

17 March 2024



**Movimento
Europeo**
Italia



**Appeal to political forces, and candidates,
for the European elections in June 2024
"Volunteering and Civil Service in Europe"**

For the Europe of solidarity, active citizenship, and peace.

In view of the European elections in June 2024, we launch an appeal to all political forces and candidates for the European elections in June 2024 to commit themselves in the next European legislature:

- **to enhance, expand and support the EU Programme "European Solidarity Corps";**
- **to work to promote National Civil Services in all EU countries, in the spirit of the Universal Civil Service (already operating in Italy), and in the perspective of a single European Civil Service.**

These European elections are taking place against a backdrop dominated by the clash of weapons at the borders of the EU, by the global challenges of the climate, technological, and energy transition, as well as by migrations that have become a structural phenomenon, linked to the growing inequalities between the North and South of the world, to climate emergency, but also to the growth in the number of dictatorial, autocratic, and libertarian regimes.

It is now understood with greater clarity and awareness, following the experience of the pandemic and because of the ongoing conflicts, that in the next legislature **the European Union**, if it wants to play a role as a global player, strong in its democratic and social model, as well as in its overall economic weight, must relaunch its political project by building on the experience of pooling debt for strategic investments and sustainable development.

- A. Considering that on 24 October 2023, as transnational European movements of secular and religious inspiration, we held a meeting in Brussels, in the European Parliament building, on "Volunteering and Civil Service in Europe", in the presence of MEPs from different political groups involved in the drafting of the report on the European Solidarity Corps;
- Representatives of the Parliament and the Commission, the Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union, European volunteer networks, the Youth Forum, associations, and testimonies of civil service and CES (European Solidarity Corps). all agreed that "volunteering and civil service" are a "relevant part of the soul of the continent";
 - We concluded the meeting by declaring our commitment to set up a coordination committee of the promoting movements, Movimento Europeo-Italia and New Humanity International Association of the Focolare Movement, to raise the awareness of European secular and religious associations to offer this opportunity to young people;
- B. Believing that it is increasingly important to strengthen democracy and the participation of the younger generations by expanding opportunities for civic education, solidarity-based European citizenship practices, dialogue and mutual intercultural understanding as necessary conditions for building a civilisation based on peace, solidarity and human rights;
- C. Recalling that Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union sets solidarity as one of the fundamental principles of the Union and Article 21(1) also refers to the principle of solidarity as one of the pillars of the Union's external action;
- D. Sharing the spirit and intent with which the **European Solidarity Corps** was created in 2016 in the EU, alongside the Erasmus Plus programme, the **European Solidarity Corps**, which became autonomous in 2021 and aims to strengthen the participation of young people and organisations in solidarity activities addressing social challenges and those related to humanitarian aid
- E. Considering that the European Solidarity Corps is a Programme that is inspired by and consolidates the 20 year-long experience of the European Voluntary Service and that, in a spirit of European cooperation, stands alongside the **National Voluntary and Civil Service Systems** , which, however, do not currently exist in all the Member States, thus depriving their young people of opportunities for growth and commitment; with a view to a **Single European Civil Service** to be implemented without dispersing the experience and specific features of the existing National Civil Services;
- F. Considering that in volunteering and community service young people start facing real challenges, working as a team (women and men learning to appreciate and

complement each other), developing transversal skills that are valuable in everyday life and in every professional field, but above all learning **the value of altruism and civic commitment**, the profound meaning of **solidarity** and the transition from individualism to **collective commitment**;

- G. Considering that today's global challenges call for ever greater intercultural understanding, the European Solidarity Corps and the various existing National Services offer young people the **opportunity to be at the forefront of building a better society**;
- H. Intending to give substance to the vision of the "**New European Humanism**" indicated by Pope Francis, which considers young people as protagonists, provided that "lets them grow through their handiwork, their intelligence and their abilities" (speech at the reception of the Charlemagne Prize, 6 May 2016);
- I. Assuming a commitment to help build the transition "moving from a liquid economy to a social economy", through the search for "new, more inclusive and equitable economic models, aimed not at serving the few, but at benefiting ordinary people and society as a whole" (from the speech quoted in H).

**In line with the Recommendation of the European Parliament (21/11/2023)
on the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps (ESC)**

WE INDICATE the following ten objectives and ASK

- **the political forces to include them in their electoral programmes for the next European elections;**
 - **the candidates and candidates for the European Parliament to take them on as commitments for the next legislature;**
- 1) to promote the recognition of volunteering and civic service experience and activities as a "**right of European citizenship**", giving concrete meaning to the proclamation of the European Year of Volunteering in 2024 (inaugurated on 3 February in Trento by the President of the Italian Republic Sergio Mattarella, who called volunteers "a precious resource" of the European Union)
 - 2) to propose to the European Commission to prepare a **Green Paper** comparing the **different national legal and regulatory systems** of volunteering and civic service in order to support their comparability, convergence and dissemination at European level;
 - 3) to call on Member States and National Youth Agencies to promote better **cooperation, synergies and exchange of experiences** between ESC, civic service, volunteering and youth mobility programmes such as Erasmus plus;

- 4) to encourage *mutual recognition between Member States of the "legal status of volunteer"* and of formal and informal competences acquired both in the Europass and in the scores of competitions for access to work;
- 5) to put *European values and civic education* (see European Parliament Resolution of 6/4/22) at the heart of the ESC's activities and experience, together with training and skills development;
- 6) to ensure that *in all MS young people and associations can freely experience voluntary work and solidarity* and that these are recognised and supported by the institutions, including by providing legal assistance and cooperation;
- 7) to make *the ESC experience increasingly accessible to disadvantaged young people*;
- 8) to support the recommendation of the European Parliament for "the establishment of a *European Civil Peace Corps*, enhancing the experiences already in place in some member countries, (such as e.g. the ongoing experiences in Ukraine and the experimentation started in Italy since 2017 on Civil Peace Corps), bringing together the competences of institutional and non-institutional actors in the field of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peaceful conflict reconciliation";
- 9) *to double the ESC budget (from 1,030 to at least 2 billion)* in the next seven years of financial programming, allowing to significantly expand the number of 270 thousand participants expected until 2027;
- 10) to *adhere to this appeal and commit to having it signed in all the countries of the Union*, involving European associations and networks of secular and religious inspiration of different confessions, including "**Together for Europe**", a network of more than three hundred associations - Catholics, Lutherans, Anglicans, Orthodox - which for more than 20 years have met annually in a different European country to contribute to the unity of a Europe that is at the service of the whole world. world."

The Organizing Committee:

European Movement Italy (www.movimentoeuropeo.it)

New Humanity International Association (www.new-humanity.org/en/)

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