

# DISSEMINATING NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN CIVIC SERVICE ALL ACROSS EUROPE : CASE STUDIES



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# FOREWORD

A successful experimentation of an innovative “European Civic Service Scheme”, conducted by the CSCE and Unis-Cité since 2020, is at the origin of this European cooperation.

Born in 1994, Unis Cité is the pioneer and youth service expert organisation that inspired the French National Civic Service programme launched in 2010 by the government. **This programme now enrolls about 90,000 young people per year. The CSCE was launched in 2018 to promote the idea of a global and universal development of youth service in Europe.**

The two associations jointly carried out the experimentation, which consisted in a unique mechanism entwining national civic service schemes and the European Solidarity Corps. Its aims were both to give more young people access to European mobility and to experiment an “Erasmus in Youth Service” enabling young people to do a voluntary service for a few months in their own country, and for some other months in a different European country.

The initiative inspired one of the major announcements of the French Presidency of the Council of the Union (January-July 2022). The French President, Emmanuel Macron, announced the intention to work towards the creation of a “European Civic Service”: this would be the second pillar of European mobility alongside Erasmus, and would enable all young Europeans to experience a unique commitment to citizenship and solidarity through long-term service (at least 6 months).

All the partners of this European coalition are convinced that such a “European Civic Service” would respond to our societies’ need to bring citizens together and restore a sense of shared belonging in Europe, through a concrete, grassroots experience for the youth, based on encounters between Europeans and solidarity action.

We are guided by the ambition of reaching a larger number of young people with a specific focus on inclusion. This is why our cooperation and this final guide aim to show how to disseminate and promote national civic service programmes and long-term civic engagement schemes for the youth in Europe as well as widen the existing opportunities for mobility through civic engagement (such as the European Solidarity Corps).

We, therefore, hope that this reading will encourage and equip you with both elements of vision and methodology and examples to experiment and promote such an ambition.



**Marie Trelu-Kane,**  
**President and co-Founder of Unis Cité**

*UnisCité*

## WORD OF THE PROJECT COORDINATOR:



**Benjamin SIBILLE, Founder and CEO  
of the Collectif pour un Service  
Civique Européen (SCE)**



“This document consists a report of the efforts we all led, through the Network of the Collective for European Civic Service, and more especially partners within this Erasmus Key Action 2 Cooperation “European Grand Tour” to help disseminating fully developed national civic service in more Member States. It provides such example, applied in real life by partners through NGO level pilot scheme that should be transformed in actual national policies. It inspires also by reflecting beyond what was tested on what could be eventually.

### **What is civic service? what do we try to encourage and achieve?**

Invented in Germany and Austria after World War 2, as a mandatory alternative to military draft, civic service has since evolved and could be described as:

- a full time (nearing the legal full time work schedule)
- long term (at least several month, and usually minimum 6 months, to actual gain from the experience) commitment of
- general interest (consisting in missions usually attributed to the State, Public Administration and NGOs, and who have a non-monetary aim, but can be described as public goods)
- fully supported by the State (who stipend, or at least provide in kind to the basic needs of both the youth and hosting organization in order to make such endeavor possible)
- with a general goal of serving society but also develop oneself (which implies the deployment of pedagogical tools and trainings and a curriculum enabling the gains of skills).

Usually but not necessarily it is restricted by age limit to the youth, and based on a purely voluntary basis, in order to ensure the most efficiency in missions.

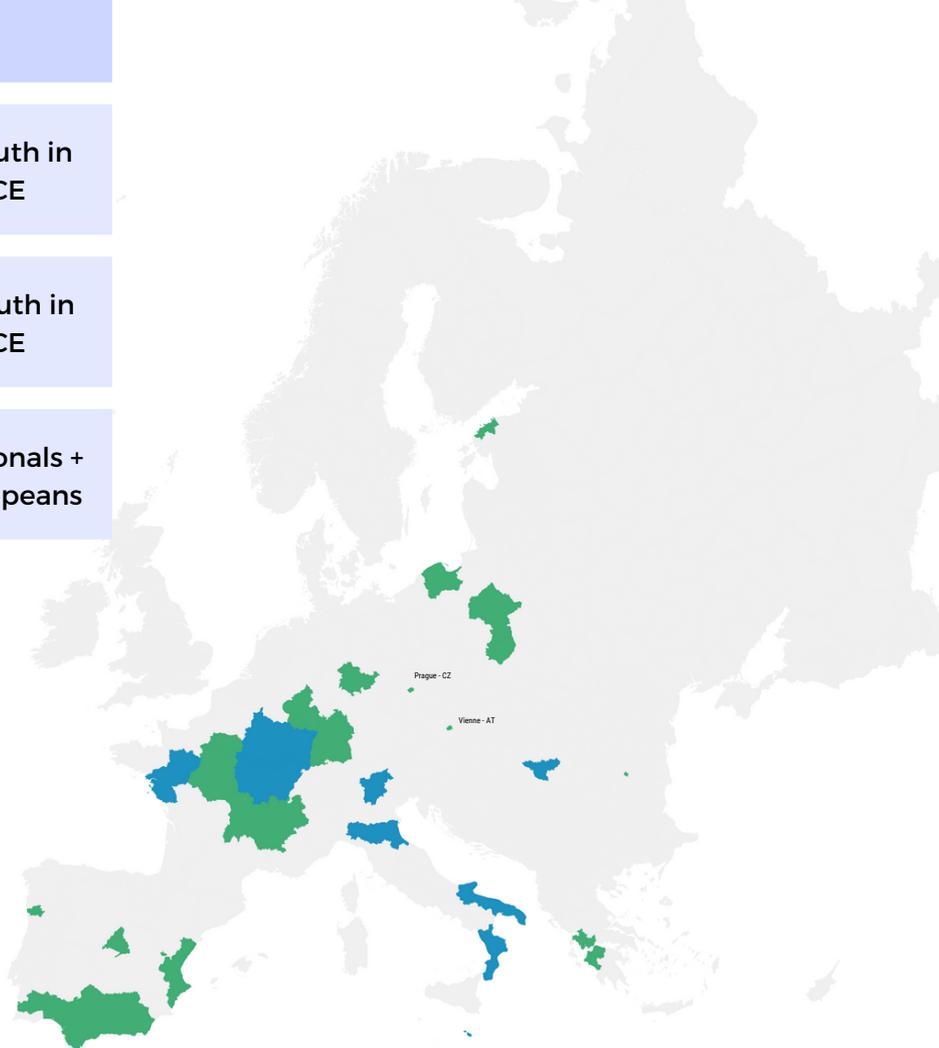
**But beyond those specifics, Civic Service is above all a State of Mind at societal level: the one which trust the Youth to make Tomorrow better and consecutively invest in it, the one which trust Citizens to strengthen Democracy through their active engagement: a true European ideal.**

# Yearly deployment by the end of the project: testing national volunteering service where it doesn't exist and combine it in a national experience where it does: the European Civic Service Model (SCE)

Country	Promotions	Total of youth	Country	Promotions	Total of youth
France	7 promotions	100 youth in SCE	Czech republic	PILOT 1 promotion	4 nationals + 4 europeans
Italy	3 promotions	35 youth in SCE	Portugal	PILOT 2 promotions	4 nationals + 4 europeans
Germany (planned)	4 promotions	58 youth in SCE	Greece	1 promotion	50 youth in civic service
Malta	1 promotion - 1 institution LEAD in ESC	16 youth in SCE	Estonia (planned)	PILOT 1 promotion	10 nationals + 10 europeans
Austria	1 promotion	10 youth in SCE			
Romania	2 promotions	28 youth in SCE			
Poland	PILOT 3 promotions	6 nationals + 6 europeans			

**A TOTAL OF 345 YOUNGSTERS FOR 2023-2024**

- SCE deployed (full scheme or pilot tested)
  - France, Italy, Malta, Romania, Greece and Austria
- Upcoming full SCE promotions
  - Poland, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Estonia and Czech Republic



# The European Civic Service, a synergy Model : integrating national and European experiences for inclusion and full cultural immersion

- **6 months of civic service, fully supported by national funds, in their own country**, to live and commit to a team of young people from all over Europe (50% from their own country, 50% mobile from another European country).
- **Then 6 to 12 months of European citizenship mobility in the country of Europe their choice**, as part of the European Solidarity Corps or Civic Service.

**ALL THE VOLUNTEERS ARE COMBINED IN A MIXED GROUP TO CONDUCT MISSIONS ALL TOGETHER, AND START IN THEIR COUNTRY, BEFORE CONTINUING IN ANOTHER**

**Through this project, is our aim not only to disseminate national volunteering models, but also foster their cooperation to leverage them as an entry point for European mobility**



10 Nationals

USUALLY IN NATIONAL



10 Europeans

USUALLY IN

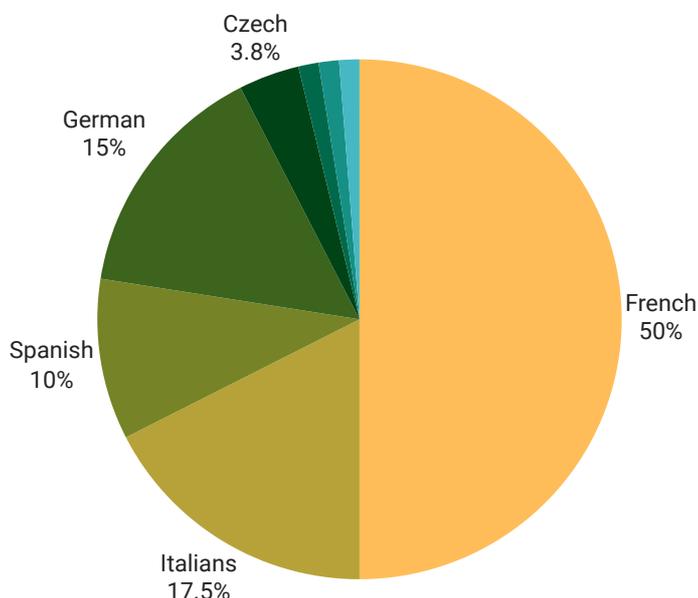


**The European Civic Service is thus a replicable model for meeting two challenges EU Member States face: to reach 50% of young people in European mobility, and to make it inclusive.**

**It usually associate national volunteering schemes AND/OR the European Solidarity Corps**

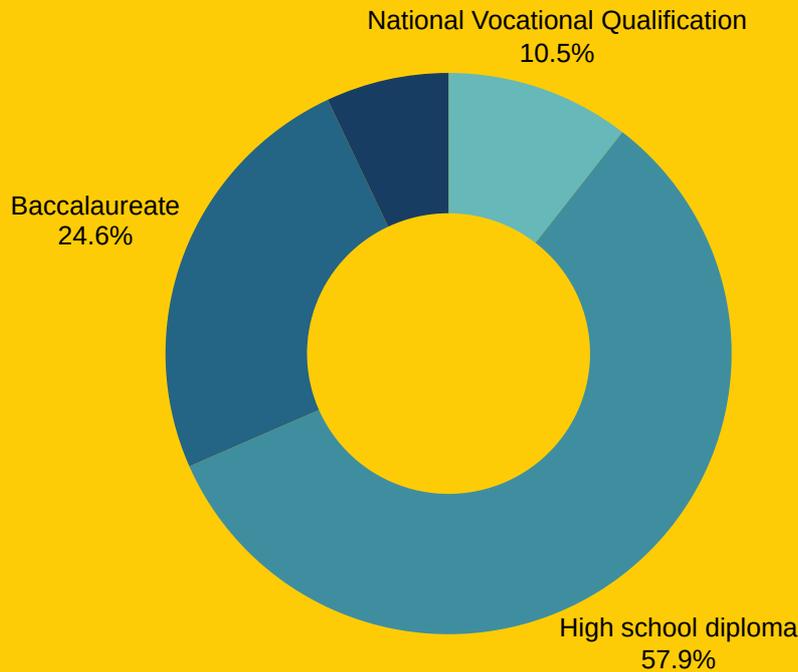
Current composition of European civic service volunteers (principle of double experience and tandem)

Years 2020 à 2023

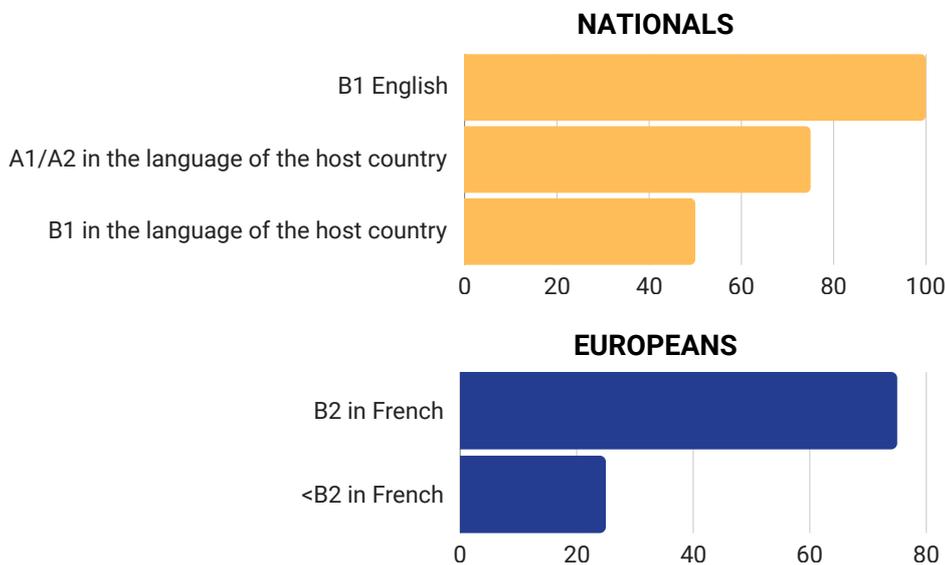


# The European Civic Service Model: Major Successes regarding Inclusion, Insertion and Cultural openness

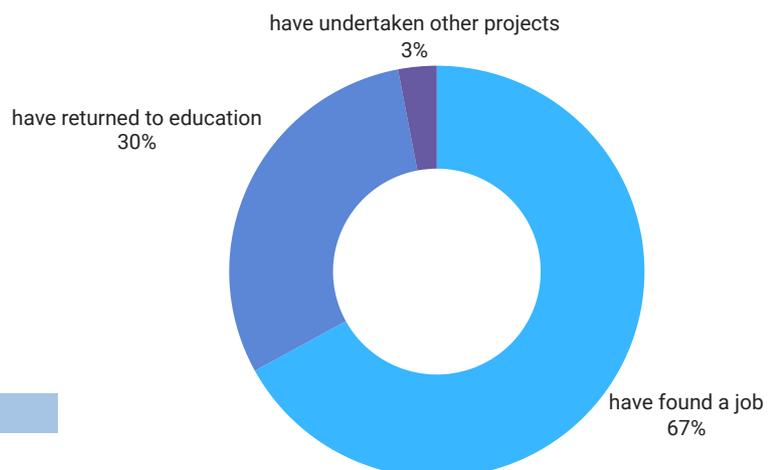
**WE MANAGE TO SUSTAIN AN INCREASED LEVEL OF INCLUSION (BETWEEN 25% AND 50% FOR A REGULAR ESC AGAINST 70% FOR US)**



## ALL VOLUNTEERS FINISH THEIR WHOLE EXPERIENCE WITH SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVES ON LANGUAGES SKILLS



### Integration of young Europeans after their ECS



**90% of Youth declare feeling "Europeans" after the program (against 30% at beginning)**

**We have up to now only 6% drop out (always in the 3 initial weeks) and 97% of Youth completing the program immediately transition towards work or studies**

# PRESENTATION OF THIS REPORT ON DISSEMINATING CIVIC SERVICE ACROSS EUROPE

- This comprehensive guide is readily accessible to all organizations aspiring to embark on and nurture projects similar to civic engagement and long-term youth volunteering. It serves as an invaluable resource for those seeking to experiment and advance the noble cause of civic engagement among young individuals.
- The primary objective of this guide is to bolster the promotion and implementation of civic engagement initiatives at the national level, focusing particularly on fostering long-term volunteer programs for youth in Member States.
- The guide draws upon a wealth of knowledge obtained from successful initiatives in **France, Italy, Germany, Malta, and nascent pilot we initiated through this cooperation in Czech Republic, Estonia, Romania and Greece** effectively compiling a repository of valuable information and innovative ideas.
- For countries where such programs are yet to be established, Unis-Cité has taken the proactive step of developing a globally applicable methodology. This meticulously crafted methodology not only defines highly effective strategies for initiating and nurturing programs akin to civic service but also formulates critical elements essential for building a robust legal framework. To disseminate this expertise, Unis-Cité with the support of the Collective for a European Civic Service organised and held an intensive training session in Paris in March 2023. The methodology was thoughtfully presented and generously shared during that gathering.

