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

Annual Report on the Implementation of the EU Aid Volunteers Initiative in 2019

I. Introduction

Acting in accordance with Article 214(5) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the EU launched the EU Aid Volunteers initiative in 2014¹. The initiative aims to strengthen the EU's ability to provide needs-based humanitarian aid and to strengthen the capacity and resilience of vulnerable or disaster-affected communities in non-EU countries. At the same time, it allows European citizens to show solidarity with people in need by taking part in humanitarian actions in these countries.

This report describes the implementation of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative in 2019. It is prepared in line with Article 27(4) of Regulation (EU) No 375/2014², which requires the Commission to submit annual reports to the European Parliament and to the Council on progress made in implementing the Regulation. Previous reports for 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 are available online³.

The report is based on data collected and analysed in line with the Framework for the monitoring of the implementation of actions under the initiative. This framework was drawn up and agreed between the Commission and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), which is responsible for managing most of the operations carried out under the initiative.

II. Objectives and priorities

The activities described in this report were based on the Commission's 2019 Annual work programme to implement the EU Aid Volunteers initiative⁴ in accordance with Article 21(3) of Regulation (EU) No 375/2014. A budget of EUR 18 365 000 was set aside to implement the initiative.

The objective of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative is to contribute to strengthening the EU's capacity to provide needs-based humanitarian aid aimed at preserving life, preventing and alleviating human suffering and maintaining human dignity and to strengthening the capacity and resilience of vulnerable or disaster-affected communities in third countries, particularly by means of disaster preparedness, disaster risk reduction and by enhancing the link between relief, rehabilitation and development.

¹ 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). 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). 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).

² OJ L 122, 24.4.2014, p. 1-17.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/echo/who/accountability/annual-reports_en

⁴ Commission Implementing Decision C (2019)4 of 14.1.2019 on the financing of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative and the adoption of the work programme for 2019.

III. Actions implemented in 2019

The actions described in Sections 1-4 of this report are delegated to and implemented by EACEA, in cooperation with the Commission⁵.

EACEA is responsible for the calls for proposals, calls for tender, contract management and implementing the budget allocation in line with the Commission's annual work programmes. In terms of managing operations, the Commission remains directly responsible for creating and maintaining the partners and volunteers' network, the online platform and communication activities.

1. Deployment

The deployment of EU Aid Volunteers to humanitarian projects in countries outside of the EU offers a meaningful opportunity for EU citizens and long-term residents in the EU to show their solidarity with those in need. Deployments of full-time volunteers in non-EU countries are supported by online volunteering that people can take part in wherever they are in the world.

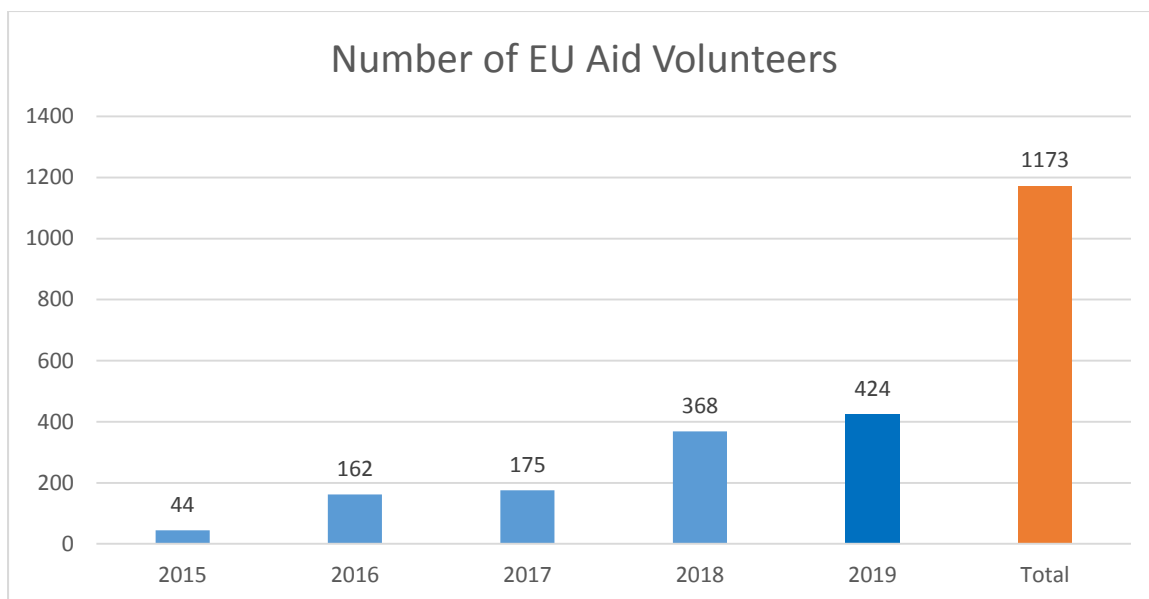
Volunteering opportunities funded under the EU Aid Volunteers initiative are published by a consortia of sending and hosting organisations on the EU Aid Volunteers Platform⁶.

