

11/05/2017



## **JEF Europe calls for more involvement of local authorities in the implementation process of European Solidarity Corps.**

On the 7th of December 2016, the European Commission launched the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) - a new initiative aiming at improving opportunities for young people and promoting solidarity. The guiding principle of the ESC is to bring young people willing to contribute to societal challenges through volunteering work and organisations that support local communities and work for a more inclusive society together.

Two months later, the Commission launched a public consultation on the ESC, with a view to writing a legislative proposal to provide a dedicated legal base for the initiative. The consultation was directed at young people, youth workers and educators, youth organizations, public authorities and other stakeholders to further strengthen the recently launched ESC. The consultations were rounded up by the ESC Stakeholders Forum, which took place on the 12th of April and brought together MEPs, youth organisations, representatives of national Erasmus+ agencies, employers and trade union representatives, and alumni volunteers. Taking into account the results of the consultations, the European Commission will adopt a legal proposal consolidating ESC on the 24th of May.

As a part of LADDER consortium ('Local Authorities as Drivers for Development Education and Raising awareness'), the non-partisan youth NGO Young European Federalists [JEF] Europe welcomes the initiative of the ESC, as it creates opportunities for young people to volunteer in the field of sustainable development, and contributes to the awareness-raising efforts promoting development issues around the continent. In line with what JEF Europe strives for, youth participation and inclusive, participatory and transparent policy-making processes, we supported active participation of youth organizations in the consultation process.

Although the official consultation process is over, JEF Europe calls on greater involvement of local authorities in the implementation process of the European Solidarity Corps. Decision-makers at the local level are uniquely well-placed to engage citizens, and especially young people, in development initiatives. Thanks to their proximity to pressing social issues, local authorities have the knowledge and the experience of the specific, local, supra-local or regional characteristics of these issues. As they are competent in most of youth-related topics, like education, youth employment, social inclusion, volunteering, etc., those key actors are in the best position to raise awareness among young people and promote solidarity on a local level. Furthermore, they have a duty and a responsibility towards larger democratic units, regions, states, and continents to foster democracy and solidarity from the bottom up.



Local authorities are the institutions that can benefit the most from the correct implementation of the ESC initiative as they will first observe the impacts of the ESC volunteering activities on their local communities. That is why, although we welcome initiatives like the European Solidarity Corps that are coming from the top level of decision-making as contributions to the discussion over youth issues in Europe, we believe that the implementation should take place the other way around, namely, at a grass-roots level in close cooperation with local authorities and local sections of youth organizations.

Local and regional actors have a great stake in claiming ownership on the shaping of this initiative. Many questions are left unanswered at this stage, even before the implementation phase begins. Therefore, they should orient the Commission on the remaining questions such as how to avoid unnecessary red tape for young people, youth organisations and civil society organisations, how to design a simple administrative system, how to combine the two strands of the ESC (volunteering and occupational) and how to evaluate the quality of the ESC activities. Local youth organisations and local authorities in charge of youth policies have accumulated experience in the fields of volunteer management and community development and thus, represent an essential input for the success of the ESC.

Hence, we call on local authorities to join the discussion, get active and make their voices heard in the process of creating a legal framework for the European Solidarity Corps and its further implementation.

Should you wish to engage in the implementation process of the European Solidarity Corps, please contact JEF Europe directly.