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*Grandir ensemble*

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# PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

## (BY UNIS-CITÉ)

The following questions are intended to be used as a guide for the reflection and elaboration process in order to define the framework for a civic engagement programme or “Youth service” in a new country (meaning a country where there is no established scheme yet).

### A. Overall strategy

#### A.1. Collect useful background information:

- How many young people are in your country? Which typology of young people (level of education, employment, major challenges)?
- What are the key social and environmental challenges on which young people in service could make a difference?

#### A.2. Define a vision for a national programme in your country

- What would be the objectives (qualitative and quantitative)? 100% of youth serving every year or only some target groups?
- Voluntary or compulsory?
- For how long do you think they should serve? Full-time/part-time?
- Completely unpaid or with a stipend (if so, which amount would be “fair”)? What about lodging and food for those young people serving?
- “Servicing” only or with trainings? What kind of trainings? Civic and professional trainings like Unis-Cité? Others? How many days of training per month of service?
- Would it be important to gather young people from diverse social or economic backgrounds during that service, or not a priority?
- On which specific social or environmental challenges should they be engaged in priority in your country? What kind of organizations should welcome those young people “in service”?...
- What would be the steps toward that vision?
- Where would you start (in which part of the country)? With how many young people? To do what? Organised and mentored by whom? Who would pay for that?
- What would be the 3-5 steps towards the long-term vision?

# PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

## (BY UNIS-CITÉ)

### B. Key legal and funding aspects

- Is there an existing legislation - legal framework allowing to give money/stipends to “volunteers” in your country?
- If not, how could your organisation provide the young volunteers with either a monthly stipend, or food and lodging?
- What would be the monthly allowance to give to the young volunteers if any (as a comparison, what is the minimum wage in your country? And the average?)? How much money would then be needed for the 1st to 5th year in your strategy, at least for stipends?
- Which type of coverage could be provided for the volunteers during their “service” in case of disease, accident, maternity...?
- What would be the additional costs? Training? Mentoring for the young people? Transportation? Overall management? Other costs? How much per young person would be needed for that?
- Who could be the public and private partners/sponsors to provide funds? For the initial phase, at the experimentation stage? And then in the long run?

### C. Marketing and influencing public policies

- How to attract the media and have them talk about those young people and the civic service scheme/project in your country? (Paper / TV / Social media)
- Would it be feasible to have young volunteers wear an identifiable outfit, like Unis-Cité's corps members?
- Which possible name for such a scheme/project? (Your organisation's project and the national one)  
Ex. Unis-Cité means “United for the Community” in French and “civic service” means serving the community as a civilian
- What do major political parties in your country think about:
- Expanding “national (and/or European) civic service” at a national level
- Financially supporting/funding it
- What would be the main arguments to convince them to have the State/Government invest a lot of money in a large national “civic service scheme”? (Ex. funding the stipends for the youth and part of the mentoring)
- What would be your major allies to convince them?

## A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Unis-Cité was founded in France in 1994 as a result of a meeting between a young American woman and three ESSEC Business School students who wanted to help contribute to the emergence of a society more committed, supportive and respectful of differences.

The association was born of the conviction that it should be part of the education of all our young people to devote a stage in their lives to serving the community while learning about teamwork and social diversity.

In **2007**, Unis-Cité made sure that “Universal Civic Service” was included in the political platforms of the main candidates in the presidential election. Nicolas Sarkozy was elected president and undertook to introduce a six-month civic service for everyone.

With the change of Government, yearly funding for Civic Service is frozen at 2,500 young people, including 900 at Unis-Cité, which had increased its workforce fivefold in two years. Unis-Cité carries on lobbying for the implementation of the President’s campaign promise.

In 2009, Unis-Cité launched its first programme with a national scope (in the environmental field) so as to illustrate the potential for large-scale impact of Civic Service on major causes.

Unis-Cité inspired and served as a model for the launch of Youth Civic Service in 2010 in France. It remains the leading Civic Service organisation; it’s recognised at both national and European level, as a benchmark in the field, having inspired the national volunteering framework in Belgium and the Netherlands.

With a presence in over 120 towns and cities in metropolitan France and La Reunion, Unis-Cité supervises more than 10,000 young people every year in the French national civic service scheme, in a “collective” civic service based on social diversity. The association promotes the idea that Civic Service should become “universal”, and part of the career path of all young people in France. It has no formal prerequisites for volunteers to join its teams.

Around 600 employees provide the organisation with all the skills and areas required by its size, including expertise in project management and teaching, particularly for young people with fewer opportunities (YwFO).

Unis-Cité sits on the administrative committee of the French Civic Service, and is systematically involved by the State for any initiative in this area.

- **Legislation:** The terms of article L. 120-1 of the national service code, introduced by the civic service law of March 10, 2010, explain that the purpose of civic service is to “strengthen national cohesion and social diversity by offering all volunteers the possibility of serving the values of the Republic and of engaging in a collective project by carrying out a mission of general interest with an approved legal entity”.
- Created in May 2010, in application of the law of 10 March 2010, the Civic Service Agency is a Public Interest Grouping (GIP) bringing together the French government and France Volontaires association. It has legal personality and financial autonomy. Placed under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education and Youth, the Agency is responsible for supervising and implementing the Civic Service in France.

## Milestones in the birth of the French civic service

**1995**

Unis-Cité pioneers a groundbreaking citizen service in the Île-de-France region, despite lacking legal status for young people and public funding. Inspired by “Americorps” and City Year experiences (12-month service), it offers a unique 9-month opportunity for young individuals to engage in community service within socially and racially diverse teams. The program provides financial compensation, citizenship training, and support for shaping their future projects, making it a transformative initiative in France.

**2005**

After the crisis in the “suburbs projects”, French President Jacques Chirac announced the implementation of voluntary civil service for 50,000 young people (with 10,000 of them joining associations following the Unis-Cité model). Unis-Cité’s influence led to the creation of the French “Voluntary Civil Service.”

**2010**

In 2010, France enacted the “Civic Service” law after consultations led by Martin Hirsch, allowing 6,000 young people, including 1,500 from Unis-Cité, to participate with State co-financing. Unis-Cité continued its “team model” and provided training and counselling for Civic Service expansion. The association developed national programs highlighting Civic Service’s significance in addressing crucial social and environmental matters.

**2023**

Unis-Cité advocates for universal access to National Youth Service, promoting diversity and civic training. They currently supervise over 10,000 young individuals yearly in “collective” civic service, setting a benchmark for innovation and expansion. Their ambitious vision aims to involve 350,000 young people per year by 2027, emphasizing quality and recognition.

## B. PURPOSE, FACTS, AND FIGURES

Unis-Cité (1994) aims to contribute to a more committed, united and inclusive society. It played a central role in inspiring and modelling the launch of Youth civic service in France (2010) and remains the leading organization in this field. Present in more than 120 municipalities in France and Reunion, it supports more than 10,000 young people each year in a “collective” civic service for social diversity.

It campaigns for Civic Service to become a universal element of the professional career of every young person in France and accepts volunteers without formal prerequisites. It actively engages with the administrative commission of the French Civic Service and frequently collaborates with the State on initiatives in this domain.

### PURPOSE

The aim of the Civic Service commitment is to mobilise young people to meet the challenges facing society. Open to all young people aged 16 to 25, and up to the age of 30 if they are disabled, it provides a framework for young people to work together and enjoy a unique human experience. To be a volunteer, all that counts is motivation and interpersonal skills.

Social diversity (levels of training, gender, age, social background, cultural origins and where they live) is one of the objectives assigned to Civic Service: all citizens must have equal access to Civic Service.

It's not an internship, volunteer work or a salaried job; it's a voluntary commitment for a minimum period of 6 months to a maximum of 12 months.

### FACTS

Civic Service is carried out exclusively by not-for-profit or public-sector organisations that request it: associations, foundations, local authorities, public establishments, government departments, trade unions, socially responsible companies, etc.

Civic Service is an encounter between a young person's desire for commitment and a project of general interest proposed by a host organisation. This unique experience is based on reciprocity and exchange. There is no hierarchical link between the organisation and the volunteer, but a shared desire to serve others through practical action. Taking on a young volunteer on a Civic Service scheme is reserved for organisations that work in the general interest and have been granted accreditation.

Approvals can be collective to cover all establishments or members of organisations with secondary establishments, or unions and federations of associations. Approved organisations can also make a volunteer available to non-approved organisations, as long as the latter meet the approval requirements.

Volunteers must be deployed on missions that are useful to society, helping to meet the needs of the population and local areas. Civic Service must be a way for volunteers to learn about citizenship and personal development.

## C. GUIDE - SERVICE CIVIQUE FRANCAIS

### 1 Profiles of the applicants

The Civic Service commitment mobilises young people aged 16 to 25 (30 if they are disabled) and offers a framework allowing young people to work together and live a unique human experience. Becoming a volunteer is based on motivation and interpersonal skills. Social diversity (levels of training, gender, social origin) is one of the objectives assigned to Civic Service.

### 2 Stakeholders

Civic Service is provided exclusively by non-profit or public organizations (associations, local authorities, administrations, unions). It is a meeting between the will of commitment of the young person and a project of general interest proposed by a host organization.

- Ministry of National Education and Youth
- National french agency: supervising and implementing the Civic Service in France.
- Non profit/public organisations
- Coordinators
- Volunteers

### 3 The fields of intervention and duration of the mission:

This is not an internship, voluntary work or even salaried employment, it is a voluntary commitment for a period of 6 to 12 months.

#### **Different areas that organisations can propose :**

- Solidarity
- Health
- Culture and leisure
- Education for all
- Sport
- Environment
- Remembrance and Citizenship
- International development and humanitarian action
- Emergency Response
- European citizenship

## 4

### Administration of the project :

- Missions entrusted to the volunteer must not have been carried out by an employee of the host organization **less than one year** before the signing of the Civic Service contract. Civic Service is a **relationship of coordination** and not of subordination.
- To encourage young people to get involved as citizens, Civic Service has a special status, set out in the National Service Code, and based on three founding principles: diversity, accessibility and non-substitution. The Labour Code therefore does not apply to civic service volunteers. The tasks entrusted to the volunteer must not have been carried out by an employee or public servant of the host organisation less than a year before the Civic Service contract was signed.
- As a voluntary and reciprocal commitment, Civic Service is a coordination relationship and not a subordination relationship: it must under no circumstances be necessary for the host organisation to carry out its mission, but must be at the service of its beneficiaries. Consequently, it cannot replace the tasks carried out by the organisation's employees, agents, trainees or volunteers and excludes any subordinate relationship between the volunteer and the host organisation.
- The status of Civic Service volunteer entitles the volunteer to an allowance paid by the State and additional support, in kind or in cash, paid by the host organisation, for a minimum total of **€609.96 per month**, holiday entitlement and a full social protection scheme financed by the State.
- It also allows young volunteers to benefit from **advantages** linked to the volunteering card (help with going on holiday, special offers on home insurance, supplementary health cover, prints and culture passes, transport passes, etc.).
- These areas of action are priorities for the nation: *Solidarity Health Culture and leisure Education for all Sport Environment Memory and Citizenship International development and humanitarian action Emergency European citizenship.*
- Each volunteer receives **Civic and Citizenship Training (CCT)**. Its first practical part aimed at democratizing the mastery of first aid gestures and gestures by providing "First Aid Level 1" training. A second theoretical part allowing participants to choose a topic for discussion from among the 34 proposals listed in the reference framework for citizen themes, to explore it individually and collectively, and to discuss the values associated with it and their translation into concrete actions. The 2 parts of the CCT are mandatory to obtain the Civic Service certificate issued by the State at the end of the mission.

## 5

## Financial framework

FRENCH STATE	COST PER YOUTH	HOSTING ORGANISATION	COST PER YOUTH
Monthly stipend	€496.94 /month	Living allowance	€113.02 /month in cash or in nature (meal voucher, travel pass...)
Social security and retirement contributions	€250 /month	Training and tutoring of the youth	HR and logistic costs
Tutoring of the youth (paid to the host organisation)	€100 /month	Support in professional integration	HR and logistic costs
Civic and citizenship training (paid to the host organisation)	€100 for the entire mission		
<b>Total cost for 8 months</b> (average duration of Civic Service in France)	<b>About 6.800€/youth</b>		

The State finances the monthly stipend and the contributions for social security and retirement. Through the **Civic Service Agency** it also supports the tutoring and compulsory training of the youth performed by the organisations. Host organisations provide the living allowance to the volunteers either in cash or in nature. They can decide to pay more to the volunteers. However, as the allowance is treated as a professional expense not subject to contributions, any increase in the amount must comply with the regulations on professional expenses when the payment is made in cash. If the payment in kind exceeds €107.58, the entire living allowance is reclassified as remuneration and subject to contributions.

In parallel, host organisations receive State aid of €100 per youth per month in link with the tutoring they ensure for the volunteers.

In total, a Civic Service volunteer receives **€609.96 net per month**, out of which 80% of which is paid by the French government.

## 6

### Training and monitoring

Besides, there are also **major national programmes**, which bring together different players around a common cause, such as school drop-outs, women's rights or support for people with disabilities. The framework of civic service remain the same, but gathering around those priority mission enable unlocking additional support to help the State meet national priorities.

Unis-Cité is the lead model of several of these national programmes.

In addition to daily action in the service of others and the general interest, Civic Service provides an opportunity to explore the challenges of citizenship.

Each volunteer receives **civic and citizenship training (CCT)** and supervision throughout their assignment. The CCT consists of 2 parts:

- a practical component aimed at democratising the mastery of first aid procedures and gestures through the provision of “Level 1 First Aid” training;
- a theoretical component enabling participants to choose a topic for discussion from among the 34 proposals listed in the reference framework of civic themes, to explore it individually and collectively, and to discuss the values associated with it and their translation into concrete actions.

The two parts of the CCT are mandatory in order to obtain the Civic Service certificate issued by the government at the end of the assignment.

# 7

## How to apply as an organization

### Checking eligible criteria

- **Respect** for the general interest.
- **Non-profit-making**: Only these organisations and legal entities governed by public law are eligible to host volunteers. This excludes religious or political associations, congregations, foundations or works councils.
- **Compliance** with the laws and regulations in force.
- **Compliance** with the principles and values of Civic Service (8 fundamental principles of Civic Service - gender, diversity, accessibility).

### Obtaining accreditation

Approval identifies **authorised organisations** for offering Civic Service missions, specifying the number of volunteers they can host and allowing the State to cover their monthly stipend and social protection. Beneficiary organisations must adhere to **Civic Service's fundamental principles**, provide mentoring and civic training to volunteers, and report annually on the program's implementation. Organisations can apply for **individual accreditation, collective approval, or choose intermediation** through an already approved organisation to work with young volunteers.

Once approved, organisations must develop **clear and adaptable mission plans** aligning with the 10 areas of Civic Service. Missions should be of general interest, fulfilling, complementary to existing staff, and open to all motivated individuals without prerequisites in terms of training or experience. Civic Service promotes **social diversity** and **encourages partnerships** with specialised organisations to support young people with disabilities.

### Publish missions offers

Host organisations must publish their mission offers on the "Agence du Service Civique" website, giving details of each mission, the skills sought and the conditions of engagement.

### Selecting volunteers

Once the mission offers have been published, the organisation can receive applications from young people interested in Civic Service. The organisation is responsible for selecting the volunteers according to its own specific criteria. This may involve interviews, exchanges or other assessment methods.

### Support for volunteers

The tutor of the volunteer(s) is a member of the host organisation. He or she follows a standard free training (held by expert organisations mandated by the National Agency) to take on this role. He or she has to organise the day-to-day activities and listen to the ideas, questions and sometimes difficulties of the young people. In particular, he or she has to help the volunteer(s) prepare for the future (post Civic Service). He or she monitors the projects entrusted to the volunteer, adjusts the assignment as it progresses and helps the volunteer to take the initiative. He or she sets the framework for the assignment and reminds the volunteer of the internal rules.

The tutor also broadens the volunteer's mindset by encouraging exchanges between different cultures, generations and social situations.

In the event of difficulties, the volunteer can be assisted by the departmental Service Civique adviser and the Agence du Service Civique, which supervises the scheme at national level.

### Eligible criteria

In order for a young person to carry out a civic service experience, they must, of course, be eligible by meeting certain conditions (already detailed above) such as: Being aged between 16 and 25 (or up to 30 if disabled). Being of French nationality, a national of the European Economic Area or having a legal residence permit for France. No qualifications or professional experience are required.

