European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps (‘EU Aid Volunteers initiative')

2012/0245(COD) - 25/02/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 600 votes to 30 with 50 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps - EU Aid Volunteers.

Parliament’s adopted its position at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure. The amendments adopted in plenary are the result of a compromise between Parliament and Council. They amend the Commission proposal as follows:

Objective: the objective of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative shall be to contribute to strengthening the Union's capacity to provide needs-based humanitarian aid aimed at:

- preserving life,
- preventing and alleviating human suffering
- maintaining human dignity and
- 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.

That objective shall be attained through the added value of joint contributions of EU Aid Volunteers, expressing the Union's values and solidarity with people in need and visibly promoting a sense of European citizenship.

Operational objectives: the EU Aid Volunteers initiative shall pursue the following operational objectives in accordance with **a certain number of indicators** set out in the resolution for each specific objective:

- contribute to increasing and improving the capacity of the Union to provide humanitarian aid;
- improve the skills, knowledge and competences of volunteers;
- build the capacity of hosting organisations and foster volunteering in third countries;
- communicate the Union's humanitarian aid principles agreed in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid;
- enhance coherence and consistency of volunteering across Member States in order to improve opportunities for Union citizens to participate in humanitarian aid activities and operations.

Provisions are laid out in the text regarding the actions to be undertaken in the framework of these objectives.

Gender perspective: the EU Aid Volunteers initiative should aim to contribute to strengthening the gender perspective in Union humanitarian aid policy, promoting adequate humanitarian responses to the specific needs of women and men of all ages. Special attention should be paid to cooperation with women' s groups and networks.

Standards and procedures regarding candidate volunteers and EU Aid Volunteers: building on existing relevant practices, the Commission shall establish standards and procedures covering the necessary conditions, arrangements and requirements to be applied by sending and hosting organisations when identifying, selecting, preparing, managing and deploying candidate volunteers and EU Aid Volunteers to support humanitarian aid operations in third countries.

Certification mechanism for sending and hosting organisations: the Commission shall develop a certification mechanism by means of implementing acts, with the involvement, if appropriate, of humanitarian partners, **ensuring that sending organisations comply with the standards and procedures,** and a differentiated certification mechanism for hosting organisations. It shall establish the procedure relating to the functioning of the certification mechanisms, building on existing relevant certification mechanisms and procedure. ,

In designing the certification mechanism, the Commission shall seek synergies with the Commission's partnership instruments in the humanitarian field and existing humanitarian standards, with the aim of administrative simplification. The certification mechanism shall be inclusive and non-discriminatory as regards any type of eligible organisation.

Deployment of EU Aid Volunteers in third countries: EU Aid Volunteers included in the database may be deployed to by:

- certified sending organisations to hosting organisations in third countries; or
- the Commission to its humanitarian aid field offices for support tasks.

Deployments shall meet the real needs expressed at local level by the hosting organisations.

For deployment, certified sending organisations shall ensure compliance with the standards and procedures. EU Aid Volunteers shall not be deployed to operations conducted in the theatre of international and non-international armed conflicts.

For deployments effected by the Commission, the Commission shall sign a volunteer deployment contract with EU Aid Volunteers, defining specific terms and conditions of deployment. Each EU Aid Volunteer shall have a designated mentor from the hosting organisation

Coherence and complementarities of Union action: coherence and complementarity shall be ensured with other instruments and areas of Union external action and with other relevant Union policies, in particular humanitarian aid policy, development cooperation policy and the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, while avoiding duplication and overlap.

In promoting a coherent international response to humanitarian crises, the actions under the EU Aid Volunteers initiative shall be in accordance with those undertaken by the United Nations, in order to support the central and overall coordinating role of UN-OCHA.

Network for the EU Aid Volunteers initiative: the Commission shall establish and manage a network for the EU Aid Volunteers initiative composed of: (i) candidate volunteers and EU Aid Volunteers who are participating or have participated in the initiative; (ii) sending and hosting organisations; (iii) representatives of the Member States **and of the European Parliament.**

The text lays down provisions for the tasks of the network.

Budget: the financial envelope for the implementation of the Regulation for the period 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2020 shall be **EUR 147 936 000** in current prices. This shall be allocated, over the period 2014-2020, in accordance with the operational objectives, thematic priorities and percentages set out in the Annex. The Commission shall be empowered to adopt delegated acts to amend the priorities and adjust each of the figures in the Annex by more than 10 and up to 20 percentage points. Such adjustment shall only take place following the results of a Commission review.

Where, in the case of a necessary revision of the budgetary resources available for support for **emergency response actions**, imperative grounds of urgency so require, the Commission shall be empowered to adopt delegated acts to revise each of the figures set out in the Annex by more than 10 and up to 20 percentage points, within the available budgetary allocations.

Evaluation: actions under the EU Aid Volunteers initiative receiving financial assistance shall be monitored regularly. Evaluations shall make use of existing evaluation standards, including those developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee, with the objective of measuring the long-term impact of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative on humanitarian aid.

In the evaluation phase, the Commission shall ensure regular consultation of all relevant stakeholders.

Delegated acts: the power to adopt acts will be delegated to the Commission in respect of provisions relating to the standards for selection, management and deployment of EU Aid Volunteers, the amendment of the performance indicators and the thematic priorities and the adjustment of the percentages for allocation of the financial envelope for implementation of the Regulation.

Report: the Commission shall submit to the European Parliament and to the Council a series of reports, including:

- annual reports examining the progress made in implementing this Regulation, including results and, as far as possible, the main outcomes;

- an interim evaluation report on the implementation of this Regulation, including on the impact of EU Aid Volunteers initiative in the humanitarian sector and the cost-effectiveness of the programme, during the first three years of its implementation no later than 31 December 2017

- an ex post evaluation report for the seven-year financial period of implementation no later than 31 December 2021.

The Commission shall review the measures laid down in the Regulation by 1 September 2019 and shall, following the conclusion of the interim evaluation report, accompany that review with a legislative proposal for amendment of this Regulation.

Annex: a new Annex sets out the operational objectives, thematic priorities and percentages for allocation of the financial envelope for implementation of this Regulation.