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(Notices)

NOTICES FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS, BODIES, OFFICES AND
AGENCIES

COUNCIL

**Council conclusions on investing in Europe's youth with particular regard to the European Solidarity
Corps**

(2017/C 62/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING:

- the European Council Conclusions of the meeting of 15 December 2016 which call for work to be taken forward on the recent Commission initiatives dedicated to youth, including those on mobility, education, skills development and the European Solidarity Corps ⁽¹⁾;
- the Joint Declaration on the EU's legislative priorities for 2017 that prioritises addressing the social dimension of the European Union, notably through the enhancement of the Youth Employment Initiative and the creation of a European Solidarity Corps ⁽²⁾;

UNDERLINES

- the importance of acting to modernise and improve the quality of education systems in the EU, from early childhood to higher education, so as to provide a high quality education for all, especially in light of the latest OECD PISA 2015 results, which clearly show the need to improve the efficiency of education and training systems, and in particular the learning outcomes of pupils with a disadvantaged socioeconomic and/or migrant background;
- the necessity to renew efforts to promote and safeguard the values of the EU as set out in Article 2 of TEU, in particular its values of respect of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minority, so as to continue fostering young people's sense of European identity and enhance their positive image of and trust ⁽³⁾ in the EU project, particularly in the light of the worrying spread of populist sentiments and sense of detachment among some young people from the common European project;
- that fighting youth unemployment remains a top priority for many Member States, and takes note of the Commission's proposals for additional funding for the Youth Employment Initiative, the continued roll out of the Youth Guarantee, and measures addressing youth unemployment, which include support for quality apprenticeships, work-based learning as well as the mobility of apprentices;
- the importance of further expanding opportunities for young people to actively engage in volunteering and social initiatives both in their own country and abroad, as a way to develop soft skills and competences enabling them to have a smoother transition to adulthood and the world of work. Furthermore, greater opportunities to take an active role at community level will significantly contribute to the development of those social and civic skills and competences needed for young people's active participation in strengthening and building more inclusive and democratic societies;

NOTES

- the Communications from the European Commission of 7 December 2016 on 'Investing in Europe's Youth', on 'Improving and modernising education' and on 'A European Solidarity Corps' ⁽⁴⁾;

⁽¹⁾ EUCO 34/16.

⁽²⁾ Doc. 15375/16.

⁽³⁾ Eurobarometer 85/16

⁽⁴⁾ Docs 15418/16, 15420/16 and 15421/16.

- the initiative ‘Investing in Europe’s Youth’ which covers three key areas of cross-sectoral dimension and of critical importance for young people: better opportunities through education and training, solidarity, participation, learning mobility, and employment, and
- in particular, the European Commission’s communication on the European Solidarity Corps and its intention to use in the first phase the existing financing programmes ⁽¹⁾, resources and quality standards, as established amongst others for the European Voluntary Service (EVS), and the EU Employment and Social Innovation programme (EaSI), to enable young people to participate in the European Solidarity Corps;

URGES THE COMMISSION

- to present during the first semester of 2017
 - an appropriate legislative and evidence-based proposal with due respect of principle of subsidiarity for the operation of the eventual second phase of the European Solidarity Corps, covering both its volunteering and occupational strands, ensuring cost effectiveness and, following consultation with Member States, relevant stakeholders and young people,
 - a clear framework, including how the European Solidarity Corps is to be funded, implemented, and evaluated,
- to ensure that the European Solidarity Corps will not only be capable of reaching its objective in terms of young people’s active involvement and participation but also ensure quality placements and projects with a strong learning dimension which enable positive outcomes for young people’s future personal, social and professional development, whilst avoiding undesirable effects on the labour market.

⁽¹⁾ Process regarding the approval of funds for Erasmus+ programme for 2017 is under way.