Between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2019, 374 EU Aid Volunteers were deployed to projects funded through the 2017 and 2018 budget and 61 apprenticeship placements took place during this period. Apprenticeship placements allow junior EU Aid Volunteers to spend up to 6 months in the headquarter of the sending organisation in an EU Member State prior to deployment to a third country.

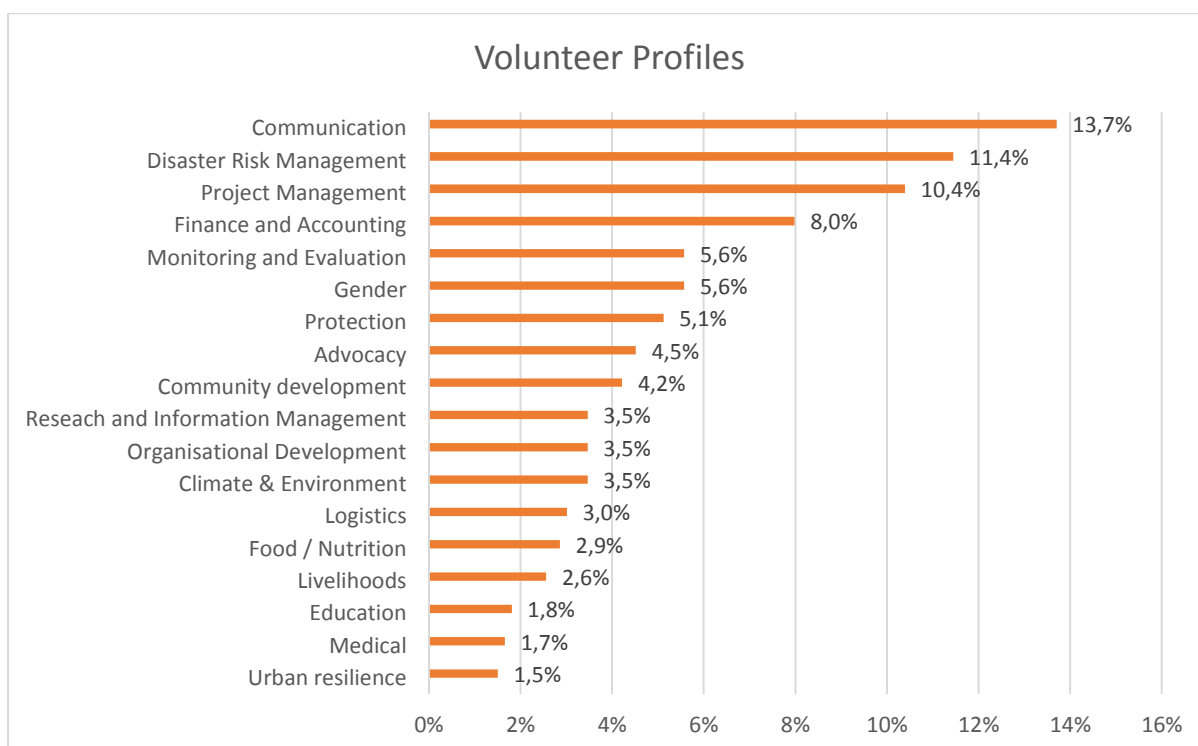
The chart below shows the number of volunteers planned under the deployment projects selected every year since the initiative began in 2015. The deployment call published in 2019 resulted in 424 deployments that will take place in 2020 / 2021.