### People with disabilities

To make Civic Service even more accessible, the maximum age for young disabled volunteers has been raised to 30. Access to Civic Service for young people with disabilities has been one of the priorities of the Civic Service Agency since its creation. I fall into this field if I am a beneficiary of either:

- *PCH (disability compensation allowance)*
- *AAEH (Education allowance for disabled children)*
- *a personalised education project*
- *an RQTH (Recognition of Disabled Worker Status)*
- *AAH (disabled adults' allowance)*
- *an MDPH (Maison départementale des personnes handicapées) notification*
- *a degree of disability*
- *an invalidity pension*

Missions can be adapted to meet the specific needs of people with disabilities. This may involve adjustments to the tasks assigned, working hours, tools or technologies used, etc.

### Finding the right mission

To find a mission that suits them, young people should visit the official Civic Service website ([www.service-civique.gouv.fr](http://www.service-civique.gouv.fr)) to consult the assignment offers published continuously by host organisations throughout the year. You can register directly on the site and create an account to receive alerts when new assignment offers are published. This allows them to stay informed of opportunities that match their search criteria.

### Apply at

As soon as they have chosen a mission, young people should apply online: all the necessary instructions are provided in the advert. Once you have found an assignment that interests you, apply online by following the instructions provided in the advert. If they haven't already done so, young people will need to create an account on the Civic Service platform and fill in the application form. They will also be asked to attach their CV and a covering letter.

### Selection interview

Once an application has been accepted, the young person will probably be invited to take part in a selection interview with the host organisation. This is an opportunity for you to discuss your motivations, expectations and skills. The organisation will assess your suitability for the proposed assignment.

### Signing an agreement

Once selected, the young person must sign a Civic Service agreement with the host organisation. This agreement sets out the terms and conditions of the commitment, the duration of the assignment, the working hours and the rights and obligations of both parties.

### Civic and citizenship training

Before starting their placement, the young people will undergo compulsory civic and citizenship training to help them better understand the issues involved in civic commitment and to familiarise themselves with their rights and duties as volunteers. The young person will then begin and complete his or her assignment.

## D. DIVERSITY, COLLECTIVE ENGAGEMENT (TEAMS), INTENSIVE TRAINING

Unis-Cité’s experimentations and recommendations inspired the 2010 law on “Service Civique”.

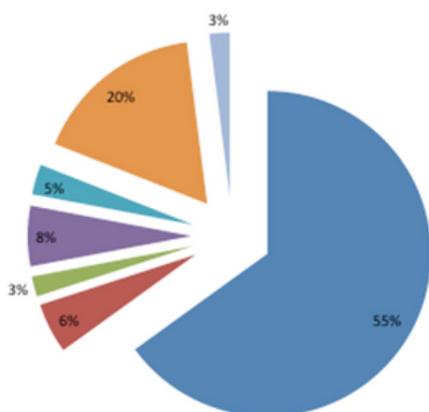
However, Unis-Cité has maintained a specific model of Civic Service: the model relies on exclusively collective engagement mixing young people from very diverse horizons, and on a strong support component for the youth especially the YwFO.

Unis-Cité staff compose teams of around 20 young volunteers who carry out together the same mission during their service. The teams’ composition ensures diversity: young men and women, graduated volunteers and drop-out ones, youth from urban, peri-urban and from priority neighbourhoods, youth with disabilities, young refugees.

Besides, Unis-Cité provides close and strong support to the volunteers during their service with the organisation. The support is adapted to the profile and the specific needs of each young volunteer. It aims at helping them clarify their own driving forces and motivations, identify their own skills, assess their personal progress during the civic service, introduce oneself, know more about the professional fields and the employment sector, learn to efficiently communicate on their experience, etc. The support component of Unis-Cité civic service consists of both collective and individual processes.

The regular evaluation has proven the positive impact of such a model on the cohesion, soft skills such as teamwork ability, and on the educational or professional project of the volunteers.

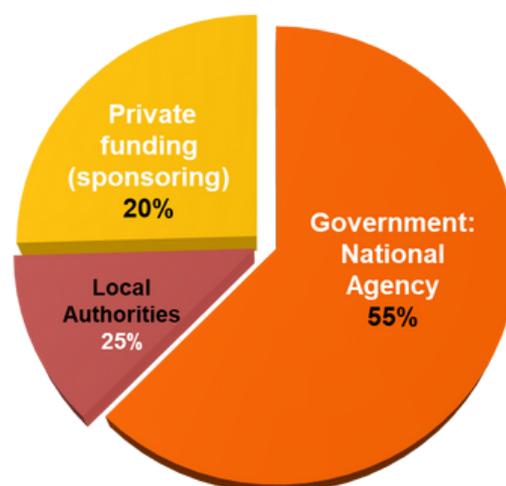
**Cost of a volunteer for an 8 months program = 11 000 €**



- Stipend + social security + food for the volunteers
- Supervision and tutoring of the volunteers
- National project management and monitoring
- Logistics and events
- Trainings and support on prof. integration
- Recruiting civic service volunteers
- Administration and management costs

**The NGO’s Business model**

**Funding sources (2023)**



*UnisCité*

# ITALY

## A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- The Italian Civic Service, officially established in **2001 by Law No. 64**, allows young people aged 18 to 28, to engage in social, cultural, and civic training through experiences in solidarity, national and international cooperation, and preservation of national heritage.
- **Article 9** of the same law enables volunteers to work abroad in initiatives by the European Union, as well as in peacemaking and cooperation structures endorsed by the EU or international bodies involving Italy.
- It's worth mentioning that the establishment of the National Civic Service in Italy wasn't solely attributed to a single law; instead, it was the outcome of numerous years of both individual and collective initiatives aimed at advocating against compulsory military service, with a significant turning point occurring in 1972.

### Milestones leading to the idea of a National Civic Service

1972

The Italian government approved a law entitled "Norms and rules on conscientious objection," guaranteeing individuals the right to object to military service based on moral, religious, and philosophical beliefs. Civic service was thus established as a compulsory alternative to military service. However, those who chose civic service were required to serve an additional 8 months compared to military service.

1989

The Constitutional Court ruled in favor of equalizing the duration of both services, military and civic, leading to a significant increase in the number of applicants for civic service. The numbers grew from 16,000 in 1990 to 30,000 in 1994, eventually reaching 70,000 in 1998.

1998

The National Council for Civic Service was created as a permanent body for consultation and reference for the National Office of Civic Service, which was previously under the Ministry of Defense. Funding and resources allocated to Civic Service were entrusted to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers - National Office for Civil Service. This change in ministry helped avoid conflicts of interest.

2000

Finally, a law entitled "Norm for the establishment of professional military service" was adopted to suspend compulsory military service, initially set for January 1, 2007, but later advanced to January 1, 2005. This measure impacted the appeal of civic service as an alternative option.

## From 2001 up to nowadays: the path from “National” to “Universal”

- A very important change was initiated in **2015**, when the Constitutional Court declared the **constitutional illegitimacy of the requirement of Italian citizenship** which was until then a criteria of admission to the National Civic Service. Consequently, the Department for Youth and National Civic Service deleted this criteria and declared it contrary to European legislation. The program has been since **open to applications from foreigners residing in Italy**.
- **2017** is the year when the National Civic Service became the Universal Civic Service - or Servizio Civile Universale (SCU) in Italian. This was a fundamental stage of the important reform process undergone by the program. In the following year, **1,236 volunteers took part in 151 “experimental” projects**, which included additional measures meant to encourage the participation of young people with fewer opportunities. The key part of the experimentation was the possibility of carrying out a period of service abroad, in one of the countries of the European Union, with a maximum duration of three months. Alternatively, young volunteers could choose to take advantage, for the same period, of mentoring sessions aimed at facilitating access to the labour market.

## B. PURPOSE, FACTS, AND FIGURES

### The Universal Civic Service: what for?

- The possibility for young people to dedicate some months of their lives to the promotion of the founding values of the Italian Republic, such as education, peace among people, unarmed and non-violent defence.
- **Double opportunity:** For their professional training and personal development, which are essential and vital resources for the country's cultural, social and economic progress.
- **Double benefit:** Involving young people in this universal civic service is beneficial for the youths itself, as well as for the communities and territory where the service takes place.

### A new form of volunteering...

...With a special status dedicated to the long-term commitment of young people to non-profit organisations

#### For organisations :

- > Bringing fresh, young energy to their teams to improve actions on the ground
- > Change the way they do things by adopting new and innovative actions (the young person cannot replace an ordinary employee or volunteer).

### Benefits

- These innovations are particularly **well perceived** by the beneficiaries of the organisations' actions, but also by their employees or other volunteers. Apart from the productive improvement, it is also a matter of **transmission of knowledge and passion**.
- The activity of tutoring, which is always implied when hosting volunteers from the Civic Service, allows to **teach specific skills or know-how** as well as to **share an organisation's history and values**. Thus, younger generations can become custodians of such values and bring them forward in their daily life.

### Going abroad...

- The possibility for **young people** to participate in activities related to international cooperation, humanitarian missions, assistance to Italians abroad, but also to missions of peace, assistance and reconstruction of conflicts and calamities, thus contributing to the fight against poverty and hunger in the world
- A unique opportunity for **personal and professional enrichment**, and a particularly effective instrument for spreading the culture of solidarity and peace among people

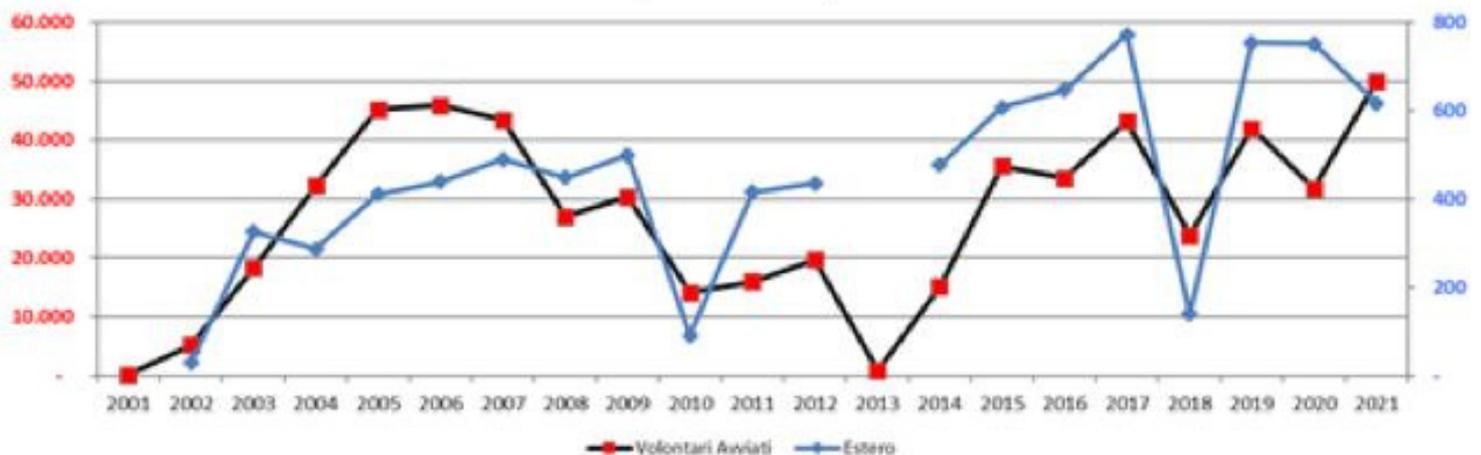
## B. PURPOSE, FACTS AND FIGURES

### Key figures in Italy

- Number of places available and applicants

*The total number of operators in service from 2001 to 2021 amounts to 523,404 young people.*

Volontari avviati al servizio dal 2001 al 2021  
(Totale 573.388)



- **2021:** 49,984 volunteers participating in the Universal Civil Service  
= 49,367 in Italy + 617 abroad.
- **December 2021:** 56,205 places initially offered by the call for Universal Civic Service operators
- **January 2022:** 8,481 places added  
= 64,686 places in Italy and abroad: It's an unprecedented number of places available!

-> **112,008 young people** have applied, reaching 1.7 requests for each place available.

-> It's a concrete proof that the Civic Service is still an experience that manages to involve tens of thousands of young people in a unique form of engagement with Republican values.

- **September 20th 2022:** the Department for Youth Policies and Universal Civic Service announced that the number of operators taking part to the Universal Civic Service reached a total of **45,582 young people**.

*This marks the success of the target M5C1-16-ITA 1, that committed to involve 40,000 volunteer operators during the first cycle of the PNRR".*

- Entities and sectors of employment of the Universal Civic Service June 2021 :

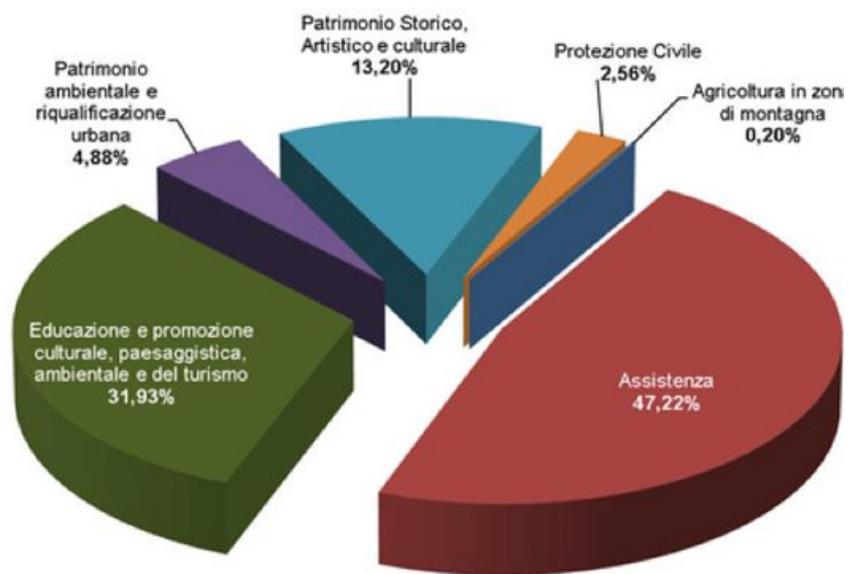
A new Decree the "**Norms and requirements for registration in the Register of Universal Civic Service Entities**" issued: The aim is to simplify and digitize the procedure of accreditation of the Universal Civic Service Register.

=> Entities can now proceed to the submission of the application exclusively online through a guided path, to guarantee a complete and correct compilation.

- **During the year 2021: about 380 registered entities, 12,204 hosting entities and 51,628 locations were listed in the new Register**

This is the repartition of the young volunteers of the Universal Civic Service in the different sectors of employment. Available figures show that during the year 2021, the operators carried out projects in the following areas:

- Assistance to people in need:  
47.22% of operators
- Education and promotion of culture, environmental sustainability and tourism:  
31.93% of operators
- Historical, artistic and cultural heritage:  
13.20% of operators
- Natural heritage and urban regeneration:  
4.88% of operators
- Civil protection: 2.56% of operators
- Agriculture in mountain areas:  
0.2% of operators



**These figures show the significant dimension of social, cultural and educational projects in the Universal Civic Service program.**

- International dimension of the Universal Civic Service

As established initially by the judgement of the Constitutional Court, and later transposed in the Legislative Decree 40/2017 regulating the Universal Civic Service, Italian citizenship no longer constitutes a requirement for admission to the program of the Universal Civic Service. After a long journey, the application has been extended to:

- **citizens of other European Union countries;**
- **non-EU citizens legally residing in Italy.**

In 2021 the percentage of foreign operators of EU origin was 24.31%; while those of non-EU origin were 75.69%.

These figures demonstrate the development of a concrete international dimension in the Universal Civic Service, emphasising the program's capacity to contribute to the inclusion of young people coming from different countries.

# Measuring the impact of the Universal Civic Service today

In the past, the effects of the civic service on the development of 'soft skills' and changes in attitudes and practices of citizenship have been evaluated, particularly abroad.

The studies have not focused on the positive '**unforeseen**' impacts of an employment type; indirect impacts hitherto neglected although the relationship between transversal skills, social capital and employment spillovers was known.

It is, therefore, in a period characterized by strong uncertainties for young people, lack of prospects, high rates of NEETs and weak 'voice' as citizens who need ideas and new suggestions for the design of measures effectively able to reduce the deep gap of opportunities between generations and between macro-regions.

There is, in fact, a possible synergy between SCNs based on the values of solidarity and citizenship and the interest of young people to self-realization as citizens and individuals.

The text illustrates the conditions and contexts in which this happy union can be realized.

The readers we turn to are all those with different roles, decision makers engaged in redesigning the measure of the SCN, managers and operators of the cooperative movement and third sector dealing with SCNs, youth policies and active labor policies, practices of active citizenship, social economy and promotion of human and economic development.

