and actual experience of living in a foreign country is one of the best vehicles for this.

The idea of a European civilian service (ECS) is attractive as it answers the question of how to enable the young to benefit from an enriching experience abroad.

The ECS responds to the needs of young people, but it must also meet an EU need beyond that of being a mere marketing communication tool. The idea should never be to promote EU funded 'holidays'.

There is a genuine need for an ECS, both at European level (civil corps and civil security corps) and at the various national levels.

What, therefore, is the Council's position on the initiative for a European civilian service?