⁵ The division of tasks between the Commission and EACEA is based on *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.*

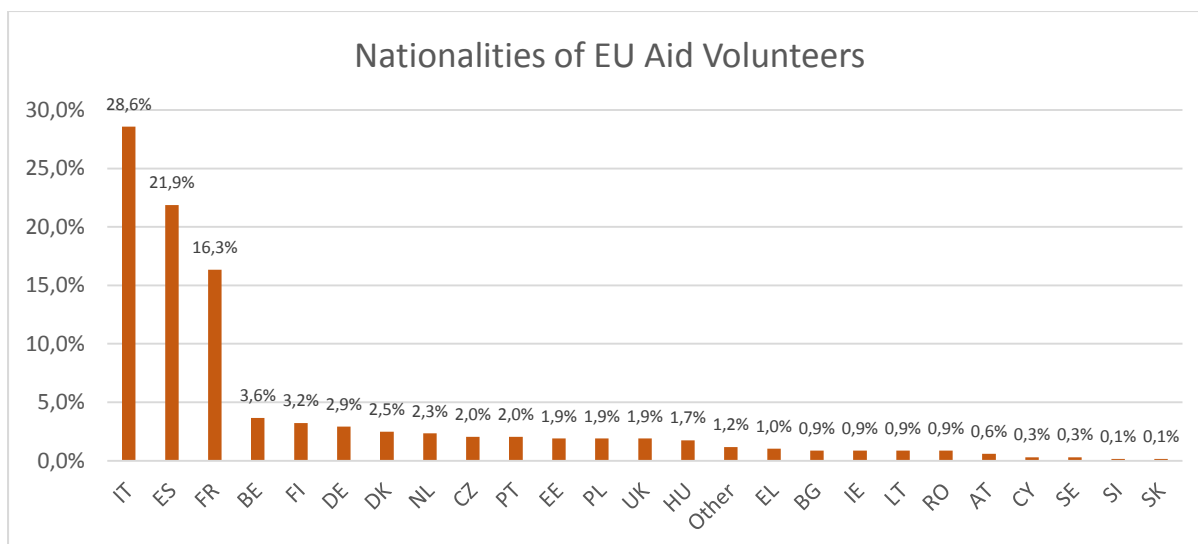
⁶ https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/echo/eu-aid-volunteers_en/



The backgrounds and skillsets of EU Aid Volunteers are diverse, reflecting a needs-based approach to defining volunteer deployments and selecting potential EU Aid Volunteers. The graph below shows the most popular professional profiles that organisations publish in their volunteering vacancies. The three most sought after profiles since the start of the initiative are (i) communication, (ii) disaster risk management and (iii) project management.



The EU Aid Volunteers are nationals of EU Member States and third country nationals legally residing in one of the EU Member States. In 2019 the participation rate per nationality of volunteers remains steady. So far, as shown in the graph below, volunteers from 24 Member States have taken part in the initiative with the biggest number coming from Italy, Spain and France.



Since the launch of the initiative, 205 online volunteering assignments were published, of which 62 in 2019. The most frequently requested tasks included translation, proofreading and graphic design.

Examples of volunteering from projects implemented in 2019⁷

The **“Humanitarian Volunteers in Action: Challenges & Opportunities”** project brings together two sending organisations from France and Slovakia that work together to deploy 18 EU Aid Volunteers to humanitarian aid operations in nine hosting organisations in Albania, Morocco, Algeria, Ecuador, Georgia, Turkey. In Albania, the project offers nutritional services to vulnerable groups, like children, people in need and people with chronic conditions in the municipality of Tirana.

A junior EU Aid Volunteer working on nutrition writes about her role in Albania, where she led workshops on nutritional good practice for children and young adults with disabilities: *“During my volunteering mission as a dietician, I had the opportunity to work with different centers and schools. Once a week I go to the center “Femijet e Botes ne Shqiperi”, which welcomes 10 children after school, and to the center “Fondacioni Ndihmoni Jeten” in Prush, which takes care of young adults with mental disabilities, including a particular group that learns to become as independent as possible. With these two groups I had the opportunity to create links and set up workshops based on nutritional education.”*

(https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/echo/eu-aid-volunteers_en/nutritional-education-food-pyramid_en)

Under the project, **‘EU Aid Volunteers for resilience and response capacity of vulnerable communities through deployment and capacity building activities’**, sending organisations from Italy and Spain are working together as partners to deploy 32 volunteers in 13 non-European countries.

