



Brussels, 13.7.2015  
COM(2015) 335 final

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND  
THE COUNCIL**

**Annual report on the implementation of the EU Aid Volunteers Initiative in 2014**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

In view of the increasing number of natural and man-made disasters in the world over the last years, the humanitarian organisations need more well-prepared people to support them helping communities struck by disasters. As envisaged by the Treaty of Lisbon<sup>1</sup>, the European Union established the EU Aid Volunteers initiative. The objective is to contribute to strengthening the Union's capacity to provide needs-based humanitarian aid and to strengthening the capacity and resilience of vulnerable or disaster-affected communities in third countries, while giving the European citizens an opportunity to be involved in humanitarian action in third countries showing solidarity with people in need.

Article 27 of Regulation (EU) No 375/2014 setting up the EU Aid Volunteers initiative<sup>2</sup> requires the Commission to submit annual reports to the European Parliament and to the Council examining the progress made in implementing the Regulation.

This annual report outlines the main activities and achievements in the implementation of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative in 2014 taking into account the specificity of the first year, which was dedicated to the adoption of the indispensable legal acts mapping out the next steps in the implementation of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative.

## **II. PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES**

### **1. PILOT ACTION**

The EU Aid Volunteers initiative has a solid foundation in the pilot action which ran from 2011 to 2014 in three phases and had the purpose of guiding the establishment of the initiative and informing the development of standards and systems around specific dimensions (training, certification mechanism, deployment set-up, data-base) of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative. Twelve pilot projects were funded under the action and through these some 300 volunteers were deployed in 49 third countries.

The pilot action of EU Aid Volunteers<sup>3</sup> proved to be effective in testing different models or methods of implementing the distinct dimensions of EU Aid Volunteers initiative. The lessons learned fed into the development of the legislation and the implementing and delegated act and will allow for a smooth transition to deployment of EU Aid Volunteers under Regulation (EU) No 375/2014. Furthermore, a major task of the evaluation was also to develop and propose a monitoring and evaluation framework that will contribute to the regular assessment of the implementation of the initiative.

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<sup>1</sup> Article 214 (5) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union: "In order to establish a framework for joint contributions from young Europeans to the humanitarian aid operations of the Union, a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps shall be set up. The European Parliament and the Council, acting by means of regulations in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, shall determine the rules and procedures for the operation of the Corps."

<sup>2</sup> Regulation (EU) No 375/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 establishing the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps ("EU Aid Volunteers initiative") (OJ L 122, 24.4.2014, p. 1).

<sup>3</sup> The Pilot action was evaluated by an independent evaluator:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/evaluation/2014/pilot\\_project\\_euaidvolunteers\\_final\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/evaluation/2014/pilot_project_euaidvolunteers_final_report_en.pdf)

## **2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Given the strong needs-based dimension of this new initiative, the Commission has been actively building the basis for development of an "EU Aid Volunteers initiative" needs assessment framework. To this end, several channels were used: a comprehensive study on the current needs for volunteers<sup>4</sup>; a workshop with a wide group of experts and practitioners to explore various methodological processes on how needs could be analysed annually and through the Pilot actions' evaluation. This framework will allow the needs to be covered by the actions under the initiative to be assessed on an annual basis. The need assessments methodology is similar to that for humanitarian aid actions taking into account the specificity of the EU Aid Volunteers and excluding ex-ante the areas with ongoing armed conflict to which EU Aid Volunteers should not be deployed. This allows for a tailor-made approach while ensuring the optimal coherence and complementarity with the EU humanitarian aid worldwide decisions.

## **III. ADOPTION OF THE LEGISLATION**

The key achievement in 2014 was the adoption of the whole legislative package providing the legal basis for the EU Aid Volunteers initiative, laying down the rules for its implementation and establishing the relevant standards.

The Regulation setting up the EU Aid Volunteers initiative was adopted on 3 April 2014, establishing the framework for joint contribution from EU volunteers to support and complement humanitarian aid in third countries. The programme will create opportunities for 18 000 people to volunteer in humanitarian operations worldwide by 2020, including EU Aid Volunteers, online volunteers and local people benefitting from capacity building. EU Aid Volunteers initiative is open to a variety of professional profiles - from young people to established humanitarian experts - to help meet the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable people. EU will ensure that participants are sent where their skills are most needed and ensure that they contribute to strengthening local capacities and local volunteering.

A delegated act<sup>5</sup> and an implementing act<sup>6</sup> were adopted and entered into force at the end of 2014. As foreseen by the Regulation, these acts set out high standards and procedures with regard to the certification of the sending and hosting organisations and the selection, training and deployment of the volunteers.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/euaidvolunteers/EUAV\\_Study\\_Needs\\_Assessment\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/euaidvolunteers/EUAV_Study_Needs_Assessment_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1398/2014 of 24 October 2014 laying down standards regarding candidate volunteers and EU Aid Volunteers (OJ L 373, 31.12.2014, p. 8).

<sup>6</sup> Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1244/2014 of 20 November 2014 laying down rules for the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 375/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 establishing the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps ("EU Aid Volunteers initiative") (OJ L 334, 21.11.2014, p. 52).

