

# European Solidarity Corps: First volunteers in Italy to help rebuild earthquake-hit regions

The 16 young [European Solidarity Corps](#) volunteers – participating in the project ‘European Youth for Norcia’ led by Italian organisation ‘Kora’ – will help reconstruct historic buildings heavily damaged by the earthquakes, including the Basilica of San Benedetto and the Monastery of the Benedictines. They will also work with the young and the elderly of Norcia, organising workshops, outdoor activities and cultural events.

Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: *“Less than a year after President Juncker announced his idea to create a European Solidarity Corps, it is up and running, delivering relief to people who need it. Norcia and its citizens have suffered greatly, and I am proud of the young Europeans who are showing solidarity by helping this community recover. I am looking forward to seeing the projects myself and to meeting the volunteers and local authorities during my visit on 4 and 5 September. With their efforts, especially to rebuild the historic Basilica of San Benedetto, these young people are also building a bridge from Europe’s past to its future, an important contribution to the upcoming European Year of Cultural Heritage.”*

The volunteers heading to Norcia come from Austria, France, Greece, Hungary, Portugal, and Spain. The project they are participating in is one of three projects under the European Solidarity Corps currently selected for activities in the Italian regions affected by earthquakes. In September this year, additional European Solidarity Corps members will join the other two projects, led by the organisation Arci Culture Solidari and the Municipality of Pescara respectively. In total, 230 European Solidarity Corps members will support Italian communities hit by the earthquakes until 2020, and €790,000 has been granted for these projects.

## **Background**

On 24 August 2016, a powerful earthquake struck near Norcia, causing major damage to the towns in the region and killing approximately 300 people. The town of Norcia suffered structural damage, fortunately without fatal injuries but leaving many people displaced. On 30 October 2016, another high-magnitude earthquake rocked Norcia, causing further heavy damage to the city.

Now that the immediate disaster relief is completed, rebuilding is beginning. The European Solidarity Corps, announced by President Juncker during his 2016 [State of the Union address](#), was set up precisely to answer needs such as these, and to give young people between the age of 18 and 30 the opportunity to take part in this type of solidarity activities across the EU.

The European Solidarity Corps projects are part of a wide range of EU support

following the earthquakes of 2016 and 2017 in the Italian regions of Abruzzo, Lazio, Marche and Umbria. In June, the [Commission proposed €1.2 billion](#) from the [EU Solidarity Fund](#), the highest amount ever mobilised under this fund of which Italy is already the largest beneficiary.

Since its [launch on 7 December 2016](#), more than 34,000 young people have joined the European Solidarity Corps. [In March 2017](#), matching with organisations began; since then, about 15,000 participants have been contacted and 700 placements accepted. The aim is to have 100,000 young people taking part in the European Solidarity Corps by the end of 2020.

On 30 May 2017 the Commission presented a [proposal](#) to put the European Solidarity Corps on a firm footing, with a budget of €341.5 million for the years 2018-2020 and a dedicated legal base. In addition, the Commission proposed to extend opportunities for young people. As well as offering volunteering, traineeships and job placements, in the future the European Solidarity Corps will also offer participants the opportunity to set up their own solidarity projects or to volunteer as a group. The proposal for a draft Regulation now needs to be adopted by the European Parliament and the Council before it can enter into force.

#### **For more information**

[Factsheet: EU-support in Italy](#)

[Factsheet: Taking the European Solidarity Corps forward](#)

[Factsheet for organisations](#)

[MEMO: Questions and Answers on the European Solidarity Corps](#)

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