

CO-CREATING ERASMUS+ AND THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

28 & 29 JANUARY 2020, ULB CAMPUS SOLBOSCH BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

Breakout session Title: C7 - When solidarity crosses oceans

Summary of the discussion

The session focused on the new humanitarian aid strand, which the European Commission has included in its proposal as part of the European Solidarity Corps Programme 2021-2027, currently in design and preparation phase. A general presentation of the Commission proposal for the new programme was delivered to the participants (quite a heterogeneous group composed by National agencies, National Authorities, beneficiaries and students). The presentation offered the opportunity to clarify issues related to the Programme structure and objectives and to collect the feedback of those few organisations already experienced in the humanitarian aid field and in particular active under EU Aid Volunteers (EUAV) initiative. The group reflected together on the concept of solidarity, in particular applied to the humanitarian aid field, before splitting into 4 groups and discussing on two main topics: the challenges to be expected when implementing volunteering projects in humanitarian aid field and how to ensure long-term impact on participants, organisations and local communities.

Main outcomes/ operational conclusions of the session

The group identified several important challenges in the implementation of volunteering projects in the humanitarian aid field, such as ensuring safety and security of volunteers, offering a win-win situation (i.e. making sure that the volunteers have a learning experience while participating in humanitarian aid deployment activities), involving and training the local communities avoiding the false perception of volunteers as job competitors. On the organisational side, the (currently under EUAV) lengthy procedures and long waiting time for volunteers before deployment are also perceived as obstacles. The group agreed on the need for clear definitions of the actions, keeping in mind that different types of crisis require different measures. It was clarified that the humanitarian aid strand will focus on post-crisis implementation context. The sustainable aspect of the projects was also mentioned, in line with the EU's Green Deal priorities. Strong preparatory actions (trainings, visits, online contacts) and a stable relationship between host and support organisations are key for a successful deployment. The group highlighted that making the link with development policies and actors at local level is also important to maximise the impact. The representatives of organisations active under EUAV also stressed that DG ECHO know-how and good practices should be preserved.

Among the issues to be further explored, the role to be played by National Agencies and SALTOs was discussed in relation to this strand (which would be centrally managed by the EACEA), as well as the possibility of allowing "humanitarian aid strand-like" deployments in post-crisis situations also in Europe. The measures to be taken to ensure that the new strand is inclusive and represents an opportunity for young people with fewer opportunities need further reflection. There was a general agreement on the need to train the volunteers in order to ensure the respect of the socio-cultural reality and situation in the host country. Finally, the discussion around the age limit (30 years old), currently subject to the ongoing negotiations, was raised once again.