## C. GUIDE - THE ITALIAN CIVIC SERVICE

### 1

#### Profiles of the applicants

- To be aged between 18 and 28 years old.
- To possess the citizenship of a country of the European Union, or demonstrate to be legally residing in Italy for non-EU citizens.
- Not belong to the military forces.
- Not have major criminal convictions.
- Not have already done more than 9 months of civic service.
- Specific requirements may be needed for some projects in addition to those already described.

### 2

#### Stakeholders

- **The young participants:** young people who decide to dedicate a period of their lives to their community and to others by carrying out community service activities in the area of chosen intervention.
- **Institutions:** public or private non-profit entities enrolled in the register of the civic service (Albo SCU) and promoters of civic service projects.
- **The community:** beneficiary of the development of the civic service projects.
- **The State:** through the Department of Youth Policy and the Universal Civil Service offices, the regions and autonomous provinces that manage the entire system.

### 3

## The duration and areas of the SCU:

- Between 8 to 10 months (depending on the single project)
- In Italy or abroad, both in the European Union or in other countries

### Different areas that organizations can proposed :

- assistance
- civil protection
- environmental heritage and urban redevelopment
- historical, artistic and cultural heritage
- education and promotion of culture, landscape, environment, sports, sustainability and tourism
- agriculture in mountain areas, social agriculture and biodiversity
- promotion of peace among people, non-violence and unarmed defence; promotion and protection of human rights; cooperation for development; promotion of Italian culture abroad/ support for communities of Italians abroad

Currently, there are **22 Environmental Civil Service programs** (= 54 projects for 441 positions), **88 Digital Civil Service programs** (= 212 projects for 2,160 positions) and **one program self-funded by the City of Latina** (for 12 participants).

### 4

## Administration of the project :

- No less than 25 hours per week or a total of 1,145 hours for 12 months
- Training: participants in civic service projects are entitled to receive general and specific training: general training is based on knowledge of the principles underlying universal community service; specific training is inherent to the peculiarity of the project. The total duration of general and specific training cannot be less than 80 hours
- Certificate of participation
- Monthly allowance of around 440 euros
- Absence permits :
  - Flexible: in proportion to the period of service (20 days for 12 months)
  - Extraordinary: for specific circumstances such as participation in university exams, blood donation...
- Possibility for some projects among those based in Italy or abroad of a mentoring period (of 1, 2 or 3 months) to facilitate entry into the job market
- Recognition and enhancement of skills acquired
- Evaluation of the experience during public competitions in the same manner and with the same value as service in the Public Administration, which may count as a qualification for preference
- Recognition of service for social security purposes (redeemable)

## 5

### Training and monitoring

**The training** focuses on increasing the active engagement of young people in society and their understanding of the significance of choosing and participating in civic service. This experience is seen as a valuable opportunity for learning and gaining specific knowledge.

There are two types of training provided:

1. **General training:** Offered by the civil service office, this training introduces the concept of civic service and its guiding principles, which will accompany the young participants throughout their service.
2. **Specific training:** Conducted by the entities where the service takes place, this training delves deeper into the specific topics relevant to the project. It includes defining and providing information, methods, and support to carry out service activities effectively.

**The monitoring of** the project is carried out by both the civil service offices (on a monthly basis) and the tutor provided for the youth participating in a civic service project.

This tutor, called **OLP**, is a person working in the organisation in which the young participant/s serve(s), who has a guidance and supporting role for the youth/s during their whole experience.

Monitoring meetings with the OLP are usually held on a monthly basis in order to keep track of what is being done, how everything is going and what can be done next to improve and better customise the service experience to the participant's needs, skills and interests.

## 6

### Recognition of the competences

***Civic service is an experience that aims, among other things, to make young people acquire skills that can be used in future employments.***

- To achieve this goal, the system of recognizing the skills acquired by young people in the civic service experience has been activated.
- It is a process that aims to prove the possession of one or more professional skills referred to a standardised repertoire of skills.
- For those young people who are interested in "proving" the skills acquired during the civic service, a procedure is activated to accompany the elaboration of an "**Individual Dossier of Competence**," with specially designed modalities to document the experience made, which can then be enhanced in institutional contexts of validation and certification.

# 7

## How to apply

- As a Youth:

- **Apply to one of the public calls for projects** that are published annually by the Department of Youth Policy and Universal Civil Service + **apply to the project you choose** among the ones available.
- The application must be done online through the national public system of digital identity called SPID.
- After the closure of the open call, the institutions that received the applications contact the participants to schedule a selection interview
- The applicants get notified about whether they were selected or not
- The young people who are selected sign a contract with the Department of Political Youth and Universal Civil Service of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and start their civic service experience.

- As an Entity

-> the **Legislative Decree 40/2017** "*Institution and discipline of universal civic service*" regulate the Universal Civic Service (SCU)

-> In order to welcome young operators of the Universal Civic Service, entities need to be part of the Register of Universal Civic Service Entities and subsequently to submit an intervention program, uploading at least two projects.

-> The rules for registration are defined by the departmental circular of 9 May 2018.

-> The Register of Universal Civic Service is managed by the Department of Youth Policies and Universal Civil Service. It is structured in three distinct sections related to the territorial level of reference, autonomous provinces, regions, State.

-> If the entity operates throughout Italy or abroad, it will be enrolled in the national section, if it operates locally, it will be registered in the section of the respective autonomous region or province.

To be part of the Register of Universal Civic Service, an entity must be:

- No-profit
- Organizational capacity and employment possibilities in relation to the SCU
- Correspondence between its institutional aims and the aims of the SCU
- Carrying out a continuous activity for at least three years in the areas of intervention chosen during registration in the Register
- Registered office in Italy
- Signing of the "*Charter of ethical commitment of universal civic service*".

**Registration to the Register is mandatory in order to submit a project of Universal Civic Service. Each institution shall submit its project to the section to which it is attached.**

# GERMANY

## A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The civic service began in the **1950s** as a charitable service for young women initiated by the Catholic and Protestant churches. In the early **1960s**, non-church charities started offering a “**Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr**” (voluntary social year) for young women, with coordinating agencies (the Arbeiterwohlfahrt, AWO) playing a key role in organizing the service.

**1964**

the “Gesetz zur Förderung des Freiwilligen Sozialen Jahres” (Law for the Promotion of the Voluntary Social Year) established a legal framework for the FSJ, defining aspects such as volunteer admission, age limits, and volunteer status. The educational aspect of the voluntary service was emphasized from the beginning.

**1968**

the first two men completed an FSJ, marking a shift towards inclusivity. Later, in 1993, the Voluntary Ecological Year (Freiwilliges Oekologisches Jahr, FÖJ) was introduced, along with its legal basis

**2002**

Both FÖJ and FSJ were merged under a new law, and since 2008, they have been regulated by the “Gesetz zur Foerderung von Jugendfreiwilligendiensten” (Law for the Promotion of Youth Volunteer Services) (JFDG).

**2011**

The Federal Volunteer Service (Bundesfreiwilligendienst, BFD) was introduced as an additional option for people over 27 years of age. The FSJ and BFD both fall under the category of youth volunteer services, but the BFD is open to older individuals.

Initially, the FSJ was mostly undertaken by young employed women, but the participant profile shifted over time to mainly include high school or college graduates, with the program seen as a bridge between education and work.

Interest in both the FSJ and BFD has grown over the years, with significant increases in the number of participants after the introduction of the BFD in **2011**. However, the number of participants has fluctuated over time, influenced by factors like the number of graduates, different coordinating agencies, and support from state ministries.

For institutions, having volunteers provides important additional support, and many volunteers later decide to pursue careers or further training in the social sector. Institutions often bear the majority of the costs associated with the volunteers, making this arrangement a unique aspect of the German voluntary service landscape compared to international practices.

## B. PURPOSE, FACTS, AND FIGURES

### PURPOSE

- The voluntary service, which is regulated by law, is intended to be a learning service, and the volunteers receive pedagogical support and professional guidance in the placement sites.
- It is about doing a full-time service for the common good for about one year, without the intention of earning a living. The activities must be predominantly practical assistance in public welfare-oriented institutions.
- The voluntary service must be neutral to the labor market. The voluntary work may support the full-time employees, but in no case replace them; no jobs may be endangered.

### FACTS & FIGURES

In **2020/21**, 97,459 persons participated in legally regulated voluntary services, the figure includes domestic and international voluntary services, but includes also the European Solidarity Corps. There are a total of 18 coordinating agencies, which also act as central offices (Zentralstellen). Coordinating agencies which are no central offices, those which are not the “born” ones, that means the organizations which have been the protagonists of national civic service since its beginning and who actually introduced it, must be affiliated with these central offices, if they are not a central office

#### The “Traeger”/coordinating agencies which are central offices are:

- Arbeiterwohlfahrt Bundesverband e. V. (AWO)
- Der Paritätische Gesamtverband e. V. (DPWV) • Deutsches Rotes Kreuz e. V. (DRK)
- Evangelic group of coordinating agencies/ evangelische Trägergruppe (Diakonie Deutschland e. V. and Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Evangelischen Jugend in Deutschland e. V.; represented today by Evangelische Freiwilligendienste gGmbH)
- Catholic group of coordinating agencies/ katholische Trägergruppe (Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend e. V. (BDKJ) and Deutscher Caritasverband e. V. (DCV), represented today by Jugendhaus Düsseldorf e.V. (JHD))
- Bundesvereinigung Kulturelle Kinder- und Jugendbildung e. V. (BKJ)
- Deutsche Sportjugend im Deutschen Olympischen Sportbund e. V. (dsj)
- Internationaler Bund e. V. (IB).
- Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland e. V. (ASB)
- Bundesamt für Familie und Zivildienst e. V. (BAFzA) • Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe e. V. (JUH)
- Malteser Hilfsdienst e. V. (MHD)

#### Only for BFD :

- AKLHÜ e. V. - Netzwerk und Fachstelle für internationale personelle Zusammenarbeit
- Deutsche Lebens-Rettungs-Gesellschaft e. V. (DLRG)
- Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland e. V. (ZWST)
- Naturschutzbund Deutschland e. V. (NABU)
- Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland e. V. (BUND)
- Allgemeiner Sportclub Göttingen von 1846 e. V.

### 1 Profils of the applicants

All people 16 years and older who have completed compulsory education. The age limit varies from program to program, 26, 27 and 28 are limits, but due to the introduction of the BFD, national voluntary service is possible at any age. Citizens of the European Union can smoothly start a German national voluntary service, other citizens can do so after obtaining a visa.

**Until the age of 25 years**, volunteers also get the “Kindergeld” (governmental support for families with children up to 25 years). If the volunteers are receiving Arbeitslosengeld 2 (minimum support for the unemployed), they are allowed to do a voluntary service instead of looking for another job and may maintain their status of eligible for Arbeitslosengeld 2. The difference between the pocket money and the unemployment compensation will be made, which means that the volunteers won't have a bigger amount of money than fixed for the unemployment compensation.

For participants **who have not yet reached the age of 18**, the provisions of the “Jugendarbeitsschutzgesetz” (youth employment protection act) (JArbSchG) must be taken into account. In addition, in between the regulations for the “Jugendfreiwilligendienste” (§ 13 JFDG) the laws the occupational health and safety regulations under the occupational health and safety act (ArbSchG) and the federal vacation act (BUrtG) must be applied.

### 2 Stakeholders

State authorities approve given “coordinating agencies” who then dispatch the fundings to actual operators. The same state authority/ Landesbehoerde can approve BFD missions as well as FSJ missions. All coordinating agencies, except the one born with this status have to join and be rattached to a central office. The central offices organize the exchange and networking of regional members and represent their interests to the outside world. The central offices are also important for volunteers who have concerns with supraregional significance. Within the central offices there are the federal tutorates. The federal tutorates are responsible for the quality assurance and development of the pedagogical support. Institutions can offer BFD and FSJ places at the same time.

- **Volunteers**
- **Coordinating agencies/Traeger:** in FSJ responsible for organization and pedagogical support, the contract is concluded with them.
- **State authorities/Landesbehoerden:** recognize the “non-born” coordinating agencies, recognize the volunteer positions
- **Central offices/ Zentralstellen with federal tutors/ Bundestutoraten:** pooling of interests, quality assurance and development of pedagogical accompaniment. The “BaFZA” has besides its representation of the federation for the BFD also the task to be one among several central offices.
- **Institutions where the missions take place/ host organizations:** public welfare institutions
- Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth/ Bundesministerium fuer Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend and its service agency “BaFZA” (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs and Civil Society Tasks) for the BFD

### 3

## Thematic areas and duration of the service:

### Thematic areas of FSJ, BFD, FOEJ :

- Welfare institutions
- Healthcare institutions (in retirement homes, hospitals etc.)
- Child and youth care institutions
- Educational institutions (schools)
- Institutions of extracurricular education and youth work
- Institutions for cultural and historical preservation
- Sports institutions
- Institutions for civil defence and catastrophe control
- Educational institutions for sustainability
- Institutions for nature conservation and environmental protection

### Duration of the services:

Since 2019 it is also possible for younger volunteers to do a **part time voluntary service**, which means at least **20 hours per week**, if they have special reasons.

The service can be performed **exceptionally up to a duration of 24 months** if this is justified within the framework of a special pedagogical concept.

The employment time can theoretically vary from mission to mission, but is limited by the weekly hours regulation agreed upon in public tariffs, in which it can be a **maximum of 39 hours**.

The coordinating agencies determine the start date, but it is usually the 1st of September, and the end date is usually the 31st of August.

## 4

### Administration of the project :

The institutions often pay a certain sum to the coordinating agencies for organization and pedagogical support.

The “**Jugendfreiwilligendienste**” works on the basis of the “Traegerprinzip”, the coordinating agencies are very important in the following triangle.

The coordinating agencies receive an amount of 200 euros per volunteer per month from the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth for pedagogical support. The coordinating agencies must add 10 percent themselves. In the case of youth with fewer opportunities, a coordinating agency can receive an additional sum of 100 euros each. Some states pay an additional amount to the coordinating agencies, e.g. in Hessen 50 euros per participant for the pedagogical support and running costs.

The host organizations pay for pocket money, work clothes, insurance, and, in some cases, for room and board.

The **FSJ/ FÖJ** is carried out in a triangle between the **host organizations, the coordinating agencies and the volunteers**. The coordinating agencies conclude the contracts with the volunteers and are responsible for the pedagogical support.

In the **BFD**, a coordinating agency can be involved, but does not have to be. However, each mission and place for volunteers needs to be recognized by the federal government, the Federal Office for Family and Civil Society Tasks (BAFzA).

The contract is concluded between **the volunteer and the federal government**.

The coordinating agencies receive from the service authority in the business area "BaFzA" (Federal Ministry for Family and Civil Society Tasks) of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth 158 euros for pedagogical support (plus 100 euros in case of youth with fewer opportunities), 300 euros for pocket money and social insurance (400 euros if the volunteers are 25 to 26 years old) as well as the one-time reimbursement of travel expenses for the trip of the volunteers to the seminar of political education.

The effects for the volunteers are the same, being either in the program of BFD or in the program of FSJ/FÖJ.

They get the same amount of pocket money, a maximum of 426 Euro, insurance, and eventually lodging and nutrition. The exact amount and what is provided can always vary, depending on the host organization and coordinating agency.

## 5

## Financial framework

COST ITEM	COST
Pocket money plus supplement to accommodation and meals	405,00 Euro
Employer's contribution to social insurance	160,00 Euro
Administration expenses respectively compensation of a lack of resources for pedagogical support	220 Euro
Contribution respectively refund for pedagogical support (state)	135 Euro
Total cost	920 Euro

From Huth, S. (2022). *Freiwilligendienste in Deutschland. Stand und Perspektiven*. Bertelsmann Stiftung, p.13.

A volunteer has a total cost of around **950 Euro per month**, it is estimated a cost of around **1100 Euro** for a volunteer abroad. With the help of statistics about the participation of women and men in voluntary service (1), it is visible that both in the FSJ and in the BFD significantly more women participate, varying from federal state to federal state partly around half more, partly in the relation two thirds one third, which concerns young adults. However, in the age range of 50 and older, a significantly larger number of men than women are active. In some states, however, such as *Saxony-Anhalt, Brandenburg and Thuringia*, there is only a slight difference between male and female participation even in the younger age range, with the number of male participants almost reaching that of females.