The Commission adopted the first annual work programme for EU Aid Volunteers initiative on 16 June 2014<sup>7</sup>. The budget for the implementation of the initiative in 2014 was set at EUR 12 148 000 for the purpose of providing technical assistance to prospective sending organisations to prepare for certification; building capacities of prospective hosting organisations from third countries and who may wish to participate in the initiative; launching the certification process of sending and hosting organisations; developing the technical environment for all related support measures, launching an insurance contract that would ensure insurance coverage for the period 2015-2020.

#### **IV. DELEGATION OF TASKS TO EACEA**

As foreseen by Regulation (EU) No 375/2014, the Commission is entrusted with the implementation of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative and has delegated certain tasks to the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Agency (EACEA). EACEA is an executive agency responsible for the implementation of the technical aspects of EU programmes through calls for proposals, calls for tender and contract management thereafter and for the implementation of the corresponding budget appropriations.<sup>8</sup> This translates into Annual Work Programmes adopted by Commission implementing decisions that set the priorities and actions for each year, and that are the basis for calls for proposals and tenders run by EACEA. In terms of operational management, the Commission through the "parent DG" ECHO (Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection) remains directly responsible for setting up the Network of the EU Aid Volunteers, the central online platform to be developed during 2015 and communications. The modalities and procedures of interaction are governed by Memoranda of Understanding between DG ECHO and EACEA.

#### **V. ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED IN 2014**

An open call for tenders for insurance was published on 31 December 2014 aiming to ensure that the volunteers participating in the EU Aid Volunteers initiative are covered by a complete insurance plan specifically designed to protect them during the entire duration of their deployment (Action 3 under Annual Work Programme 2014).

All necessary actions have been implemented to ensure the publication of Call for proposals for technical assistance for sending organisations and capacity building for humanitarian aid of hosting organisations (Action 1) and Call for applications for the certification of sending and hosting organisations wishing to participate in the EU Aid Volunteers initiative (Action 2) in early 2015<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Commission Implementing Decision C(2014)3872 of 16.6.2014 concerning the adoption of the 2014 work programme and the financing for the implementation of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative.

<sup>8</sup> Commission Decision C(2013)9189 of 18.12.2013 delegating powers to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency with view to performance of tasks linked to the implementation of Union programmes in the field of education, audiovisual and culture comprising, in particular, implementation of appropriations entered in the general budget of the Union and of the EDF allocations (as amended by Commission Decision C(2015)658 of 12.2.2015).

<sup>9</sup> [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/eu-aid-volunteers\\_en](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/eu-aid-volunteers_en)

The EU Aid Volunteers initiative provides an additional opportunity to highlight the value and impact of volunteering and show EU solidarity with communities in countries affected by disaster in action. Support measures for networking and communication (Action 4) aim to raise awareness, encourage participation, create new opportunities to take part and support networking between participants. In 2014 Commission services and EACEA also prepared the Info and Networking Day that took place in January 2015. The aim of this public event was to explain to the future partners - implementing organisations the opportunities available under the EU Aid Volunteers initiative and to launch the first activities of the initiative (the call for proposals for technical assistance and capacity building and the call for applications for the certification of sending and hosting organisations).

The web page for EU Aid Volunteers on the website of DG ECHO<sup>10</sup> will continue to publish information on the initiative and communication products such as blogs from volunteers, articles and videos. A platform on the initiative will provide additional information for volunteers and participating organisations, a space for mentoring of volunteers, online volunteering activities and networking opportunities for both volunteers and organisations. Specific activities foreseen for 2015 include a conference to build experiences of the pilot phase into the next phases of the initiative, development of the platform and a launch event.

The results of these activities under the Annual Work Program actions will be presented in the next annual report.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD**

2014 was a very important year for the European Aid Volunteers initiative as the legal basis was adopted and administrative and organisational activities have followed creating the solid foundation and the favourable conditions for the initiative to be established and to grow up. Due to the need to adopt implementing and delegated acts, 2014 was mainly a year of legislative and preparatory measures. 2014 also marked the implementation of the final year of the Pilot action providing the key lessons already integrated into the general actions of the legislation.

The EU Aid Volunteers initiative is on course to meet its multiannual objectives. All the actions have been prepared so as to kick-off in 2015 following the above mentioned adoption of the legal acts: certification of sending and hosting organisations wishing to participate in the EU Aid Volunteers initiative; capacity building of hosting organisations and technical assistance to sending organisations; a comprehensive insurance scheme for the volunteers; the pre-deployment training for all volunteers; deployment of volunteers by certified organisations. The first vacancies for volunteers will become available by early 2016.

The Commission will continue to promote the EU Aid Volunteers initiative and to invest in fruitful communication in order to raise awareness and to gather lessons learnt. A number of

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<sup>10</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/eu-aid-volunteers\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/eu-aid-volunteers_en)

activities are planned to take place among which a conference to mark the closure of the preparatory actions with the return of the volunteers from the final phase pilot projects and a high visibility event to launch the deployment phase of the volunteers.

More information on EU Aid Volunteers initiative can be found at the following address:

[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/eu-aid-volunteers\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/eu-aid-volunteers_en)