

Engage youth in health

EUREGHA'S POSITION PAPER ON
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

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CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Policy recommendations/ Suggestions to the questions:	3
1. What conditions will need to be fulfilled, in your view, to make the European Solidarity Corps a success? What would be the pitfalls to be avoided? How to make the use of the Corps attractive for potential beneficiaries of EU funded projects?.....	3
2. How should the Corps be designed to make a real difference and offer added-value to your work? What needs to be taken into account to avoid overlap and duplication in relation to existing programmes?.....	3
3. What kind of tasks (both high-skill and generalist) would you envisage for the future participants in the Corps? How could the Solidarity Corps make a real difference for young people and equip them with the skills and experience that can be useful on the labour market? What kind of placement would you consider to be suited best?	4
4. Example tasks.....	5

INTRODUCTION

This position paper presents EUREGHA's recommendations on how to make the health area more visible in the European Solidarity Corps and how to encourage the young(er) generation to be active in health-related fields.

EUREGHA is a network of local and regional health authorities. Today, EUREGHA represents 16 regional and local health authorities across Europe. EUREGHA's vision is to ensure that the local and regional perspective is represented in EU health policy. Our members commit to work towards strengthening the voice of local and regional authorities at EU level.

EUREGHA welcomes the establishment of a European Solidarity Corps and sees a potential double gain in the initiative of achieving better health outcomes, through the concrete activities of the Solidarity Corps in health areas and through the involvement of the young generation in meaningful activities.

The challenges involved with coping with an ageing population and new demands on health- and social care services are tangible and put high demands on service provision in regional and local health authorities across Europe. Moreover, many of the areas where staff reinforcement would be needed are areas which do not require trained personnel.

With a view to the health effects of the participating members of the Solidarity Corps, it is important to note that health should not be considered as a solitary target, but rather as a prerequisite for a fulfilling life. Consequently, health solidarity could imply striving for equality in capabilities to cope with life events and being capable to participate in society. There is a clear relation between youth unemployment and ill health, especially mental health, and it has proven important with models of multicompetent teams for a successful establishment in the labour market. Youth unemployment is often a symptom of other factors of life, such as mental health or economic difficulties.

The following policy recommendations have been put forward by EUREGHA members and collated by the Secretariat.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS/ SUGGESTIONS TO THE QUESTIONS:

1. WHAT CONDITIONS WILL NEED TO BE FULFILLED, IN YOUR VIEW, TO MAKE THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS A SUCCESS? WHAT WOULD BE THE PITFALLS TO BE AVOIDED? HOW TO MAKE THE USE OF THE CORPS ATTRACTIVE FOR POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES OF EU FUNDED PROJECTS?

Inclusiveness should be an overarching theme in the establishment of the Corps and its activities. The target population (the young generation) should be actively involved in defining what topics are relevant and where they want to put their efforts.

Inclusiveness should be considered also when putting together the Corps and efforts should be made to include groups with low potential on the labour market, people without a diploma, groups at risk of criminal behaviour etc.

It is important to award participants with a diploma/certificate after completed service to validate the experience.

2. HOW SHOULD THE CORPS BE DESIGNED TO MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE AND OFFER ADDED-VALUE TO YOUR WORK? WHAT NEEDS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT TO AVOID OVERLAP AND DUPLICATION IN RELATION TO EXISTING PROGRAMMES?

National contact points could be created where all national, regional and local health authorities, national and international NGOs, hospitals, schools, etc. could submit their interest to participate in the European Solidarity Corps initiative. This would be both a physical and digital network, that inspires and drives young people to achieve a positive change. Through this network, youngsters could choose the placement in any of the institutions willing to participate in the initiative.

The digital platform on the website could allow young people to express what they would find rewarding and interesting to work with in health. If the database does not have any offers matching interest of young people, after the expression of interest has been submitted,

the organisation point of Solidarity Corps in the country could search for opportunities where young people could express themselves and contribute to health and wellbeing of the population.

It would also be important to advertise the initiative through the National Health Ministries and Regional and Local Health Authorities to make not only young people aware of the existing opportunities but also the potential employers.

It is also necessary to involve all organisations currently working on health in the country, ask for their input and keep them informed about the developments in order to avoid overlaps and to reinforce their efforts to tackle particular issues. They could also include placement offers into the European Solidarity Corps database and participate in the discussions on the platform. Those existing organisations' primary role would be guiding young people on how could they engage with Solidarity Corps considering their background and interests.

In this programme, youngsters should be given the opportunity to volunteer on their own with professionals or form teams and help the institutions/organisations in groups. The digital communication will ease their communication and group formation.

The youngsters should be given the right of initiative not only to join existing institutions but also to create associations within the Solidarity Corps and carry out activities of their interest that are not yet present in their community/region/county.

Small groups of 'Health Ambassadors' could be created at schools, so that young people would get insights for their possible future pathway. In many schools' adolescents lack guidance for their future professional development and having the opportunity to experience life outside of the academic bubble before entering the university can be extremely valuable. This would also guarantee that adolescents have extracurricular activities and develop new interests, get more engaged with society.

3. WHAT KIND OF TASKS (BOTH HIGH-SKILL AND GENERALIST) WOULD YOU ENVISAGE FOR THE FUTURE PARTICIPANTS IN THE CORPS? HOW COULD THE SOLIDARITY CORPS MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND EQUIP THEM WITH THE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE THAT CAN BE USEFUL ON THE LABOUR MARKET? WHAT KIND OF PLACEMENT WOULD YOU CONSIDER TO BE SUITED BEST?

Some example tasks in the fields of health care, health promotion, elderly care and migrant health are outlines in the table below.

Another area where the European Solidarity Corps could provide added value is through disseminating and sharing results of concluded EU (pilot) projects in the health policy area. The Solidarity Corps could build on the results from pilot projects that have not been scaled up or continued due to lack of resources or capacity. Examples include "Together" or "My healthy family". Where appropriate, the Solidarity Corps could continue and build on the successful pilot projects on a voluntary basis to increase the possibility of anchoring the results in policy making.

4. EXAMPLE TASKS

Task	Explanation	Managing authority	Placement
Health care			
Nursing/care assistant	<i>Assist in the daily activities of nursing or care assistants to alleviate staffing problems. A first entry point to the nurse profession. Win-win for both health centres, youth corps, and patients.</i>	Regional authority	Hospitals, primary care centres
Public health/health promotion			
Health promoter	<i>Youth ambassadors promote healthy living habits to the young. This could be a powerful tool in reaching out to school children and teaching the importance of lifestyle choices in leading a successful and fulfilling life.</i>	Municipal authority/ third sector	Schools, youth centres, youth associations
Elderly care			
Support in elderly care	<i>Inter-generational support. The youth corps would assist in the care of elderly while constituting a valuable contact and social connection to avoid isolation and loneliness and support active and healthy ageing.</i>	Municipal authority	Elderly care centres, residencies
Migrant health/well being			
Buddy system	<i>To reach out to newly arrived migrants and refugees in order to introduce them to their new surroundings and creating social bonds and connections to enhance cultural understandings. One underlining objective is to avert mental health problems associated with stress.</i>	Municipal authority	Civil society/NGO's

EUREGHA is the reference network for European Regional and Local Health Authorities. We bring together a critical mass of knowledge and expertise and encourage diversity with the purpose of helping our members to improve the efficiency and quality of health systems and services in Europe.

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