

“Exciting world of European Solidarity Corps for Municipalities!” 10 steps guide to more solidarity

Municipality for the people and people for the municipality! In practice, this actually means highlighting and upgrading solidarity and all the added value of good practices, individual and group contributions and all other activities that are bringing the municipality closer to the people and create meaningful connections between them. After all, our common interest is to create the conditions for activities and projects that people need and want.

European Solidarity Corps (ESC) programme addresses precisely this! Municipalities are focal points of local communities and offer everyone opportunities to realize their potential! With the involvement in European Solidarity Corps municipalities can create a variety of opportunities and brings fresh energy to towns and cities with volunteers or participants in jobs and traineeships.

How?

European Solidarity Corps programme has spread the possibilities and upgraded European Voluntary service into different possibilities for a variety of stakeholders. That's right, today the service provides added values in all areas of society, with all generations.

How does it sound having a volunteer organizing an international book club at a local library?

Want fresh ideas in your local museum?

You find that would be helpful to step into internationalisation of your local primary and secondary schools?

Would you like to use the potential of connecting different generations and cultures and consequently enable the elderly in your municipality to be more connected?

Is your goal to create conditions in the municipality that will address all generations, connect different cultures and consequently add value to the lives of individuals and society as a whole?

The goal is right & the path is known!

How to get there?

Step 1

It always starts with the Programme guide and a presentation of the programme. What is European Solidarity Corps? What does it offer? Do we need a quality label? Start [here](#).

Step 2

Be strategic and do a good research! Where do you need volunteers? What should happen in the community and where could volunteers support you? Make a [SWOT](#) analysis and think about how your municipality could benefit from EU idea of solidarity.

Step 3

Map your main stakeholders that you can approach when planning a project in your municipality. You should establish the department for youth and culture or something similar and a quick tip: make sure the mayor understands your intentions and supports you. Check the municipality of [Kerava](#) for inspiration.

Step 4

We can all benefit from networking. Who can help you to start? Could there be potential partners in your local community to help you start the process? Maybe local NGO's already host ESC volunteers; it's worth to do some research. [NA in your country](#) is as well always there to support you with first steps. They can also be great source for mentoring.

Step 5

Need some inspiration? There is a great & effective solution for that too. Changemakers toolkit of Europe Goes Local – worth reading and having a check. [Here](#). But be warned! – lots of new ideas can pop up.

Step 6

The municipality is actually a training ground to help encourage creativity and cooperation of all generations! Possibilities are endless. Think what could other administrations contribute to your project? Have you included interests of sports services, libraries, museums, schools, kindergartens, retirement homes, social services, planning departments, etc? Choices are numerous, as long as you keep the importance of building the [solidarity](#) in your community through your projects.

Step 7

Create a project team. With the team, mission of getting the Quality label and starting projects is always much easier. Think together about the values, which values are important for your municipality, which do you want to promote and how will they be reflected in the projects? Make a good plan, with a good plan everything is much easier.

Step 8

If you don't know, ask!

Create a participatory action and ask what do young people think about ESC? What do young people see that could be done by the volunteers in the local community, could this support peer learning and encourage more inspiring actions in local communities?

Step 9

Be aware that projects in the framework of ESC are bring societal change & that the impact they have had in this programme period is enormous. New walking paths, new dance classes, freshly painted walls, new culinary knowledge about Cyprus and Moldova, lots of inspiration and kind hugs, ... Volunteering is making a change and also your local community will be changed because of it. We promise it will be a positive change! All that is left for you is to write and submit your project proposal.

Step 10

You are almost there. You got to know the programme, received the Quality label and submitted your project. If (or better to say when) your project will be accepted all you need to do is to find your volunteers and start planning your joint adventure that will help you create a better society. With all 10 steps your community will be all about solidarity, common values, intercultural dialogue, happy citizens and a lot more inclusive environment – and this is what we aim for, isn't it?

Remember: Inclusion is one of the main aims of the programme, so the more diverse the programmes are and the more you manage to address the needs of vulnerable groups, the better off you will be towards an inclusive municipality and the success of your project! Don't forget that all of the projects accepted in the European Solidarity Corps get a grant that co-finances costs related to hosting of volunteers and organizing project activities.

The start is always hard, we get that. But as you know, magic always happens out of your comfort zone, so check the web, ask around, search for best practices and call people, who have practical experience.

The network of organisations that have experiences in Europe is huge, so use the potential, and learn from them. Keep in mind, that nothing can be perfect, but the colours that volunteers can bring to the local communities are so shiny and bright, that all of the effort is worth it. And never forget, that there is a National agency in your country, who can always support you and help you at your beginning. Welcome in our wonderful world of European Solidarity Corps!