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

2012/0245(COD) - 03/08/2018 - Follow-up document

In accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EU) No 375/2014, the Commission presents an annual report on the implementation of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative for the year 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. The activities described in the report were based on the 2017 annual work programme and EUR 20 972 000 was set aside in the budget to implement the initiative.

Deployment: a total of **206 EU Aid Volunteers** were deployed to **28 countries** worldwide (excluding countries with armed conflict) by the end of 2017/beginning of 2018. Six new projects were selected for co-funding in 2017 with a total EU grant of EUR 5 726 880. These will result in the deployment of 175 EU Aid Volunteers starting in 2018.

The numbers of volunteers, although increasing, remain well below the initial targets of 4 000 EU Aid Volunteers by 2020. Among the reasons for this are the barriers to participation, such as the certification of organisations or the need to form partnerships with other organisations to apply for EU funding. In 2017, **63 new organisations were certified** which brings the total number of certified organisation under the EU Aid Volunteers initiative to 145 (36 sending and 109 hosting).

Technical assistance and capacity building: a call for proposals was published in 2017 providing for the co-financing of projects for capacity building for hosting organisations and technical assistance for EU-based sending organisations, in areas such as disaster risk management, volunteer management and needs assessment methodology. **18 applications (4 for technical assistance and 14 for capacity building)** were selected for cofunding12 with a total EU grant of EUR 9 909 346.

Training programme: the report notes that candidate EU Aid Volunteers’ satisfaction with the training remains high, with an average score of 9 out of 10 points. While the course had previously only been delivered in English, in 2017 for the first time, one group of volunteers was instructed in Spanish.

In addition, the report notes that:

- **the EU Aid Volunteers platform** hosted its first online volunteering vacancies. The platform is now also able to offer online volunteering opportunities and it is expected that online assignments will increase in the coming months. In 2018, the EU Aid Volunteers platform will increasingly be used to publish stories from volunteers and will be further adapted to respond to the needs of organisations in relation to managing volunteers;
- **a network workshop** was held in February 2017 for organisations that are involved in the EU Aid Volunteers initiative through deployment projects, certification under the EU Aid Volunteers initiative or in technical assistance or capacity building projects. 93 participants from 45 EU and non-EU countries attended the workshop.

The report states that work will continue on **strengthening** the EU Aid Volunteers network, including a network workshop for organisations that participate in the initiative and a workshop to allow EU Aid Volunteers to share their experiences of their deployment in the field and build closer links with the humanitarian sector.

The Commission refers to the **interim evaluation report** (please see previous document), the overall conclusion of which was that the initiative provides added value and its objectives are relevant to stakeholders. Among the **challenges** that need to be addressed are:

- the simplification of processes and administrative procedures;

- reducing the time for deployment;
- further synergies with existing Commission programmes and shift of focus from funding processes (supporting volunteer management or organisational capability and capacity) to humanitarian impact-oriented activities.

Lastly, in the context of preparing the way forward in the next Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021 – 2027, the Commission proposed to integrate the EU Aid Volunteers initiative into the European Solidarity Corps to maximise synergies and impact and achieve greater simplification.