

Bridging the gap: Over 1,600 young Europeans share their EU youth programme experiences

This year, over 1,600 Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps volunteers are sharing their stories of adventure, learning, discovery and connections. Why? Because they wanted to spread the word and encourage others to join EU youth programmes.

When each of these young Europeans applied to be part of Erasmus+ Youth or the European Solidarity Corps, they had an idea of what they would learn but as they looked back on their exchanges, they realised they gained so much more than they expected.

For more than 35 years, [Erasmus+ Youth](#) has provided opportunities for young people living in Europe to learn new skills, gain new perspectives and expand their horizons. Also funded by the European Union, the [European Solidarity Corps](#) was launched with a similar mission, to provide even more chances for young Europeans to learn through volunteering experiences and solidarity projects both abroad and in their own communities. Both programmes have led many to be more confident, with more skills and greater awareness and appreciation for different cultures.

To find out what each young person had experienced, a campaign was launched by the European Commission's Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture asking participants to share their stories. This initiative received an incredible contribution of 1,620 testimonials. Each response demonstrated the many benefits of signing up for one of the programmes.

Based in Türkiye, Ahmet Colak discovered the European Solidarity Corps while watching videos on YouTube. He had thought about doing something similar in the past and applied for a few projects that needed volunteers straight away. Soon, he was invited to join one in Bulgaria. Full of excitement, he set off to a small historical town named Petrich.

"We went to the schools and talked about Erasmus+ Youth," Ahmet reflected on his time in Bulgaria. "We met many local people at the schools and established very good friendships."

Ahmet and his team's main mission was to work on the local museum. He worked with others to organise photo competitions, games and prizes. While a friend was focused on designing posters, Ahmet was responsible for managing social media. Looking back on his time abroad, he noticed his perspective on several situations of his life changed as he started to look at the big picture.





Originally from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 22-year-old Silvana Šavrljuga also took part in a European Solidarity Corps volunteer programme which took her to Aachen, Germany, where she worked with people with disabilities. It was the first time she had lived away from her family, but Silvana enjoyed building strong relationships with her new colleagues and experiencing everything from baking cookies to folding laundry at her workplace. When she was not on duty, Silvana was able to fit in several holidays to explore different parts of Europe. She visited the Eifel region and the historic town of Alfeld (Leine) in Germany, and the Tivoli Stadion Tirol in Austria – all with friends from her team at work.

Coming from Italy, and after spending three months volunteering in Malaga, Spain, Maria says everyone should take part in the European Solidarity Corps. While working in a communications team, Maria was able to take photos and videos with professional equipment and create graphics for social media. “I worked in a fantastic team, improved my language skills in English and Spanish and grew personally and professionally,” she told us. As well as building skills and confidence for your career, Maria points out that signing up to the European Solidarity Corps is also a great way to discover a foreign country when you’re on a budget.



Are you also interested in experiencing the thrill of taking part in an EU youth programme? Check out the opportunities available on [Erasmus+ Youth](#) and the [European Solidarity Corps](#) today. You can also stay up-to-date with the latest news concerning European youth by visiting the [European Youth Portal](#).