(1) [https://www.bundesfreiwilligendienst.de/fileadmin/de.bundesfreiwilligendienst/content.de/Service\\_Menue\\_Kopf/Presse/Statistike/BFD\\_Statistik\\_11\\_2021.pdf](https://www.bundesfreiwilligendienst.de/fileadmin/de.bundesfreiwilligendienst/content.de/Service_Menue_Kopf/Presse/Statistike/BFD_Statistik_11_2021.pdf)  
[https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freiwilliges\\_soziales\\_Jahr#Bildungstage](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freiwilliges_soziales_Jahr#Bildungstage)

## 6

## Training and monitoring

The pedagogical accompaniment is defined by law: "The pedagogical accompaniment is ensured by a central office of a youth volunteer service provider approved according to § 10 with the aim of imparting social, cultural and intercultural competences and strengthening the sense of responsibility for the common good" (§ 3 S. 2 JFDG).

In order to ensure pedagogical support, the coordinating agency must set up a central point with trained pedagogical or socio-pedagogical staff, 1 full-time pedagogical staff member per 40 volunteers must be made available.

25 educational days within the framework of 5 one-week seminars are required by law. They are organised by the coordinating agencies. In the BFD, the seminar on "political education" is conducted as one of the 5 seminars by the Federal Office for Family and Civil Society Tasks (BaFZA).

## 7

### Recognition of the competences

Participants in voluntary service have a status equal to that of professional apprentices.

Parents are entitled to receive “Kindergeld”, the family allowance available for all German resident.

The voluntary service is recognized as a waiting semester for university studies. For some courses of studies or apprenticeships, it is counted as a pre-semester or a year of recognition.

The coordinating agency (even if it is ultimately paid by the host organization) is responsible for the insurance coverage in case of illness and care, the full cost of social insurance (employee and employer's share) including the statutory accident insurance.

The time of the voluntary service will be credited for the old-age provision.

## 8

### How to apply

#### As an operator

If the interested person already knows an institution, he or she can inquire or apply directly to that institution. Otherwise, there are platforms to find missions, from larger organisations, coordinating agencies, states. Institutions with vacancies and the contact address can be found there; the person then applies, depending on the regulations of the coordinating agency, either directly to the institution or to the coordinating agency.

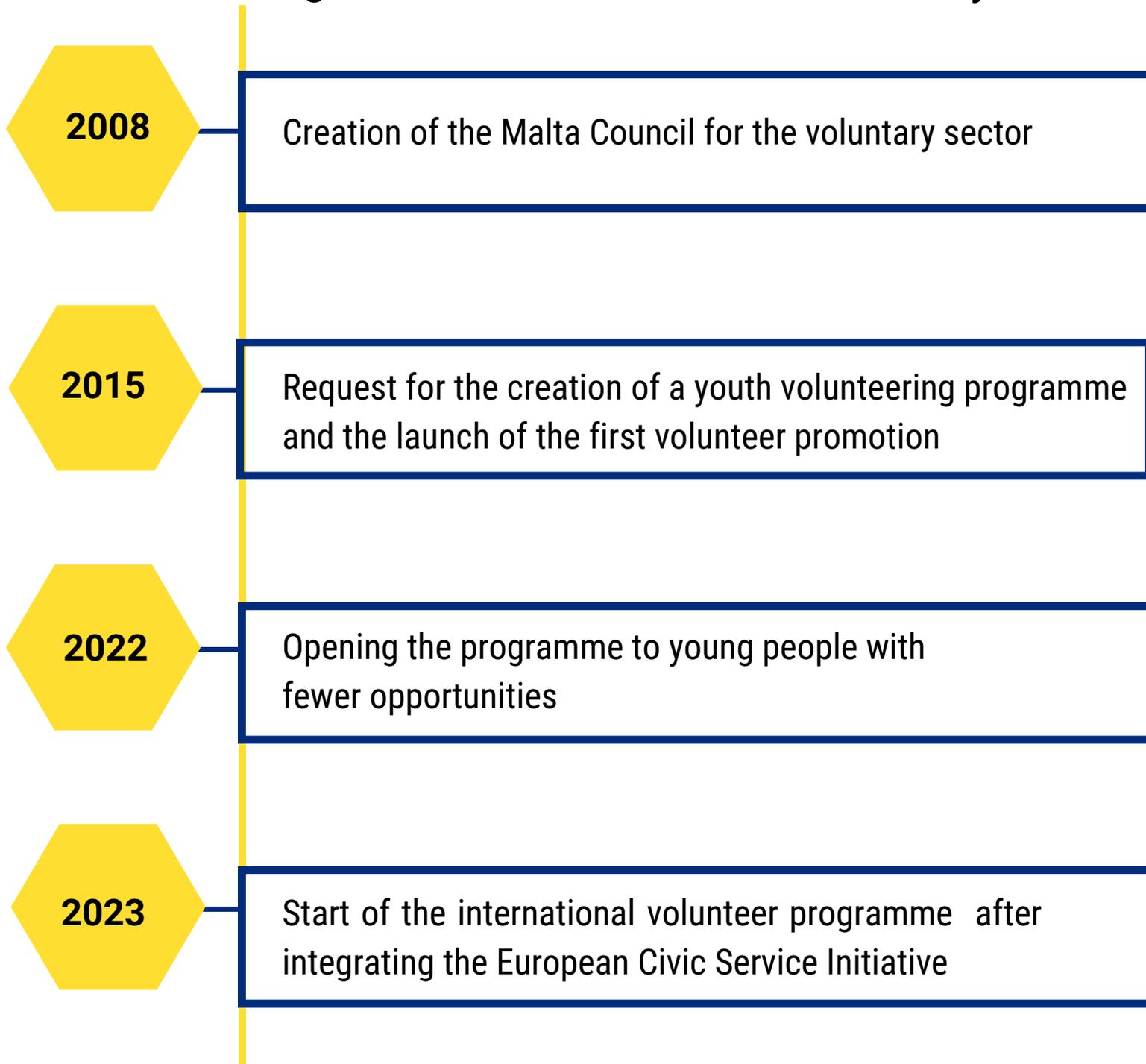
#### As an entity

The assignment sites must be located in organisations that are oriented towards the common good (§ 3 Abs. 1 JFDG). Institutions must be approved via the coordinating agencies. In the case of the BFD, the institutions and missions are recognized by the federal government. Organisations wishing to become coordinating agencies must submit an application to the state authority. In both the “Jugendfreiwilligendienste” and the BFD, there is a fixed contingent of placements that can be approved.

## A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

From its inception in September 2008, MCVS has strived to provide holistic support to the voluntary sector. After the successful outcomes of two project-based grant schemes which were made available to voluntary organisations, in 2015 the Council requested for the first time, funds from the Ministry to launch the Youth Voluntary Service (at the time called the Youth Voluntary Work Scheme). Its aim was to promote and encourage a culture of volunteering and participation in volunteering activities among people, especially children and youths and to meet the ever-increasing needs of the voluntary sector. From that year onwards, the allocated state funds to the programme have been on the increase, with the sum amounting to €150,000 in 2023.

### Milestones leading to the idea of a National Youth Voluntary scheme



## B. PURPOSE, FACTS, AND FIGURES

### PURPOSE

The mission of the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS) is to support the development of a more effective and efficient voluntary and community sector in Malta and Gozo through the delivery of a range of support and capacity building services including information, advice, and training. The role of the Council is to promote the voluntary sector, provide a forum for the voluntary sector and a platform from which to develop co-operation between voluntary organisations and the Government and co-operation between voluntary organisations amongst themselves.

### FACTS & FIGURES

- Promotion of youth participation within the community.
- Promotion of social inclusion and well-being to combat youth unemployment.
- To improve the level of key competencies and skills of young people, including those with fewer opportunities.
- Foster quality improvements in youth voluntary work.
- Provision of resources such as financial support, emotional support and self-development tutoring to youth volunteers.
- Promotion of informal and non-formal learning processes.
- Raise awareness with regard to the impact and value of voluntary service.
- Support the development of basic and transversal skills, such as entrepreneurship, working in a team and leadership skills.
- Promotion of the values of inclusion and tolerance among young people.

## C. GUIDE - THE MALTESE YOUTH VOLUNTARY SCHEME

### Local youth voluntary service

#### 1 Profils of the applicants

Youths with a Maltese residency aged 16-30 (youths aged 15 eligible if they finished their secondary-level education) - Possible collaboration with schools so in those 3- 4 months after they finish the obligatory education, we integrate them into the voluntary sector).

#### 2 Stakeholders

Host organisations: Voluntary organisations who want to host youth volunteers have to submit an application for accreditation. Accreditation is valid for 1 year. They can host up to 4 volunteers per year. Orgs. must show that they have the capacity and structure to be able to engage, train, manage, monitor, and support Youth Volunteers.

Only Voluntary Organisations enrolled and compliant with the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations are eligible to participate and host young people under the Youth Voluntary Service programme. They can fall under any of the below sectors: Animal welfare, Arts, Culture, Disability, Education, Environmental, Health, Humanitarian, Social, Sports and Youth.

The hosting Voluntary Organisation is responsible for:

- Training and managing the Youth Volunteers.
- Setting up specific tasks and activities on which the volunteer shall work on.
- Monitoring and supporting the Youth Volunteers.
- Providing an adequate and safe environment to Youth Volunteers according to local Health and Safety regulations and other work-related legislations.
- To supervise volunteers under the legal age throughout their work at the voluntary organisation.
- To Send the attendance sheets, monthly reports, and monthly tasks of its youth volunteers in a timely manner as requested by MCVS officers.
- To ensure attendance of the youth volunteers within the J.O.Y.S. programme as part of their YVS placement.

### 3 Duration and length of the mission

- Duration: A local mission between 2-6 months. In cases related to persons at risk of social exclusion - persons with societal challenges - persons with physical disabilities/conditions - persons with mental disabilities/conditions, the maximum placement duration may be extended up to twelve (12) months and the hours per week may be extended to thirty (30) hours.
- Time: Minimum of 2 hours per month up to 15 hours per week. (However, youths are free to do as many hours as they wish.)
- Stipend: MCVS provides small pocket money to the volunteers at the end of each month. In 2023 the rate is that of €3.50/hour.
- Host organisations: Voluntary organisations who want to host youth volunteers must apply for accreditation. Accreditation is valid for 1 year. They can host up to 4 volunteers per year. Organisations must show that they have the capacity and structure to be able to engage, train, manage, monitor, and support Youth Volunteers.
- Monthly self-development sessions: J.O.Y.S (Journey of Youth Self-Development) programme was created to provide self-development sessions + mentoring to both local volunteers doing their Youth Voluntary Service and European Solidarity Corps volunteers doing their volunteering mission in Malta.

### 4 Stipend

We provide a small amount of pocket money to the volunteers at the end of each month. This year it's €3.50/hour. Youths need to carry out a specific task every month in order to receive the stipend (could be an interview with a VO member/a small write-up or video about their mission etc...) Helps with promoting the programme.)

### 5 Administrative process for hosting organizations

- Submission of Host Application by the Voluntary Organisation.
- The Host Application is assessed and verified for approval by an evaluation committee appointed by MCVS.
- Upon approval of the application, accreditation is awarded, and the Host Contract is signed by MCVS and the VO.

- Volunteering opportunity is published on <https://volunteers.mt/volunteer/youth-voluntary-service/>
- Bridging: Prospective volunteers sit for a meeting with the Host VO and are interviewed for selection. VO and selected volunteers sit for an online meeting with MCVS.
- Submission of monthly reports, monthly tasks, and attendances are submitted by VO every month.
- Stipend is remunerated monthly.

The Host Application can be submitted at any point in time. The Host Application includes:

- ❖ A description of the project or task to be given to the volunteers.
- ❖ A description of the benefits of the project for youth volunteers.
- ❖ A description of the intended training and monitoring of the youth volunteers.
- ❖ A description of the experience of the Voluntary Organisation with hosting youth volunteers.
- ❖ A description of the risk management and safety precautions of the Voluntary Organisation.
- ❖ The date of commencement and end of the project.

## 6

### Assessment Criteria

#### **Assessment Criteria:**

Accreditation is a requirement needed for Voluntary Organisations to host Youth Volunteers under the Youth Voluntary Service. Accreditation is designed to ensure consistently high standards for Host organisations participating in the Programme and to ensure Youth Volunteers find placements with reliable Voluntary Organisations. Accreditation is given based on the assessment of the host application. The evaluation shall be carried out by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector Evaluation Committee which shall assess the Local Host Application, based on the following:

- ❖ Motivation and experience in hosting volunteers.
- ❖ The organisation's aims, activities and capacities for the youth placement.
- ❖ Risk, safety and well-being procedures.
- ❖ The training and management of Youth Volunteers especially those working with Voluntary Organisations in the areas of Health, Social and Humanitarian Action.
- ❖ Awareness of and ideas for well-defined tasks constituting of maximum 15 hours per week, avoiding job substitution and routine tasks.
- ❖ Familiarity with the concepts of non-formal learning and learning opportunities offered through the service.

To obtain accreditation, the Voluntary Organisation submitting the relevant application, must show that it has the capacity to host volunteers. A Youth Volunteer participating in the Youth voluntary service may only be hosted by an accredited host Voluntary Organisation.

Host accreditation is awarded on a project-by-project basis. If accreditation is not given due to an unsatisfactory application, Voluntary Organisations will be informed and guided accordingly. VOs which have not been granted accreditation, may resubmit applications at any point.

Once approved, accreditation is valid for 12 months, though the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector reserves the right to revoke the accreditation during the agreed period should there be reasonable grounds to act in such a manner. An accredited Host Voluntary Organisation must renew its interest to participate in the Programme once the accreditation period has expired.

## 7

### How to become a youth volunteer

- Eligible youths can find a voluntary opportunity to their liking from the Opportunities section on our website: <https://volunteers.mt/volunteer/youth-voluntary-service/#opportunities>
- Application – Youths apply on the same portal to take part in the YVS Programme.
- VO visit - MCVS sets a meeting between volunteer and host organisation. The youth volunteers will be required to visit the organisation in order to confirm their interest in volunteering with that VO. If the visit is successful, the youths are to send a confirmation email to the VO and the MCVS Officer.
- Sign contract - Volunteers will be asked to sign a contract and sit for an online meeting to go over YVS reporting responsibilities.

The Youth Contract:

Once the youth has been successfully bridged, the youth is to sign a contract establishing:

- ❖ The duration of the placement
- ❖ Accountability, Duties & Responsibilities
- ❖ Remuneration of Youth Volunteer
- ❖ Hours of Work
- ❖ Training/Events
- ❖ Resignation or Termination Contract
- ❖ Confidentiality
- ❖ Bank Details

A pre-placement meeting will be held between a representative of the Host Organisation, the youth volunteer, and an MCVS official to discuss programme responsibilities and processes.

# D. INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS WITHIN THE NATIONAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE

## International Volunteering

MCVS has started tapping into international volunteering thanks to European Solidarity Corps funding. In order to complement the local Youth Voluntary Service Programme, MCVS applied for and was awarded the Support quality label in 2022, and was also awarded the Lead and host role in 2023, opening up opportunities to coordinate and host European volunteers and support Maltese youths in European missions. Youth volunteers can apply here: <https://volunteers.mt/volunteer/eu-mobility/>

## Ongoing workshops & volunteer networking:

In an attempt to better support the development and growth of youth volunteers in Malta, a self-development programme for the youths was developed.

The objectives of this holistic youth voluntary support programme are to:

- ❖ Support youth self-development and acquisition of skills;
- ❖ Instil values of self-awareness, respect and general well-being amongst youths;
- ❖ Promote cooperation, networking, peer sharing and active collaboration amongst Maltese volunteers and European Youth volunteers;
- ❖ Promote diversity of cultural expressions amongst Maltese and European Youth volunteers;
- ❖ Instil the European value of volunteering and solidarity and train youth volunteers about European democratic and active citizenships;
- ❖ To promote the participation of Maltese volunteers in European Programme.

The self-development programme consists of different resources including:

- My Journey – a 31-day self-development Journal: This Journal is provided to all youths participating in the programme. This book provides self-development tools, resources as well as activities which youths can make use of in their personal time.
- Mentoring: - MCVS Mentors will be able to provide casual mentoring to youths in the J.O.Y.S. Programme upon request.
- Monthly self-development workshops; Topics that are discussed include Friendship and connections, Self-discovery and self-acceptance, Mindfulness, Mental health and more subjects pertaining to self-awareness. This self-development programme and resources will be available for free for all youth volunteers.

## Volunteers with Fewer Opportunities – About the Youth Engage Programme

### Aims of the Youth Engage Scheme

This scheme aims to complement the provided opportunities with the direct participation of young people and stakeholders. This process is aimed to provide a safe and secure space for participants with fewer opportunities to enhance their respective working experience whilst at the same time be empowered to believe in themselves and contribute to the best interest of society.

