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

2012/0245(COD) - 28/06/2018 - Follow-up document

In accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EU) No 375/2014, the Commission presents a report on the interim evaluation of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative for the period mid-2014 to mid-2017.

The initiative provides funding to consortia of EU-based and non-EU based organisations for the deployment and the preparation for deployment (including apprenticeships) of EU Aid Volunteers to third countries. To implement the initiative, an amount of **EUR 147 936 000** has been earmarked for the period between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2020.

Main findings:

Relevance: whilst the evaluation found that the different actions carried out under the initiative’s five objectives are relevant, **interest** from established humanitarian Framework Partnership Agreement partners remains **very low**, which is problematic for an initiative that is supposed to serve the humanitarian aid sector. The objective of communicating the EU’s humanitarian aid principles is only considered relevant by a small number of stakeholders (mainly volunteers), which indicates that more attention is required on this point in the initiative’s **communication activities**.

Effectiveness: the initiative has **not been effective** in achieving its five objectives, and the targets set in the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework are still far from being met. The budget in the first three years was not fully used, although the figures for 2017 saw a strong uptake in funding for capacity building. The numbers of volunteers remains **well below the target** of 4 000 EU Aid Volunteers by 2020, and now stands at around 200 EU Aid Volunteers being deployed. The main reason for this is the **barriers to participation**, such as: (i) the certification of organisations; (ii) the need to form partnerships with other organisations to apply for EU funding. The search for **consortium partners** and the administrative procedures to manage a consortium hampers effectiveness.

Coherence: there is **room for improvement** in the initiative’s coherence with humanitarian aid, development and civil protection instruments, since it was **not embedded** in the existing

EU instruments providing humanitarian aid, but was set up as a stand-alone instrument. As volunteers must not be deployed to regions of armed conflict, some third countries where a considerable part of humanitarian aid is provided are **excluded from the scope** of the initiative. However, there is some coherence with EU development cooperation policy, since the broad definition of humanitarian aid used in the Regulation allows for synergies.

Efficiency: rules and procedures for managing volunteers can be especially burdensome and certain organisations find the process **discouragin**g, because it can take up to 18 months: from the publication of a call for proposals through the selection process, the publication of vacancies for volunteers, the training of volunteers to the deployment of volunteers. The application, selection and reporting procedures appear particularly burdensome for organisations that are mainly active in EU humanitarian aid (emergency response) projects.

EU added value: the initiative creates EU added value through **common standards** for managing volunteers from all EU countries, common training, and funding for capacity building and technical assistance. The initiative was able to involve a broad range of organisations from different EU Member

States, since it enables organisations with different backgrounds (e.g. humanitarian, development, civil protection, volunteering organisations) and of different sizes to work together.

The way forward: the Commission is taking forward the findings and recommendations of the evaluation in a **two-pronged approach**:

Actions to be implemented from now until 2020: the Commission will:

- **feed back** the results of the evaluation into the programme design and allocation of resources;
- speed up processes (e.g. through a simplification of the certification process), **simplify administrative procedures,** improve support for interested organisations, further promote the funding opportunities and share success stories;
- **increase the deployment** of EU Aid Volunteers in the Commission's humanitarian aid and disaster risk reduction and development cooperation projects.

Actions that require more fundamental changes into the EU Aid Volunteers legislation: this is linked to the ongoing Commission's work on the future of EU programmes under the next multiannual financial framework beyond 2020. In this respect the Commission will:

- strive to achieve a **significant simplification of procedures** by removing the elements that slow down the deployment of volunteers and create a significant administrative burden for participating organisations;
- seek **synergies and streamlining** with other EU volunteering schemes, notably the European Solidarity Corps;
- aim at providing more clarity for EU citizens seeking volunteering opportunities inside and outside the EU;
- consider better alignment with the EU objectives on linking relief, rehabilitation and development and humanitarian aid development.