A junior EU Aid Volunteer deployed in the Philippines writes about his experience as EU Aid Volunteer in logistics. Since the eruption of the Taal volcano his activities are focused on the logistic coordination of the emergency response operations in the area:

“We are now implementing several projects - with shelter, WASH and cash components - after the series of earthquakes that took place in the last weeks. In these two months, there was also a strong typhoon, Kammuri - the 20th this year -, but thankfully it was not as destructive as thought. It looks like they are not wrong when they say those months are always busy!”

More stories from the field: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/echo/eu-aid-volunteers_en/

⁷ The text in italic is a testimony from EU Aid Volunteers involved in the implementation of projects funded under the EU Aid Volunteers.

The 2019 call for proposals for deployment of EU Aid Volunteers⁸ was published on 12 April 2019 with a submission deadline of 13 June 2019. The call aimed to co-finance projects for the deployment of EU Aid Volunteers, including apprenticeship placements for junior professionals and additional capacity building activities carried out by volunteers. Initially, the budget for this call was EUR 10 000 000. Following the evaluation of applications, the budget was increased by transferring budget allocated to the technical assistance and capacity building call for proposals. A total of 10 projects were selected⁹ for co-financing with a total EU grant of EUR 11 360 700. The projects started in December 2019 and will result in the deployment of 424 EU Aid Volunteers planned to start in 2020. There is an increase in the number of volunteers proposed by organisations from 368 in 2018 to 424 in 2019.

The deployments in 2019 were planned to take place in Africa (45.5 %), Latin America and the Caribbean (24.8%), the Middle East (15.8%), Eastern Asia (9.9%), Central Asia (3.1%) and the Balkans (0.9%).

2. Technical assistance and capacity building

Technical assistance and capacity building projects¹⁰ supported through the EU Aid Volunteers initiative funding strengthen the capacities of organisations intending to deploy EU Aid Volunteers and ensure that they comply with the standards and procedures set through the initiative.

On 22 May 2019, EACEA published a call for proposals¹¹ with a submission deadline of 4 July 2019. The call aimed at co-financing projects for capacity building for hosting organisations based outside of the EU and technical assistance for EU-based sending organisations, in areas such as disaster risk management, volunteer management and needs assessment methodology. The total budget for the co-financing projects set out in the Commission's annual work programme was reduced from EUR 4 600 000 to EUR 3 239 300, following the transfer of funds to the projects selected under the call for proposals for deployment.

Five applications (one for technical assistance and four for capacity building) were selected for co-financing¹² with a total EU grant of EUR 2 614 101.

Overall, the 2015-2019 calls resulted in the funding of 32 capacity building projects and 13 technical assistance projects, involving 440 beneficiaries/project partners.

These projects aim to strengthen the management and operation systems of participating organisations and to help the organisations involved to work in partnership to implement best-practice in delivering humanitarian aid and managing volunteers.

Examples of projects selected for funding in 2019

⁸ EACEA/10/2019.

⁹ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/euav_deployment_2019_publication_results.pdf

¹⁰ Article 10 and 15 of Regulation (EU) No 375/2014.

¹¹ EACEA 13/2019.

¹² https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/eu-aid-volunteers/selection-results/eu-aid-volunteers-technical-assistance-for-sending-organisations-capacity-building-for-humanitarian-aid-hosting-organisations-2019_en

Capacity building

The **XCHANGE project** is promoted and implemented by a consortium of 14 partners: 5 EU organisations from Italy, Slovakia and Spain, and 9 organisations from Ethiopia, Kenya, Guatemala, Colombia, Peru and Serbia. The project's main goal is to give members the possibility to manage volunteers under the EU Aid Volunteers initiative and to learn from sharing good practice in humanitarian aid, volunteer management and community-based development.

INPLACE is a capacity building project revolving around the challenge of forced displacement in Latin America and the certification of new hosting organisations on that continent. There are 2 EU organisations from Spain and Italy and 13 organisations from 9 non-EU countries that participate in this 24-month project, bringing their experience and improving capacities or gaining new ones: Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Brazil, Venezuela, Chile, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico.

The project has four specific objectives: (i) develop capacities to protect vulnerable populations and communities affected by the Venezuelan crisis and forced displacement; (ii) strengthen community-led processes in protection, preparedness, and response linked to displacement; (iii) strengthen the capacity of organisations to get EU Aid Volunteers certification and promote local and online volunteering; and (iv) foster partnership among members.