### **The scope of the Scheme is to:**

- a) Facilitate a process where young people will have the opportunity to believe in themselves.
- b) Support young people to recognize their own abilities and talents.
- c) Provide a space where theoretical education could possibly be linked to hands on practical work.
- d) Enable young people to appreciate the value of active participation which can take place in various forms.
- e) Expose participants to the various realities present within different entities particularly voluntary organisations.
- f) Provide an opportunity where young people may process with their respective professionals any occurrences taking place during this journey.
- g) Facilitating space where young people learn to work in various setups within organisations. Thus, experiencing teamwork episodes and other occasions where the person would possibly need to work on his/her own.
- h) Recognizing the need to respect managerial authorities. i) Space where the participants would be able to receive and give constructive feedback.
- j) Explore potential entrepreneurship ideas which may eventually potentially materialize in sustainable initiatives.
- k) Possible engagement of young people within the voluntary sector.
- l) Helping young people to foster an independent life.
- m) Empower the participants to take leading roles when and if necessary.
- n) Create space for youth to learn further about the value of inclusion and contribute towards this cause.

### **How it works:**

1. Participating entities (national disability agency, social welfare agency) recruit youths to participate in the Youth Engage scheme.
2. MCVS identifies voluntary organisations who will be participating in the Youth Engage Scheme
3. A training programme will be delivered with those responsible for the management of such organisations.
4. MCVS together with the relevant entity shall hold Interviews with Voluntary Organisations to determine which Youth Volunteers are best suited for a particular placement.

## Administrative Aspect of the Youth Engage Programme:

- **Eligible volunteers: Maltese Youths with fewer opportunities (Physical or mental disability, difficult social backgrounds). Here we have younger beneficiaries - between the ages of 13 - 30.**

- Duration: A minimum of 1 month to a maximum of 12 months
- Time: Up to 30 hours per week.
- Stipend: MCVS provides a small pocket money to the volunteers at the end of each month. In 2023 the rate is that of €3.50/hour = a maximum of €105 per week for each volunteer. MCVS also provides a monthly admin allowance of €100 to each host organisation + also an extra €50 for each volunteer they host.
- Host Organisations: Voluntary organisations who want to host youth volunteers with fewer opportunities have to submit an application for accreditation. Accreditation is valid for 1 year. They can host up to 4 volunteers per year (flexible). Orgs. must show that they have the capacity and structure to be able to engage, train, manage, monitor, and support Youth Volunteers. Training is provided by specialised entities to prepare organisations to host volunteers with fewer opportunities. Youth volunteers need to have a designated mentor at the host org, apart from their social workers (since the latter will not always be accompanying the volunteers)

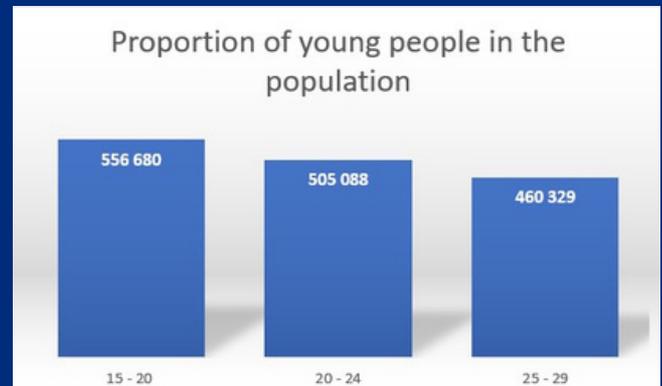
# CZECH REPUBLIC SCHEME

## BY DB CENTRUM

### A. YOUTH SOCIAL CONTEXT

The Czech population is **10,524 mil** people in total.

- Young people aged 15-29 constituted **14.8%** of the population. The country has experienced a decline in the share of young people over time, contributing to its overall ageing demographic.



- **30.9%** of young adults aged 18-24 are not in education, employment or professional training (NEET).
- The number of people without education from at least 15 years old and up is **56 thousand** in total.
- *The general unemployment rate in the country is **3,6 %** (one of the lowest overall unemployment rates in the EU).*
- The unemployment rate for young people aged 15-24 is **12,7 %**. It does not mean that the labour market situation is deteriorating. Young people think differently; they travel more, they don't want to take unskilled jobs for little money and they prefer to wait for a better offer.
- **The Czech labour market** generally **provides a secure and stable environment for most young people**, unlike Southern European countries where dissatisfaction with employment is more common. However, the labour market does have challenges, such as comparatively low wages and a prevalence of low-skilled jobs.
- Young Czechs are **generally satisfied with their living situations**, especially those living with partners or both parents. The education system plays a role in reproducing social capital and hierarchy, with parents' educational attainment influencing their children's educational trajectories.
- The youth is mainly **focused on individual goals and ambitions**, prioritizing independence and career success over civic activities and politics.

<https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/19598-20221115.pdf>

## B. MAJOR SOCIETAL NEEDS

Demographically, Europe as a whole is ageing. Preparing for an ageing society is also a topical social issue in the Czech Republic. **In accordance with the Strategy for Preparing for Ageing 2021-2025 (MoLSA), it should include creating conditions for personal activity in old age, civic engagement, and volunteering** or developing quality interpersonal and family relationships in general. Active ageing should mean continued participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual, and civic life.

It is therefore inevitable to focus on the **entire Czech population, including youth and integration of the ethnic minorities** in terms of **long-term civic engagement**.

We believe that long-term civic service could address several important societal needs related to different areas and the national civic service program should be opened for everyone from 18 years:

- According to a survey, **22% of the Czech population** is characterized by high incomes and the largest accumulated wealth but they have enough acquaintances in prestigious professions and only an average network of friends and relatives who can provide help in case of problems. **For this population, civic service can provide important connections to improve their social lives and better use of their resources to help the community.**
- **12% of the Czech population**, often IT, finance and technical professionals, are the only ones who speak Western languages without much problems. They acquire cultural capital through an active lifestyle focused on high and modern culture. These individuals constitute the key demographic to be drawn to volunteering, as **their active lifestyle often already includes help in the community.**
- **14% of the Czech population** are mostly middle-aged or older, are not very involved in local connections and have a limited number of friends and relatives they can turn to when they need help. For this demographic, it is **crucial to expand their social circle** to gain the necessary experience and contacts to maintain healthy relationships and active citizen lifestyles.
- **12% of the Czech population** have good contacts in prestigious professions and always have someone to turn to if they need help. However, their knowledge of foreign languages and technology is pretty low, **with only 63% of them using the Internet on a daily basis** and a full third very irregularly. This demographic can highly profit from volunteering alongside youth to not only benefit their community but also gain important skills necessary in the modern world.
- **22% of the Czech population** is characterised by below-average incomes and assets. They work in low-paid jobs, even though they have formal education that would enable them to obtain more skilled and better-paid positions. To have **above-average social capital**: they need to have contacts in more prestigious professions and also have someone to turn to if they need advice. However, they lack specific competencies for the job market. **Targeted training in specific civic service activities might inspire these citizens to increase their skill portfolio.**
- **Civic engagement for immigrants (e.g. Ukrainian youth) - 9.16 % of the total Czech population** are migrants, and **young people 15-29** represent **20%**.
- **Integration of NEETs/YWLO** - building a bridge from information education/volunteering to education or professional market.

[https://www.irozhlaz.cz/zpravy-domov/ceska-spolecnost-vyzkum-tridy-kalkulacka\\_1909171000\\_zloText](https://www.irozhlaz.cz/zpravy-domov/ceska-spolecnost-vyzkum-tridy-kalkulacka_1909171000_zloText) odstavec

## C. CZECH REPUBLIC - LONG-TERM CIVIC SERVICE

### A long-term civic service: why for?

Long-term civic service is not high on the agenda and is not perceived as a priority among the Czech population. However, the above data shows that there is a great potential within society that can benefit different demographic groups.

Advantages of long-term civic service include:

- **Strengthening Crucial Infrastructure:** Long-term civic service can contribute to the reinforcement of critical societal infrastructure, including healthcare, administration, law enforcement, and education. Participants can fill gaps in service provision, support the work of these sectors, and alleviate the burden on public resources.
- **Higher Incentive for Non-formal Education:** Civic service can be a platform for non-formal education and skill development. It can offer individuals the opportunity to acquire new skills and knowledge that might not be readily available through traditional formal education. It can lead to personal growth and increased employability.
- **Social Capital and Community Building:** Civic service fosters the development of social capital, as it brings people from different backgrounds together to work towards a common goal. This sense of community and collaboration can have a positive impact on social cohesion and the overall well-being of society.
- **Resource Optimization:** People engaged in the civic service often bring their skills, time, and energy to various projects. This resource infusion can help organizations and communities operate more efficiently and effectively, making the most of available resources.
- **Interpersonal Relationships and Family Ties:** Long-term civic service encourages the development of quality interpersonal relationships and family bonds. When individuals engage in volunteer work together, it can strengthen their connections and provide a shared sense of purpose.
- **Sense of Fulfilment:** Civic service offers a sense of fulfilment and purpose to individuals. Knowing that one is making a positive difference in the lives of others or contributing to a meaningful cause can lead to increased personal satisfaction and happiness.
- **Civic Engagement:** Civic service is a form of civic engagement, which is essential for a healthy democracy. It encourages individuals to actively participate in their communities, voice their opinions, and take an interest in the welfare of society.
- **Skills Development:** Civic service provides an opportunity for individuals to develop and enhance a wide range of skills, including leadership, communication, problem-solving, and project management. These skills can be valuable in both personal and professional life.
- **Social Inclusion:** Civic service can promote social inclusion by involving individuals from diverse backgrounds and age groups. It creates a sense of belonging and encourages people to work together despite their differences.
- **Economic Benefits:** In the long run, the skills and experiences gained through civic service can have economic benefits for individuals. Improved skills and networks can lead to better job opportunities and career advancement.
- These advantages of the civic service **contribute to a stronger, more connected, and resilient society** that is better equipped to address the complex challenges it faces, including those related to an ageing population.

## A law and legal status for volunteers

Czech Republic has a volunteering law, Voluntary Service Act (act no. 198/2002 Coll.), with subsequent amendments as Act no. 86/2014 Coll. This Act regulates the conditions under which the State supports voluntary service organised under this Act and performed by volunteers without remuneration. At the same time, this Act recognises the provision of reimbursement of expenses related to a certain type of voluntary service associated with the necessary preparation for the volunteer's participation in a certain volunteer service programme or project, the reimbursement of expenses related to travel to and from the place of work abroad, pocket money to cover current expenses at the place of work, and the provision of work equipment and personal protective equipment.

The legal status of participants in civic service requires precise definition and setting. We estimate that further modification of the law is required.

## A new scheme articulated with economic and social need of your country

The country faces challenges related to demographic developments common to the whole of Europe. In the second half of the 21st century, there will be 2.5 times more seniors than children in the Czech Republic.

By involving populations in long-term civic engagement projects, meaningful personal engagement, solidarity, and belonging can be increased to promote social cohesion.

The infrastructure for the scheme appears to be well provided by the **regional volunteer centres**, which can offer their expertise and help in developing and coordinating such a service.

## D. SCHEME FRAMEWORK

### Suggested name for the scheme/project

"Národní občanská služba"  
(National Civic Service)

## 1 Vision for the national civic service

### Objectives

- React to the demographic trends
- Increase civic engagement among the Czech population
- Offer diversified activities with different target groups
- Provide meaningful activities for every social group of society
- Integration of refugees
- Provide formal recognition of acquired competencies through a certificate for participant's future professional careers.

### Organisations

- Social and healthcare providers
- NGO's
- State administrative organisations
- Religious organisations
- State Contributory Organisations

### Logistics

- **Optional**
- **Age of applicants:** from 18 years
- **Length of the mission:** 3 - 12 months
- **Full-time or part-time of flexible service**

## 2 Stakeholders

### The decision-makers

- **Ministry of Interior** Responsible for volunteering agenda.
- **Ministry of Education**
- **Ministry of Regional Development**
- **Ministry of Social Affairs**

### Supportive partners

- **Organisation included into the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) and Interreg IVY**
- **Regions**
- **Municipalities**
- **Ngo's**
- **Companies with foreign management/ownership**
- **National companies/businesses**

### The major allies to convince decision-makers

**European Parliament:** A unified statement from the European Parliament advocating the importance of the national civic service can carry significant weight.

**Successful European Models:** Highlighting the experiences of other countries where the civic service has been successful can serve as a persuasive example.

**Data and Impact Evaluation:** Providing data and evidence of the positive impact of civic service in other countries can strengthen the case.

**National Association of Volunteering:** As a collective of 42 organizations, their endorsement and support can add credibility to the initiative.

## 3 Fields of intervention

Social and care services	Sport
Culture	Environment
Mentoring programs	Humanitarian aid
	Promotion of peace among people, non-violence and unarmed defence; promotion and protection of human rights; cooperation for development;

## 4 Support for volunteers

**Training** is desirable - as preparation for the service at least;

- it could be organized like in the case of the ESC program with on-arrival (service starting) training, mid-term and final evaluation.

However, it depends on the content and aims of the national program.

- Professional training should be provided by the hosting placement according to the needs and service conditions.
  - General training on volunteering could be around one week in total or roughly a day per month of service, combined in max 3 sessions (beginning, mid-term, final).

Specific/ project-related training could be added when needed.

- **Professional training of participant coordinators** - can be implemented by Regional Volunteer Centres.

## Financial plan

### Participants of the national scheme

It would be good if stipend is related to either minimum salary in the country.

Minimum salary is 736 EUR gross, 654 EUR net.

The participants of the national scheme would be insured by the national and security schemes as every working person.

The cost overview inspired by the German voluntary service (Freiwilligendienste in Deutschland) is our polite suggestion.

#### 654 EUR net (40 h of service/week)

ITEM	EVALUATED as
Stipend	654 Euro
Insurance	national and security schemes as every working person
Cost of mamagement	220 Euro
Training	130 EUR
Total cost	about 1000 eur

**Recalculate: Total for 1 year: 12 000 EUR/1 volunteer**  
**Total for 5 years: 60 00 EUR = 1 410 000 Kč (rate 1 EUR= 23,5 Kč)**

## 6 Political/economical situation

The economic situation in the Czech Republic is difficult, the country is in an economic recession. The energy crisis, problems in supply chains and high inflation are three major factors that affected the Czech economy last year and will continue to affect it this year. The recovery originally expected after the covid pandemic did not materialise and our country had to deal with a recession. This will continue in the first half of 2023, and a slight recovery could occur in the second half of the year. The original state budget for 2022, which envisaged a deficit of CZK 280 billion, had to be amended twice as a result of the conflict in Ukraine and its consequences. The first time the planned deficit was increased to CZK 330 billion, the second time to CZK 375 billion. In the end, the budget ended up with a deficit of CZK 360.4 billion. This year's budget is approved with a planned deficit of CZK 295 billion.

## 7 Advocacy for youth and national civic service

Civic engagement is a fundamental pillar of a thriving and compassionate society. In the Czech Republic, there is an opportunity to further embrace the spirit of civic engagement. This advocacy focuses on its vital role in our nation and why it is crucial for citizens, both young and adult, to be incentivized to engage in long-term. We also emphasize the invaluable contribution of adults and older adults in mentoring and guiding the younger generation, to be incentivized to engage in long-term.

### **Preserving Cultural Heritage and Wisdom:**

The Czech Republic is rich in history and culture. Our older generation carries within them a wealth of wisdom, traditions, and cultural knowledge. Young people can benefit greatly from the insights and experiences of their older counterparts. Whether it's understanding our cultural heritage, the history of our nation, or even practical life skills, older adults are invaluable mentors and educators.

### **Mentorship and Personal Development:**

Older citizens can serve as mentors, offering guidance and emotional support to youngsters involved in civic service. This mentorship fosters personal growth and development. It builds resilience and character and can help guide young people in their career and life choices.

### **Strengthening Social Cohesion:**

Civic service that bridges generational gaps helps to strengthen social cohesion. By promoting understanding and respect across age groups, we build a more harmonious and inclusive society. This sense of togetherness can be a powerful force for social stability and progress.

### **Incentivizing Regular Civic Engagement**

#### **Recognition and Appreciation:**

Citizens need to feel that their contributions are valued and appreciated. Public recognition and appreciation, through awards, ceremonies, or media coverage, can motivate volunteers to continue their work with renewed dedication.

#### **Skills and Personal Growth:**

Offering opportunities for skill development and personal growth can be a strong motivator. Civic service in the Czech Republic should provide training, workshops, and mentorship opportunities to help volunteers acquire new skills and enhance existing ones.

## 7 Advocacy for youth and national civic service

### **Flexible Options and Convenience:**

To incentivize long-term civic engagement, programs should be flexible and convenient. Offering options for remote or virtual civic service, as well as accommodating different schedules, can make it easier for people to contribute their time regularly.

