

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](#)

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

[European Solidarity Corps Portal registration page](#)

[European Solidarity Corps facebook page](#)

Twitter: [#EUSolidarityCorps](#)

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Follow Commissioner Navracsics on [Twitter](#)

Follow Commissioner Thyssen on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

[June 2017-Euro area international](#)

trade in goods surplus €26.6 bn-€7.1 bn surplus for EU28

The first estimate for **euro area** (EA19) exports of goods to the rest of the world in June 2017 was €187.2 billion, an increase of 3.9% compared with June 2016 (€180.2 bn). Imports from the rest of the world stood at €160.7 bn, a rise of 6.2% compared with June 2016 (€151.3 bn). As a result, the **euro area** recorded a €26.6 bn surplus in trade in goods with the rest of the world in June 2017, compared with +€28.9 bn in June 2016. **Intra-euro area** trade rose to €157.5 bn in June 2017, up by 3.5% compared with June 2016.

These data are released by **Eurostat**, the statistical office of the European Union.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

July 2017-Annual inflation stable at 1.3% in the euro area-EU stable at 1.5%

Euro area annual inflation was 1.3% in July 2017, stable compared with June 2017. In July 2016 the rate was 0.2%. **European Union** annual inflation was 1.5% in July 2017, also stable compared to June 2017. A year earlier the rate was 0.2%. These figures come from **Eurostat**, the statistical office of the European Union.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

Trend of converging working time across 28 EU Member States has stalled

(Dublin, Ireland): The difference in working time between workers in the 28 EU Member States remains large and is especially marked between the 'older' 15 EU Member States and the 13 new Member States that joined the EU since 2004, according to new research from Eurofound. This is particularly apparent when comparing annual leave entitlements for workers: a gap of 2.5 working

weeks is evident between the most generous and the least generous. The trend of converging working time between the 28 EU Member States has clearly stalled.

The latest annual report, [Developments in working time 2015–2016](#), shows significant disparities in the average amount of collectively agreed annual leave days between workers in the EU Member States. With the addition of public holidays, ‘high-leave’ countries include Croatia with 41 leave days, Denmark with 39 days and Germany with 37. These should be compared with the figures for ‘low-leave countries’, such as Ireland, Hungary and Estonia, all which come in at just 28 days annual leave. The average figure for the EU28 was 33.8 days – 34.7 days in the EU15 and 31.3 days in the Member States that have joined the EU since 2004 (the NMS13).

Collective bargaining plays an important role in determining the duration of working time in many of the EU28 countries; it plays a lesser or sometimes negligible role in some of the NMS13. The nature and extent of this role also differs widely across countries, with bargaining at different levels (intersectoral, sectoral and company level) being more or less important.

The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK were the only countries registering changes to collectively agreed weekly hours between 2015 and 2016. Over the same period, the EU15 average was reduced from 37.6 hours to 37.5; consequently, this resulted in a reduction for the EU28 from 38.1 to 38 hours. At 35.6 hours, France remains the country with the shortest average collectively agreed working week in the EU. In some Member States – Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovenia – working time is not generally defined through collective bargaining.

The ‘actual hours worked’ are the hours that individuals spend in work activities, including production activities, ancillary activities, short breaks, and education and training necessary for successfully carrying out the job tasks. In the EU, full-time employees in the UK report the longest usual weekly working hours in their main jobs in 2016 – 42.3 hours, 0.1 hours less than in 2014 and 2015. They are followed by employees in Cyprus (41.7 hours), Austria (41.4 hours), Greece (41.2 hours), Poland and Portugal (41.1 hours). Employees in Denmark report the shortest weekly hours (37.8 hours). This is 4.5 hours less per week than their counterparts in the UK – the equivalent of more than five working weeks per year.

The report also looks at working time across selected sectors, including chemicals, metalworking, banking, retail, and public administration. It finds that across all selected sectors, the NMS13 countries work significantly more hours compared to EU15.

The report aims to provide a definitive sense of which EU workers work the most hours. It complements Eurofound’s database of wages, working time and collective disputes, which since 2000 has provided information about the systems in place that define working time as well as some of the main outcomes of these systems. In addition, the report updates and complements the report [Working time developments in the 21st century](#), which covers data on a range of aspects of working time, including collectively agreed working

hours between 2000 and 2014.

Publication: [Developments in working time 2015–2016](#)

[Database of wages, working time and collective disputes](#)

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