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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL**

Annual Report on the Implementation of the EU Aid Volunteers Initiative in 2018

I. Introduction

Acting in accordance with Article 214(5) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the European Union (EU) launched the EU Aid Volunteers initiative in 2014¹. The initiative aims to strengthen the EU's ability to provide needs-based humanitarian aid and to strengthen the capacity and resilience of vulnerable or disaster-affected communities in non-EU countries. At the same time, it allows European citizens to show solidarity with people in need by taking part in humanitarian actions in these countries.

This report describes the implementation of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative in 2018. It is prepared in line with Article 27(4)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 375/2014², which requires the Commission to submit annual reports on progress made in implementing the Regulation to the European Parliament and to the Council. Previous reports for 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 are available online³.

The report is based on data collected and analysed in line with the Framework for the monitoring of the implementation of actions under the initiative. This framework was drawn up and agreed between the Commission and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), which is responsible for managing most of the operations carried out under the initiative.

II. Objectives and priorities

The activities described in this report were based on the 2018 Annual Work Programme for implementing the EU Aid Volunteers initiative adopted by the Commission⁴ in accordance with Article 21(3) of Regulation (EU) No 375/2014. EUR 19 235 000 was set aside in the budget to implement the initiative, with the following objectives:

- resilience building and disaster risk management in vulnerable, fragile or disaster-affected countries and forgotten crises;
- synergy with disaster preparedness projects;
- selection, training and deployment of volunteers;
- capacity building and technical assistance for hosting and sending organisations;
- certification of sending and hosting organisations;
- maintaining and further developing the EU Aid Volunteers Platform for registration, networking, online volunteering and learning;
- outreach activities and promotion of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative.

¹ Regulation (EU) No 375/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 establishing the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps ('EU Aid Volunteers initiative') (OJ L 122, 24.4.2014, p. 1). Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1398/2014 of 24 October 2014 laying down standards regarding candidate volunteers and EU Aid Volunteers (OJ L 373, 31.12.2014, p. 8). Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1244/2014 of 20 November 2014 laying down rules for the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 375/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 establishing the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps ('EU Aid Volunteers initiative') (OJ L 334, 21.11.2014, p. 52).

² OJ L 122, 24.4.2014, p. 1-17.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/echo/who/accountability/annual-reports_en

⁴ Commission Implementing Decision C (2018)165 of 22.1.2018 concerning the adoption of the 2018 work programme of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative.

III. Actions implemented in 2018

The actions described in sections 1-4 in this document are delegated to and implemented by EACEA, in cooperation with the Commission⁵.

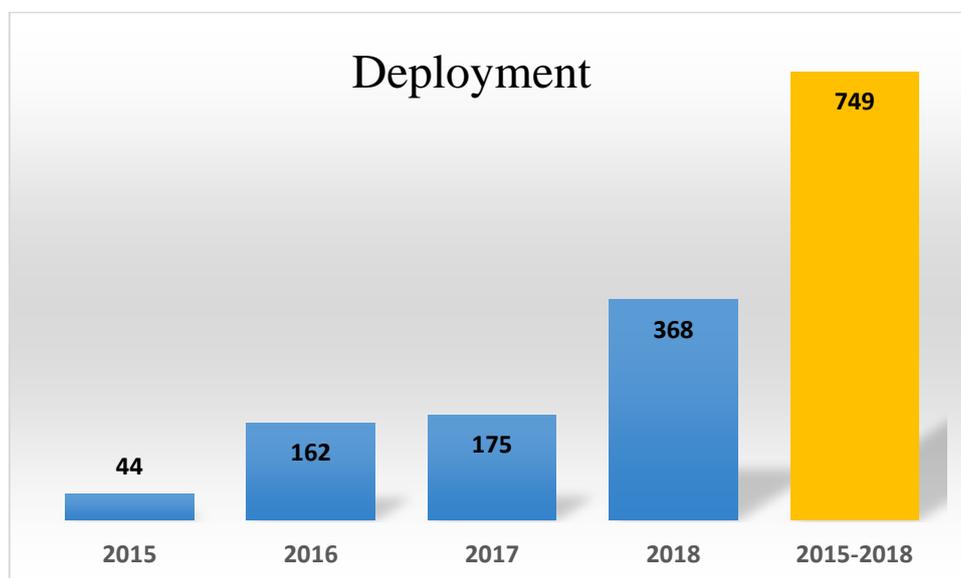
EACEA is responsible for the calls for proposals, calls for tender, contract management and implementing the relevant budget appropriations in line with the annual work programmes adopted by the Commission. In terms of managing operations, the Commission remains directly responsible for creating and maintaining the partners and volunteers' network, the online platform, communications and the interim evaluation of the initiative launched in 2017. The evaluation report and staff working document were adopted in June 2018⁶.

1. Deployment

The deployment of EU Aid Volunteers to humanitarian projects in countries affected by disaster offers a concrete opportunity for EU citizens and long-term residents in the EU to show their solidarity with those in need. Full-time volunteering deployments in non-EU countries are supported by online volunteering that people can take part in wherever they are in the world.

Volunteering opportunities funded under the EU Aid Volunteers initiative are published by consortia of sending and hosting organisations on the EU Aid Volunteers Platform⁷.

The chart below shows the number of EU Aid Volunteers funded through the annual calls for proposals published from 2015 to 2018.