### **Community Impact and Fulfillment:**

Highlighting the meaningful impact of civic engagement in local communities can be a powerful motivator. Demonstrating how civic service changes lives and improves society can give them a strong sense of purpose.

### **Financial and Tax Incentives:**

Exploring financial incentives or tax benefits for participants can provide an extra push for long-term engagement. These incentives could take the form of tax deductions, transportation subsidies, or stipends for civic service-related expenses.

# PILOT PROJECT

To enable the **National and European volunteering experience for youth** in Ústí nad Labem a small-scale pilot was launched in Dobrovolnické centrum, z.s. in Ústí nad Labem.

The main topics of volunteering:

- Mentoring programs for children
- Social and healthcare
- Integration of refugees and minorities
- Culture
- Sport
- Mini-project prepared and delivered by each volunteer

Funding will be provided by two European Commission programmes

- **European Solidarity Corps - 6 months experience in National volunteering scheme**
- **Interreg IVY (Interreg Volunteer Youth) - 6 months experience in volunteering abroad scheme**

Dobrovolnické centrum has already started the pilot project of the European Civic Service, 2 French volunteers are hosted in Ústí nad Labem after they have finished their civic service in France.

A small pilot project for the National volunteers granted by ESC has been launched in the Dobrovolnické centrum, the recruitment campaign has started and we are looking for 4 Czech volunteers.

# ESTONIA SCHEME

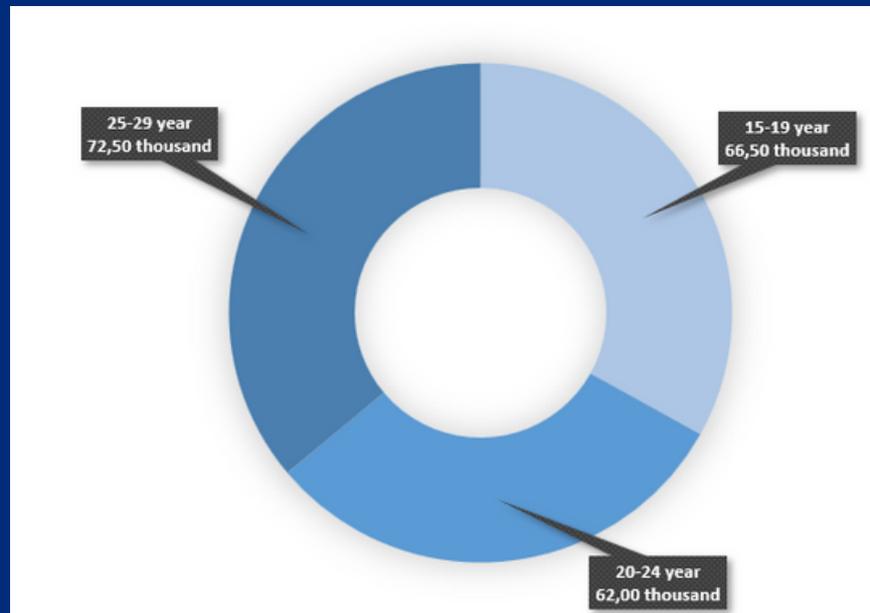
BY ESTYES

## A. YOUTH SOCIAL CONTEXT

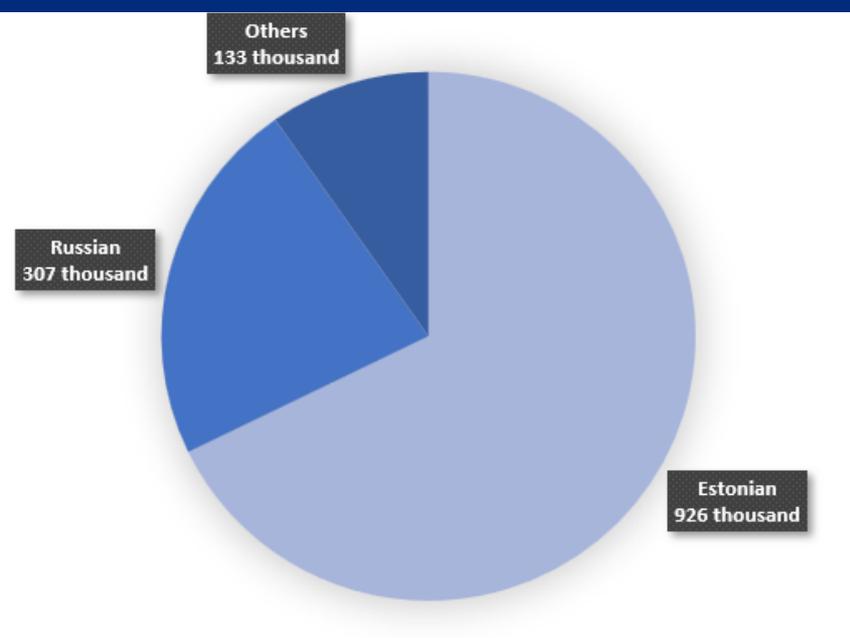
Estonian population is **1,366 mln people** in total. The age of young people is legally defined as 7-26.

According to statistics there are 66,5 thousand young people aged 15-19; 62 thousand young people aged 20-24; 72,5 thousand young people aged 25-29.

- General unemployment rate in the country in 2022 was 5,6%, among young people aged 20-26 it was **11,7%**.
- The rate of neither working nor studying young people aged 15-26 is 10,5%.
- Number of people without education from at least 15 years old and up is 2,5 thousand in total.
- Young people **are obliged to pursue education** (school, gymnasium, vocational school) until the age of 18. General level of education in the country is high.



One of major challenges currently is **poor knowledge of the state language** (Estonian) by young people from minority groups due to separation of schools to Estonian and Russian languages. This reduces career possibilities for Russian speaking youth and often forces them to leave the country and go abroad. This is one of the examples of a lack of integration and interaction between two communities.



For the record :

- The number of Estonian speaking in the country is 926 thousand
- The number of Russian speaking population in the country is 307 thousand
- The numbers of others in the country is 133 thousand

## YOUTH VOLUNTEERING

There is no dedicated governance system for youth volunteering.

Volunteering is an aspect within civil society strategic planning overseen by the Ministry of Interior. The primary cross-sectoral collaboration in the realm of youth volunteering takes place between the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Interior.

The Cohesive Estonia Strategy 2030, executed in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasizes volunteering as a vital component of community and civil society development. One of the goals of this strategy is to enhance public awareness and engagement, particularly among young people, in volunteering. To gauge progress toward this objective, one of the indicators is the volunteering participation rate, measured through surveys to determine the proportion of the population involved in volunteering within the last 12 months.

The new youth sector development plan for 2021-2035, known as “Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2021-2035,” spotlights youth volunteering through various activities and introduces a youth-specific indicator related to youth volunteering: the ratio of 15-26-year-olds engaged in organized volunteer work.

The implementation of state-level strategies and development plans relies on specific programs. The “Community Estonia 2023-2026” program is instrumental in achieving key outcomes and includes the youth sector as a significant partner. This program yields three concrete outcomes, which, while not exclusively focused on youth volunteering, are relevant to the cause:

- Connecting the efforts of youth work, NGOs, schools, and universities with civil society.
- Disseminating the Community Practice program to schools across Estonia.
- Developing youth participation at the local level.

## B. MAJOR SOCIETAL NEEDS

Long-term voluntary service could provide valuable practice for young people before they decide what they would like to do or study, or in which field they would like to work in future. It should be easier to find a “proper job” after getting valuable practical skills and confidence.

Also, national voluntary service could become a tool of integration of ethnic minorities to Estonian society, especially for those who live in isolated ethnic communities and have very little interaction with the rest of the population, which negatively affects their Estonian language skills and consequently future careers.

A new scheme articulated with economic and social needs of the country = lack of vocational experience, lack of public support of youth workers and NGOs... The help of volunteers is valuable and appreciated by many organisations. And certainly there are many fields where it could be applied in the future. For now, we mainly appreciate the occasional support given here and there based on short-term needs. Perhaps, the needs for long-term full time engagement are not specified yet. Here we can only refer to experiences created in the course of realisation of EVS/ ESC programs, which have strong international/ intercultural dimension, which creates important added value and makes it more attractive or sometimes the decisive argument for local hosting organisations to join it.

## C. LEGAL STATUS OF VOLUNTEERING

Currently, there is no law nor legal status for national volunteering as we want to see it in the frame of the project.

However, ESC program volunteers are legally recognised, also for in-country service. And it is also possible to become a volunteer through the Unemployment Office for a period of up to 3 months with full or part time engagement as a part of reintegration to the labour market. This area is well regulated.

# Estonian National Volunteering

## 1 Vision for the national service - objectives

### The qualitative objectives of this scheme

= **The main aim is to be inclusive and open for everybody.**

- more social cohesion
- better ethnic integration
- solidarity with communities
- building capacities of young people.

Taking into account that Estonia sends not more than 100 young people to long-term ESC projects first steps must be gradual and progressive

### The characteristics of this scheme

- Certainly voluntary
- Full time to provide deeper experience to young people and achieve tangible results on a community level.
  - min 3 months up to 12 months
- Legal age of young people in Estonia is 7 to 26. The age for volunteering could be 17/18 to 26 and potentially higher, up to 30 as in the ESC program.

### A stipend, preferably not taxable :

- If it is sufficient to cover living costs, nothing else is needed
- Otherwise, there could be a support for lodging costs, especially if a volunteer does service not in his/ her hometown.
- Food costs should be covered by stipend, otherwise accounting and reporting may become too difficult.
- Travel costs, if any, should be covered.

➔ It would be good if stipend is **related to either minimum salary in the country** or to stipend students receive during their university studies.

➔ Currently the minimum wage is **725 euro** (654 of which is non-taxable). There is a program to increase it to over 1000 euro in the coming 3-4 years, increasing the non-taxable part to 700 euro.

➔ This stipend should be agreed and approved at the state level as it is done for students or the ESC program now.

## 2

# Stakeholders

### The decision-makers

- **People working in** the Ministry of Education, particularly **the Youth Department and National Agency**.
- Support for the development of civil society of the **Ministry of Interior**.
- **Municipalities**, especially small ones, in rural areas as they can easily see the benefits of the project for their young people and for the community.
- **Professional youth workers** dealing directly with young people.

### The NGOs

- **Organisations with ESC experience and the quality label** :
  - easier to involve this type of organisations during the pilot phase
- **Local youth centres** working by municipalities could become a “sending” partner.

### The public/private partners and sponsors

- **A state program** (certainly)
  - especially as it needs legislation elaborated at the state level
- **Municipalities**
  - but looking at the current economic situation it does not look realistic.
- **All organisations involved in youth work** could become partners of the program in the long run

## 3

# Fields of intervention and duration of the mission

**The length could be min 3 months up to 12 months.**

## 4

# Support for volunteers

*Training is desirable - as preparation for the service at least*

- it could be organized like in the case of the ESC program with on-arrival (service starting) training, mid-term and final evaluation.
  - *But it depends on the content and aims of the national program.*
- Professional training should be provided by the hosting placement according to the needs and service conditions.
  - General training on volunteering could be around one week in total or roughly a day per month of service, combined in max 3 sessions (beginning, mid-term, final).
  - Specific/ project related training could be added when needed.

## Legal framework

Lack of legal framework is one of the major obstacle for launching of the program. Currently there is no law and therefore a legal status for national volunteering as we want to see it in the frame of the project. However ESC program volunteers are legally recognised, also for in-country service. It is also possible to become a volunteer through the Unemployment Office for a period of up to 3 months with full or part time engagement as a reintegration to the labour market. This area is well-regulated and this possibility is widely used. There is regulation for national volunteers working in rescue teams, with police and as social workers with prisoners. But these are rather specific cases which have nothing to do with civil service as an educational and engaging program for young people - as we wish to see it.

## Volunteers

There should be a stipend paid, preferably not taxable. If it is sufficient to cover living costs, nothing else is needed. Otherwise there could be a support for lodging costs, especially if a volunteer does service not in his/ her hometown. Food costs should be covered by stipend, otherwise accounting and reporting may become too difficult. Travel costs, if any, should be covered. It would be good if stipend is related to either minimum salary in the country or to stipend students receive during their university studies.

if we imagine that one month of service costs 1000 euro (round figure, probably close to the reality) and the duration is 10 months on average, we get 10 000 euro per person. Then 20 volunteers per year cost 200 000 euro, which could be the 1st year. With the ambition to increase to 50 by the 5th year we come to a maximum of 1,5 mln euro for a 5 years plan. However we should not forget about all administrative costs of all structures involved to run such a program which can easily make it double.

**NB!** Table below shows one of many possible financial scenarios and it is based on current (October 2023) regulations and rates. Stipend set as 654 euro is non-taxable minimum. With its increase to 700 euro, as government plans, stipend should be also raised.

ITEM	EVALUATED as
Stipend	654 euro
Insurance	national health security scheme
Trainings	120 euro
Coordinators (human resources)	220 euro
Total cost	994 euro

## 6 Political/economical situation

The economic situation in Estonia is difficult, the country has been in an economic recession for the last 6 quarters. The energy crisis, problems in supply chains, extremely high inflation rate (the highest in EU!) and high bank interest nowadays which slow down investments are the major factors affecting the economy from 2022. The quick recovery experienced after the Covid rapidly changed to a deepening recession since the beginning of the war in Ukraine.

The state budget faces serious deficits caused by increased expenditure for defence, help to Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees as well as increasing costs for social sphere and education. At the same time state income shows signs of decrease. Many companies cut personnel or go bankrupt, which in turn increases the unemployment rate in the country.

Newly formed, after elections to the Parliament in March 2023, liberal government has to pull back from the promises given to voters before the elections because of an extremely tight budget with a high deficit. This leads to high tensions in society (recent teachers' strike is one example) and political confrontation of unprecedented scale.

These new elements make the expected introduction of a national voluntary program in Estonia not quite feasible at the time being.

## 7 Advocacy for youth volunteering program

Long-term voluntary service could provide valuable practice for young people before they decide what they would like to do or study, in which field they would like to work in future

It should be easier to find a “proper job” after getting valuable practical skills and confidence.

National voluntary service could become a tool for the integration of ethnic minorities into Estonian society, especially for those who live in isolated ethnic communities and have very little interaction with the rest of the population, which negatively affects their Estonian language skills and consequently future careers.

# PILOT PROJECT

Long-term voluntary service could provide **valuable practice** for young people before they decide what they would like to do or study, in which field they would like to work in future.

It should be easier to find a “proper job” after getting valuable practical skills and confidence.

National voluntary service could become a tool for the **integration of ethnic minorities into Estonian society**, especially for those who live in isolated ethnic communities and have very little interaction with the rest of the population, which negatively affects their Estonian language skills and consequently future careers.



# ROMANIAN SCHEME

## A. YOUTH SOCIAL CONTEXT

### National Voluntary Civic Service

#### 1 Vision for the national service - objectives - Medium Term

- 1.To reach at least 5% of the total number of youngsters per year;
- 2.To develop the civic and entrepreneurial competencies, as well as the other 8 key competencies framed by the European level, through non-formal education during their service;
- 3.To fill the gap between skills and labour market needs, for young people, increasing employability after the volunteering stage;
4. To gather young people from diverse social or economic backgrounds during that service;

#### 2 Stakeholders

Partnership with Youth Coalition (Youth National Foundation, Youth Federation, School Council)  
Romanian Ministry of: Youth, Labour

## 3 Fields of intervention and duration of the mission

1. **Social Integration and Inclusion:** Youngsters in Romania also require social support and opportunities for active participation in society. Promoting social inclusion, combating discrimination, and providing platforms for youth engagement in decision-making processes are crucial for their overall well-being.
2. **Health and Well-being:** Addressing the health and well-being needs of young people is vital for their personal development and future productivity. Ensuring access to quality healthcare services, mental health support, and promoting healthy lifestyles can positively impact their economic and social outcomes.
3. **Infrastructure and Connectivity:** Enhancing infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, and improving digital connectivity can help bridge the urban-rural divide and provide equal opportunities for youngsters across the country.
4. **Cultural and Recreational Activities:** Providing access to cultural and recreational activities fosters creativity, personal growth, and social interaction among youngsters. Supporting initiatives in arts, sports, and community-based projects can contribute to their holistic development.

The sectors where voluntary is most important in Romania are:

- Taking care of children or for underprivileged communities;
- Taking care of old people who have no family nearby;
- Help and protect women from domestic violence;
- Join animal rights activists who take care of animals;
- Join environmental volunteers who are trying to preserve Romania's wilderness.

Duration of the mission: between 6 months and 12 months

## 4 Support for volunteers

Romanian volunteering law allows to be reimbursed for: food, on a daily basis, transportation and other cost of the activity (materials, for example). The minimum monthly income in Romania per person is around 500 EUR, without taxes. The organization should be supported with a payment of the coordination (volunteer coordinator – named trainer and activity coordinator – named youth worker), management and activity cost payment.

