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

2012/0245(COD) - 03/04/2014 - Final act

PURPOSE: to establish the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Regulation (EU) No 375 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps (‘EU Aid Volunteers initiative’)

BACKGROUND: solidarity is a fundamental value of the Union and there is potential for further developing means of expressing solidarity of Union citizens with people in third countries vulnerable to or affected by man-made crises or natural disasters. Moreover, the Union as a whole is the **world's largest humanitarian aid donor**, providing almost 50 % of global humanitarian aid. The EU Aid Volunteers initiative should therefore contribute to efforts to strengthen the Union's capacity to provide needs-based humanitarian assistance and to strengthen the capacity and resilience of vulnerable or disaster-affected communities in third countries.

CONTENT: the Regulation establishes a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps as a framework for joint contributions from European volunteers to support and complement humanitarian aid in third countries.

It lays down the rules and procedures for the operation of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative and rules for the provision of financial assistance.

Purpose: 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 which will be assessed on the basis of **certain indicators** for each specific objective, that are set out in the Regulation:

- contribute to increasing and improving the capacity of the Union to provide humanitarian aid;

- improve the skills, knowledge and competences of volunteers in the field of humanitarian aid and the terms and conditions of their engagement;

- 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.

Actions under the EU Aid Volunteers initiative: the EU Aid Volunteers initiative shall pursue the objectives through the following types of actions:

- development and maintenance of standards and procedures regarding candidate volunteers and EU Aid Volunteers;

- development and maintenance of a certification mechanism for sending and hosting organisations;

- identification and selection of candidate volunteers;

- establishment of a training programme and support for training and apprenticeship placements;

- establishment, maintenance and updating of a database of EU Aid Volunteers;

- deployment of EU Aid Volunteers to support and complement humanitarian aid in third countries;

- capacity building of hosting organisations;

- establishment and management of a network for the EU Aid Volunteers initiative;

- communication and awareness raising;

- ancillary activity that furthers the accountability, transparency and effectiveness of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative.

Details of these actions are set out in the Regulation.

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** set out, and a differentiated certification mechanism for hosting organisations (in third countries). It shall also establish the procedure relating to the functioning of the certification mechanisms, building on existing relevant certification mechanisms and procedures. The certification mechanism shall be inclusive and non-discriminatory as regards any type of eligible organisation.

Sending organisations shall be eligible for certification, if they adhere to the standards and procedures referred to in the Regulation and fulfil certain other criteria, such as being an NGO formed in accordance

with the law of a Member State and whose headquarters are located within the Union, or established in a partner country. The International Federation of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are classified as sending organisations.

The Union should entrust such organisations notably with the identification, selection, preparation and deployment of EU Aid Volunteers, as well as with follow-up during and after assignments, in accordance with standards and procedures established by the Commission. The Commission should, where appropriate, be able to draw upon successfully trained and prepared volunteers for deployment to its field offices for support tasks.

Selection of candidate volunteers: on the basis of prior assessment of the needs in third countries by sending or hosting organisations or other relevant actors, certified sending organisations shall identify and select candidate volunteers for training. The volunteers must be at least 18 years old. Building on existing programmes and procedures and with the involvement, if appropriate, of specialised institutions, the Commission shall establish a training programme in order to prepare the candidate volunteers for deployment to support and complement humanitarian aid.

Deployment: deployments should **meet the real needs expressed at local level** by the hosting organisations. Certified sending organisations shall ensure compliance with the standards and procedures referred to in the Regulation. EU Aid Volunteers shall **not be deployed to operations conducted in the theatre of international and non-international armed conflicts.**

Each EU Aid Volunteer shall have a designated mentor from the hosting organisation to supervise and support the EU Aid Volunteer during deployment.

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 Regulations includes provisions regarding the mission and tasks of the Network.

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 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.

The Regulation sets out the types of eligible actions, the financial beneficiaries and types of financial intervention as well as the procedures applicable.

It also sets out the modalities regarding participation of third country organisations in the implementation of the initiative.

Financial envelope: 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. Allocations from this envelope will be made in accordance with the percentages set out in the Annex.

Provisions for budgetary resources may also be amended in order to support emergency response actions.

Evaluations and reports on implementation: actions under the EU Aid Volunteers initiative shall be monitored regularly. In the evaluation phase, the Commission shall ensure regular consultation of all relevant stakeholders. It shall also shall submit to the European Parliament and to the Council series of reports including:

- annual reports examining the progress made in implementing the Regulation;

- an interim evaluation report on the results obtained and the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the implementation of the Regulation, including on the impact of EU Aid Volunteers initiative in the humanitarian sector and the cost-effectiveness of the programme (for 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 accompany that review with a legislative proposal for amendment where appropriate.

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

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 25.04.2014. The Regulation will be applicable from 01.01.2014.

DELEGATED ACTS: the Commission is empowered to adopt delegated acts in accordance with the Regulation. The power to adopt delegated acts is conferred on the Commission for a period of seven years from **25 April 2014**. 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.

The European Parliament or the Council may object to a delegated act within two months from the date of notification (which may be extended by two months.) If the European Parliament or Council express objections, the delegated act will not enter into force. There are provisions for urgent measures.