Technical assistance

Technical assistance in humanitarian response, ensuring valuable international volunteering and inclusion of people with disabilities aims to create a global community of practice made up of EU organisations working towards disability inclusion in humanitarian action and volunteering. The project is represented by 6 Consortium partners from 4 EU countries: Finland, Italy, Belgium and Ireland.

The project has three main objectives: (i) EU organisations have increased capacity to manage and oversee inclusive humanitarian aid projects, including disaster risk reduction and post-disaster recovery; (ii) some consortium member EU organisations become certified as sending organisations for deployment of EU Aid Volunteers and are running inclusive volunteering programmes; (iii) development of a community of practice building capacity in inclusion, humanitarian action and volunteering between members, and sharing this learning with the sector and the public.

3. Certification

Organisations that wish to deploy EU Aid Volunteers must be certified as sending or hosting organisations under the EU Aid Volunteers initiative's certification mechanism. This certification checks if participating organisations are able to apply the volunteer management standards to manage volunteers before and during their deployment.

An open call was published in 2015, allowing for ongoing applications until 30 September 2020¹³. By the end of 2019, 282 sending and hosting organisations have been certified (52 sending and 230 hosting organisations), providing opportunities to deploy more EU Aid Volunteers.

The chart below shows the number of organisations certified between 2015 and 2019.

¹³ <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/certification-call-announcement-012115.pdf>



Article 36(1) of Commission Implementing Regulation 1244/2014¹⁴ requires that the certified sending and hosting organisations undergo re-certification after three years of being awarded certification. In 2019, 34 organisations certified in 2016 had to undergo the process of re-certification.

4. Training programme

The EU Aid Volunteers training programme is delivered by a consortium led by ICF. It is based on a competence framework set out in Commission Delegated Regulation 1398/2014 and is delivered using a combined learning approach, with online preparatory learning and face-to-face classroom training including mandatory and optional training modules and a scenario-based exercise¹⁵.

So far, a total of 23 training cycles have been delivered, two in 2016, four in 2017, eight in 2018 and nine in 2019. Since 2016, 1016 candidate volunteers have been trained with a year-on-year increase in the number of candidate volunteers being trained: 96 in 2016; 179 in 2017; 295 in 2018 and 446 in 2019. Over the whole period of the initiative so far 99% of candidate volunteers were declared ‘fit for deployment’ at the end of the training.

Between 2016 and 2019, 72% of participants were women, while only 28% were men. Furthermore, 75% of candidate volunteers held junior profiles (having less than five years of professional experience), while 25% held senior profiles (with more than five years of experience). In relation to the country of origin, most candidate volunteers came from Italy (278), Spain (220) and France (177).

Between March and September 2019, nine training cycles were held in training centres in Austria, Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands. A total of 446 candidate volunteers were trained. As in previous years, a number of reserve candidates attended the training to ensure that there are substitute volunteers if chosen candidates resign or are no longer available. The final selection by sending and hosting organisations takes place after the training is completed.

¹⁴ OJ L 334, 21.11.2014, p. 52-83.

¹⁵ Annex II to Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1244/2014.

The courses were delivered mainly in English and some groups were taught in French or Spanish. The projections for future deployments in South America and Africa is high. This may lead to an increase in the demand for Spanish and French training cycles in 2020.

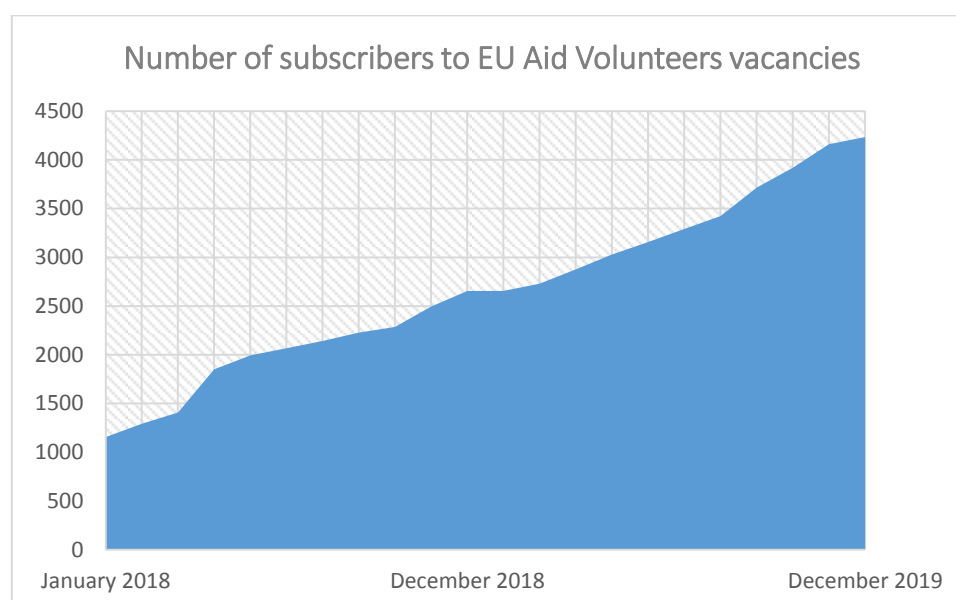
Candidate volunteers' satisfaction with the training remains high, with an average score of 8.8 out of 10 points.