Training should be mandatory. The type of training: civic, soft skills, communication, ecology and activity-related training.

5 days in the first week, then 2-3 days per month, in the first 3 months of service and 1-2 days per month after 3 months.

## 5 Financial and legal framework

All the organizations who are working under the volunteer law standards in Romania should apply to host volunteers, no matter the profile. The priorities should be set on an annual basis.

The Volunteer Law in Romania is regulated by Law No. 78/2014 on the regulation of volunteering activities in Romania. This law provides a legal framework for carrying out volunteer activities in the country and promotes citizens' involvement in actions of general interest.

### BUDGET ASSUMPTION CALCULATED PER VOLUNTEER

\*

ITEM	EVALUATED as
Stipend	450 euro
Insurance	National health security scheme. (for NEET young people Suppose to be a cost for insurance 400 euro/year)
Trainings	100 euro
Coordinators (human resources)	150 euro
Total cost	700 euro

## 6 Political/economical situation

The specific relationship between Romania's political and economic conditions and the demand for volunteer services is subject to the local context and government policies. In response to these conditions, volunteer organizations and individuals in Romania often adapt their efforts to address the evolving needs of their communities and the country as a whole.

1. **Economic Growth:** Romania has been experiencing moderate economic growth, with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of around 3-4% in the years leading up to 2021.
2. **Unemployment:** Unemployment rates have been gradually decreasing but remained relatively high compared to other EU countries, with an unemployment rate of around 5-6% in 2021.
3. **Income Inequality:** Income inequality has been a concern in Romania, with a significant gap between urban and rural areas and disparities in income distribution.
4. **Minimum Wage:** The minimum wage in Romania was around 2,300 Romanian Lei (RON) per month in 2021, which was an important economic factor for many workers.
5. **Poverty and Social Assistance:** Romania had a significant portion of its population at risk of poverty or social exclusion, with various social assistance programs in place to address these issues.
6. **Non-profit and NGO Sector:** The economic and political climate can influence the funding available to non-profit organizations and NGOs in Romania. Scarce funding can lead these organizations to rely more heavily on volunteers to sustain their operations and deliver critical services.

## 7 Advocacy for youth volunteering program

By advocating for youth volunteering, we promote a sense of civic duty, encourage empathy, and help bridge generational gaps. Furthermore, these initiatives have the potential to address critical social issues, as the energy and fresh perspectives of young volunteers can bring innovative solutions to longstanding challenges. Advocating for the growth and sustainability of youth volunteering programs is an investment in the development of future leaders and the betterment of society as a whole.

In Romania, citizen's feelings and impressions about volunteering are constrained and ambivalent. Like other countries of the ancient communist Eastern bloc, the word voluntary can have a negative connotation because it is a synonym for free labour and a referral to the former communist dictatorship. Some citizens also perceive it as a way for the state to discharge its obligations and entrust its missions to NGOs or individuals (in 2008 73% of Romanian citizens thought volunteering wouldn't be necessary if the State were doing its job).

The number of people involved in volunteering has increased, in 2006, 18% of adults did some volunteering. Most Romanian volunteers have had a good experience of this. A report of the Directorate General Education and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission revealed that a majority of Romanian volunteers have a positive return of their experience: an opportunity to make new friends, happy to aid the community, 41% stated that they enjoyed the opportunity to implement new ideas through volunteering.

## B. PILOT PROJECTS PLANNED

### STEP 1: DRAFTING THE PROGRAMME

- Romanian Youths are defined by the law as a person between 14 and 35 years old
- Romanian laws that are applicable: Volunteering law, Internship law, Apprenticeship Law
- Targeted number: 5% of youths
- Budget 10 million for the first year; to be increased in the next 3 years

### STEP 2: PARTNERSHIP WITH YOUTH COALITION (YOUTH NATIONAL FOUNDATION, YOUTH FEDERATION, SCHOOL COUNCIL)

### STEP 3: PITCH THE IDEA TO THE ROMANIAN MINISTRY OF: YOUTH, LABOUR

The structure:

- National Coordinator (Agency) to accredit NGOs or a Federation who will coordinate NGOs
- Hosting NGOs or public institutions
- Coordinator of the volunteers / Coordinator of the activities (mission)
- Trainer (Volunteer coordinator or a trainer from a pool of trainers)
- Mentor/Coach
- List of activities: description, duration, lead to which learning outcome for the volunteers
- Volunteer/team of volunteers

### First pilot experiments from our country network

Thanks to the networking and lobbying action of the European Grand Tour project in 2022, we were able to test, together with the associative network actors in Romania, a first pilot experience involving 4 national young people and 4 European volunteers in Bucharest. The hosting base was the European Solidarity Corps, used in its “in country” and “abroad” declination. This enabled the young volunteers to work together full-time. There was the possibility for national volunteers to leave after the local engagement phase in Bucharest.

Pending the generalisation of national volunteering in Romania, we will continue to experiment with forms of paid and continuous engagement for young people. In 2024, we plan to engage young Romanians to work together with young French Neets on missions of general interest all across Romania (30 French and equivalent number of Romanians), at the same time volunteers will be engaged in the construction of cultural events for an innovative collaboration project between Romanian and European cities (10 Romanians and 10 Youth from other countries, in Timisoara), as well as for missions for helping Ukrainian Refugees (20 Romanians funded, split between Timisoara and Bucharest).

# GREEK SCHEME

## A. YOUTH SOCIAL CONTEXT

**Name for the scheme/project**  
**National Civic Service Corps**  
**(Εθνικό Σώμα Υπηρεσίας του Πολίτη)**  
**By ECOGENIA**

### 1 Vision for a national youth civic service scheme - objectives

A **paid civic service programme** would combine volunteering with professional training and skills development, meanwhile creating high-value work opportunities for youth and generating social impact. Combining these different aspects, a civic service programme would **leverage young people's readiness to fight for a better future**, and **recognise their service by valuing the time they invest in bettering their communities through compensation and dedicated professional development opportunities**. In addition, the program would upskill them and prepare them to approach future job opportunities and beyond, with an active citizenship mindset.

The objectives include:

1. To **address** the consistently high **youth unemployment** rates of Greece (27% for people under 25; Eurostat, 2023) by providing a paid service term for unemployed/under-employed youth
2. To mobilise Greek youth to **accelerate the national sustainable development agenda**
3. To equip young people with the **critical skills that are in high demand** to successfully lead Greece's green transition
4. To **activate and empower future generations** to create a sustainable and equitable future
5. To provide every young person the opportunity to **dedicate up to a year of paid work leading localised change** and addressing community needs across the 13 regions of Greece
6. To **foster community resiliency** at the local level and preserve Greece's natural and cultural wealth

### 2 Stakeholders

#### Key decision-makers in implementing a national civic service scheme

- **Central Government:** Ministry of Labour, Ministry of the Environment and Energy, Ministry of the Climate Crisis and Civil Protection, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Social Cohesion
- **Local Government:** Municipalities and Regions
- **Other Entities:** The National Employment Service

#### Other key stakeholders:

- CSOs can be engaged as host sites - ideally ones that hold the European Solidarity Corps Quality label or a national civic service quality label
- Youth/student organizations and councils, universities/colleges can become recruitment partners
- Private sector can come in as funders
- Municipalities, cities, regions can be key programme partners, funders or host sites

#### Potential public and private partners/sponsors for funding:

- **Initial phase (Pilot):** Individual and institutional donors
- **Scaling phase:** Foundations, corporate funding, and national funds
- **Institutionalization phase:** Municipalities (fee for service), Foundations, corporate funding, and national funds

### 3 Fields of intervention and duration of the mission

A national civic service corps would provide a vehicle for young Greeks to mobilise to address the biggest national challenges Greece is facing today, while they receive critical skills development. Among others, this could include climate action and conservation projects, social cohesion initiatives and cultural heritage preservation work. The **priority impact areas (fields of intervention)** that a national civic service corps could serve are listed below, acknowledging that the list is not exhaustive:

1. **Ecotourism & Trail Building** - To build a sustainable Greek tourism industry that is inclusive for all, has minimal environmental impact, and educates and benefits local communities. Youth can be at the forefront of realizing this vision by participating in an ecotourism civic service term.
2. **Active Citizenship Education** - Offering an opportunity for intergenerational connection, whereby corps members are trained to facilitate meaningful educational workshops for children that are centred around the intersectionality of civic engagement and sustainable development. Our aim is to empower young children to be active citizens.
3. **Disaster Preparedness & Relief** - Corps members can be mobilised to address the climate emergency and work to enhance community sensitization and preparedness ahead of natural disasters, advance fuel reduction and anti-flood work, (re)plant trees, restore and build structures, rehabilitate areas and provide coordinated relief support.
4. **Environmental Conservation** - Teams of young people would act as environmental stewards, leading climate mitigation projects, promoting sustainable business and construction practices, retrofitting spaces, improving public parks, and other local needs-based environmental improvement work.

In terms of the **format of the civic service term**, this should be:

- on a **voluntary basis**
- targeting youth **18-30 years old** from diverse backgrounds and regions
- through an **inclusive** recruitment process
- at **full-time capacity** (40 hours/week)
- for a **duration of 6-12 months** (with 6 months being the minimum, and 8 months being the average)

### 4 Support for corps members in Greece

A civic service corps would equip youth with **civic and entrepreneurial competencies** through non-formal education, and address the gap between skills and labour market needs, thus increasing the employability of participants post-service. It would also allow youth to engage in a year of paid work for the community and *for the greater good*, thus yielding high social impact and SROI.

To achieve that, the service term should provide the following support to corps members:

- **Onboarding**: A structured and formalized onboarding to support youth in entering and navigating the experience, and instil the values of active citizenship in them.
- **Training**: Professional development and skills training incorporated throughout the service term to allow youth to gain high-demand skills that would match them with high-paying job opportunities in the future.
- **Compensation**: Corps members would receive stipends and allowances to cover basic needs for the duration of their service. This would include social security benefits. To ensure inclusivity, stipends should cover basic living expenses, and communal housing or appropriate compensation should be provided. Public transportation cards, if available, should also be given.
- **Mentoring**: Ongoing coaching, mentoring, and navigation for "post-service" support should also be provided.

## 5 Financial and legal framework

Greece's volunteering law, Law 4873/2021 for the Protection of Volunteering, was enacted in December 2021. As the law does not fully recognize the provision of a stipend for community-based work, an additional legal framework and administrative infrastructure should come into place to facilitate the scaling of civic service to a national programme.

A national infrastructure would establish a **national civic service corps**, funded by the state with a **minimum of 80%** contribution to corps-members' stipends, **social security covered** and a **training subsidy extended to the organisations** running civic service programmes (100 euros per corps member).

ITEM	EVALUATED as
Stipend (based on minimum wage)	700-800 € (depending on project location) for full time service
Insurance & Social Security	fully covered (donated) by the state
Training cost	100 € pp for the organisation fully covered by the State
Management cost	100 € pp for the organisation fully covered by the State
Total cost	900-1,000 € per corps member

**Total for 1 year: 12,600-14,000 €/1 corps member**

**Total for 5 years: 63,000-70,000 €/1 corps member**

## 6 Socio-political considerations

Greece faces challenges related to **youth unemployment** (27% for people under 25; Eurostat, 2023), while the education system is mostly curriculum-based and does not prepare youth with practical, leadership and team-based skills. By engaging young people in long-term service projects, an investment can be made in skills development and fostering a future-proof workforce.

With 26% of the population at **risk of poverty or social exclusion** (ELSTAT, 2023), the country faces significant social challenges as a result of the multiple consecutive crises of the past decade. Rural areas are facing decline and many remote villages are on the verge of extinction, posing the threat of imminent loss of the country's cultural heritage. Service projects in these regions can bring economic activity and rejuvenation. **Over-tourism** is another pressing issue, causing detrimental environmental and societal impacts. Mobilizing youth in ecotourism-related projects can help address this problem.

With its **decarbonisation mandate**, and lagging progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the country also needs a young and skilled workforce that will be in a position to **lead the country's green transition**. With natural disasters only expected to increase in number and intensity in coming years, there is a growing need for trained communities and citizens to respond to emergencies. Young people are seeking practical points of entry into the job market, and service projects could be the ground to train them in preventing and responding to disasters in a practical manner.

### On the introduction of civic service:

In Greece, the term "service" is often associated with mandatory military service for males, creating a negative connotation among young Greeks. The volunteering movement is widespread but the relevant law is only recent (2021). There is a great opportunity to introduce civic service, and rebrand service as an opportunity in which both male and female youth can participate on a voluntary basis to serve their country's sustainable development needs.

By engaging young people in long-term civic service projects, the country can address the above-mentioned issues, provide vocational experience, and support youth workers and NGOs in their vital roles.

## 7 Advocacy for a national civic service scheme

For civic service to scale to the national level in Greece, a national civic service agency is proposed to be launched following the French model. Greece and France also have similar legal systems, so the French model lends itself as a roadmap for institutionalising civic service in Greece.

A national agency could be launched under the umbrella of the **Public Employment Service** and/or the **General Secretariat of Vocational Education, Training, Lifelong Learning and Youth (G.G.E.K.D.V.M. & N.)** or be standalone.

The argument for seeking to approach scaling through synergy with the Public Employment Service is that civic service has a central role to play in addressing youth unemployment. The argument for approaching it through the General Secretariat stems from the Secretariat's mandate to arm the country's workforce with modern qualifications needed to improve citizens' skills and the competitiveness of the Greek economy. The idea is that part of the budget that is currently funnelled to unemployment benefits and lifelong skills development through these entities respectively, could be redirected to provide service stipends, giving an opportunity to unemployed youth to gain critical professional skills and serve their country's most urgent sustainable development needs.

## B. PILOT PROJECT PLANNED

In Greece, Ecogenia, a non-profit organisation established in 2021, has been introducing the concept of civic service and testing it on the ground through small pilot projects to provide the proof of concept.

Since its inception, Ecogenia has executed **3 small-scale pilot projects** achieving the following impact:

- 25 cohort members engaged
- 6,501 hours served in the community
- 92 hours of training invested in each cohort member
- 598 direct beneficiaries
- 1,018 people reached

The cost of these projects has been covered through funding by foundations, corporate and individual donors. This is envisaged to be an interim solution to get piloting off the ground, and demonstrate the potential impact, while the organisation also invests in advocacy efforts to make the case for a national and publicly funded (as described above) civic service corps.

Ecotourism Pilot, 2022:

- 7 cohort members
- service term of 10 weeks
- monthly stipend per cohort member (part-time service term): 418 €
- monthly cost per cohort member (incl. social security and taxes): €661.5
- accommodation offered by the community

Education Pilot, 2022:

- 10 cohort members
- service term of 10 weeks
- monthly stipend per cohort member (part-time service term): 650 €
- monthly cost per cohort member (incl. social security and taxes): €935
- accommodation at own expense of cohort members

Ecotourism Pilot, 2023 (cost increased due to inflation):

- 8 cohort members
- 1 team leader
- service term of 10 weeks
- monthly stipend per cohort member (part-time service term): 503 €
- monthly cost per cohort member (incl. social security and taxes): €715.4
- monthly team leader stipend: 640.98 € (total monthly cost 913.5 €)
- accommodation offered by the community

***Disclaimer: the above represents the costs incurred by Ecogenia to test the civic service model through private funds and on a part-time term basis. Costs for the organisation would significantly drop, if advocacy efforts were successful and a portion of the stipends along with social security costs were covered by state funding.***

## THANK YOU!

We are extremely thankful to the **French National Agency Erasmus+** and all the **Erasmus+ Programme** for their valuable contributions. **All the partners in the project** have been essential in promoting active citizenship, volunteering, and social cohesion. Their initiatives have instilled a sense of duty and responsibility in young people, empowering them to make a positive difference in their communities. Through engaging in civil society projects, these young people have gained essential skills, knowledge, and experience that have benefitted both them personally and the communities they served.

The Erasmus+ Programme has played a vital role in fostering intercultural understanding and cooperation among European countries. By providing opportunities for young people to study, work, and volunteer abroad, it has broadened their horizons and fostered a sense of European identity and solidarity. The integrated promotion of active citizenship, volunteering, and intercultural exchanges has left a lasting and profound impact on the lives of numerous young people.

**As a testimony of commitment to Youth programs in Europe, all associated partners led by the end of the Program and for upcoming EU elections, a campaign gathering eventually supports (combined, organizations representing more than 30,000 volunteers and 1000 youth workers) to increase Youth and especially European Solidarity Corps funds in Europe**



Malta Council for the  
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