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

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The Commission presented the annual report on the implementation of the EU Aid Volunteers Initiative in 2015.

To recall, the EU Aid Volunteers initiative aims 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 show solidarity with people in need through taking part in humanitarian action in these countries.

Main achievements: the report presents the main activities and achievements in the implementation of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative **in 2015**, an important year for the initiative to become operational, which enabled the Commission to map out the next steps in implementation.

The activities in 2015 are based on the annual work programme in 2015 adopted by the Commission. The budget for the implementation of the initiative in 2015 was set at EUR **13 868 000** and aiming to:

- build capacities of hosting organisations in third countries and providing technical assistance for sending organisations based in the EU Member States; contributing to resilience building and disaster risk management in vulnerable, fragile or disaster affected countries and forgotten crises;
- prepare the selection, training and deployment of volunteers and the public launch of the initiative, establishment of the EU Aid Volunteers Platform, launch of the call for tender for the selection of the training provider, and various communication activities.

Activities funded under the work programme for 2014, such as the ongoing certification of sending and hosting organisations, the establishment of an insurance scheme for EU Aid volunteers and the selection of projects for capacity building and technical assistance, also took place in 2015 following the adoption of the delegated and the implementing acts.

Way forward: following the adoption of the legislative package on the EU Aid Volunteers initiative, **2015 was the first year of implementation of the full range of activities**, including the certification of organisations, the launch of the call for proposals for technical assistance and capacity building, the call for proposals for deployment, the call for tenders for the training of volunteers, the establishment of the insurance scheme and the start of the development of the EU Aid Volunteers Platform.

The pilot phase implemented from 2011 to 2014 was closed and the initiative formally launched with a conference attended by volunteers and organisations that had participated in the pilot phase.

Based on this solid foundation, the implementation of the initiative will continue.

The concrete actions will be focused on the selection, training and deployment of volunteers; the implementation of the current projects and the selection of new projects on deployment of volunteers, capacity building and technical assistance for hosting and sending organisations; and the certification of applicant sending and hosting organisations. The activities related to the application of the insurance scheme and the training of volunteers will continue. The EU Aid Volunteers Platform for registration, networking, online volunteering and learning will be launched.

In line with the Work Programme for 2016, one of the main objectives will be to **contribute to resilience building and disaster risk management in vulnerable, fragile or disaster affected countries** and forgotten crises.

The deployment of EU Aid volunteers in third countries and the projects aiming at the capacity building of the local communities will respond to the Commission's strong political commitment on resilience and will contribute to building better prepared, inclusive, and stable societies, improving services and opportunities, mitigation of risks, and reducing suffering and loss.