5. Support measures

The EU Aid Volunteers Platform continued to be a hub for volunteering-related information, providing details of vacancies for full-time deployment and online volunteering. It also provides tools for managing EU Aid Volunteers, a database of successfully trained volunteers, tools to manage online volunteering assignments, collaborative spaces for volunteers and projects, a public forum where updates about the initiative are posted, the possibility of posting stories from the field, and reporting and survey tools. The platform has 5 806 active registered users.

The platform is consulted by visitors from across the globe and the subscriptions service for volunteering vacancies had around 4 234 subscribers at the end of 2019.

The chart below shows the sharp increase in the number of subscribers to the EU Aid Volunteers Platform vacancy notices.



The EU Aid Volunteers initiative was also promoted at several events, such as the European Youth Week at the European Parliament, the travelling exhibition of the European Commission on EU response to emergencies “EU Saves Lives”, the European Development Days, the Global Humanitarian and Development Aid Event (AidEx) and the Annual Partners' Conference for the Commission's humanitarian aid partners. A dedicated

information session was organised on International Volunteer Day on 5 December at the External Cooperation Infopoint in Brussels.

In 2019, the Commission organised a major communication campaign with testimonies from the field on three continents. The EU Aid Volunteers in Colombia, the Philippines and Tunisia had the opportunity to share their stories, describe their specific roles and tasks in implementing the project and their interactions with local communities. Meeting the volunteers in the field allowed the Commission to collect audio-visual material¹⁶ for promotional events, namely the International Volunteers Day on 5 December. It also provided an opportunity to gather feedback on the volunteering experience, including the working and living conditions, and valuable suggestions to improve the implementation of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative.

A newsletter highlighting the most recent developments of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative is distributed on a regular basis to the subscribed individuals and organisations. In 2019, seven EU Aid Volunteers newsletters¹⁷ were sent to hundreds of stakeholders.

IV. Conclusions and way forward

The implementation of the deployment and capacity building/technical assistance projects funded in previous years paved the way for the progress that has been made on the EU Aid Volunteers initiative in 2019. A total of 10 new projects for deployment of volunteers, one technical assistance project and four capacity building projects were selected for funding in 2019. The total number of EU Aid Volunteers deployed to non-EU countries by the end of 2019 reached 706 and at least 424 more will be deployed in 2020. The training programme continued to gain high satisfaction rates among volunteers and more training sessions in English, French and Spanish are planned for 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic the planning for implementation of the projects, including the training and deployment of EU Aid Volunteers might be seriously affected.

Since the launch of the initiative, 282 organisations have been certified. A number of these organisations were re-certified for another three years and this process will continue in 2020 for organisations that were awarded certification in 2017. New certification applications could be expected in view of the call for proposals for deployment in early 2020.

In 2019, the EU Aid Volunteers Platform was increasingly used to publish stories from volunteers and organisations (107 new stories in 2019). The Platform was further adapted to respond to what organisations needed to manage their volunteers and it performs better now and is more user-friendly. The EU Aid Volunteers Platform will continue to be maintained and developed, including through updated guidance for users.

¹⁶ Some of the videos made in 2019:

<https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-181696>, <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-181695>
<https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-181782>, <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-181684>
<https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-181763>, <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-181762>
<https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-181694>, <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-181783>

¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/eu-aid-volunteers_en

Communication activities will continue to provide information about the EU Aid Volunteers initiative and its key impact and achievements.

An ex post evaluation covering the seven-year financial period of implementation will be launched in 2020.

For more information on the EU Aid Volunteers initiative:
http://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/eu-aid-volunteers_en.