⁵ The division of tasks between the Commission and EACEA is based on *Commission Decision C (2013)9189 of 18.12.2013 delegating powers to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency with view to performance of tasks linked to the implementation of Union programmes in the field of education, audiovisual and culture comprising, in particular, implementation of appropriations entered in the general budget of the Union and of the EDF allocations.*

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/funding-evaluations/evaluations/thematic-evaluations_en

⁷ https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/echo/eu-aid-volunteers_en/

Volunteering examples from projects implemented in 2018⁹

The ‘EU Aid Volunteers strengthening the resilience and response capacity of vulnerable and disaster-affected communities in the Middle East, Africa, Southern and Central America’ project brings together three sending organisations from Italy (GVC) and Spain (Alianza por la Solidaridad and Acción Contra El Hambre) that work together to deploy 33 EU Aid Volunteers to humanitarian aid operations in 19 hosting organisations in 12 non-EU countries (Tunisia, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Bolivia, Peru, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Mozambique, Mauritania). In Guatemala, the project aims to build the capacities of local organisations to host volunteers, prevent emergencies and strengthen preparedness in case of disaster. Europeans and local citizens work together to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities in least developed and fragile countries. A junior EU Aid Volunteer working on monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning writes about his role in Guatemala, where he conducted surveys on children’s nutrition:

‘First of all, what takes most of the time are short term tasks at project level. For example, to take part in the selection of beneficiaries, calculating a sample size for a given survey, constructing the questionnaire for a tablet-friendly use, revise statistical studies, define indicators ... It’s quite technical most of the time but I feel useful using my IT and statistical knowledge to take part in the project.[...] From the professional point of view, it was a good reminder on how theory applied in the field is difficult to balance with reality to be found. How to randomly select houses to survey at 2400 metres of altitude when some are 40 minutes far by walk, isolated, behind a stream? [...] While I was watching and learning from very professional staff during the first day, I was after conducting surveys by myself, in charge of one of the two teams of two investigators and an anthropometer that measures the weight and height of children under 5 years old to detect undernutrition.’ (https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/echo/eu-aid-volunteers_en/story-meal_en)

The ‘Sustainable development through humanitarian aid volunteers’ project complements work done to support partners outside the EU with humanitarian expert volunteers to work on their local projects and help their beneficiaries. The project brings together EU partners from France (ADICE), Italy (ASPEM) and Estonia (MTÜ Mondo) with hosting organisations in 10 non-EU countries (Thailand, Nepal, India, Uganda, Kenya, Ghana, Peru, Bolivia, Ukraine and Palestine) to work on volunteering projects between 6 and 12 months.

A senior EU Aid Volunteer active in community-based development reported: *‘I was deployed in a small Muslim village Kokpayom in Southern Thailand, close to seawater canals surrounded by mangrove forests. The host organisation has a long-term commitment in the village with focus on education, life-long learning, community development and environmental conservation. I assisted the hosting NGO in developing more effective networking activities, so that it can build stronger and sustainable partnerships. One of my main tasks was to support the NGO in developing a more strategic partnership with the local community college, with the goal to promote and support education accessible to everyone, life-long learning for better future prospects and community development.’* (https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/echo/eu-aid-volunteers_en/story-field-eu-aid-volunteer-petya-6-month-thailand_en)

More stories from the field: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/echo/eu-aid-volunteers_en/

The 2018 call for proposals for deployment of EU Aid Volunteers¹⁰ was published on 1 February 2018 with a submission deadline of 6 April 2018. The call aimed to co-finance projects for the deployment of EU Aid Volunteers, including apprenticeship placements for junior professionals and additional capacity building activities carried out by volunteers. Initially, the budget allocated to this call was EUR 8 400 000 and it was expected that eight proposals would be selected. However, interest in the call was higher than expected and the number of applications increased from 6 to 13 compared to 2017. Following the evaluation of applications, the budget was subsequently increased to EUR 12 000 000 by transferring EUR 3 600 000 from the budget allocated to the technical assistance and capacity building call for proposals. Eleven projects were selected¹¹ for co-financing with a total EU grant of

⁹ The text in italic is a testimony from EU Aid Volunteers involved in the implementation of projects funded under the EU Aid Volunteers.

¹⁰ EACEA/04/2018.

¹¹ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/euav_deployment_2018_publication_of_results.pdf

EUR 12 015 059. The projects started in October-December 2018 and will result in the deployment of 368 EU Aid Volunteers starting in late spring 2019.

2. Technical assistance and capacity building

Capacity building and technical assistance projects¹² supported through funding provided by the EU Aid Volunteers initiative strengthen the abilities of organisations intending to deploy EU Aid Volunteers and ensure that they comply with the standards and procedures set under the initiative.

On 27 March 2018, EACEA published a call for proposals¹³ with a submission deadline of 1 June 2018. The call aimed at co-financing projects for capacity building for hosting organisations based outside of the EU and technical assistance for EU-based sending organisations, in areas such as disaster risk management, volunteer management and needs assessment methodology. The total budget allocated for the co-financing of projects in the annual work programme was reduced from EUR 7 700 000 to EUR 4 100 000, following the transfer of EUR 3 600 000 to the projects selected under the call for proposals for deployment.

Seven applications (one for technical assistance and six for capacity building) were selected for co-financing¹⁴ with a total EU grant of EUR 4 157 886.

Overall, the 2014-2018 calls resulted in the funding of:

- 28 capacity building projects, involving 311 beneficiaries/project partners from 18 EU countries and 60 non-EU countries, and
- 12 technical assistance projects, with 70 beneficiaries from 25 EU countries.

These projects aim to strengthen the management and operational systems of participating organisations and help the organisations involved to work in partnership to implement best practices in humanitarian aid delivery and volunteer management.

Examples of projects selected for funding in 2018

Capacity building

The ‘**Strengthening the capacity of local organisations to respond effectively in emergencies (SCORE)**’ project involves the rollout of capacity strengthening initiatives with a consortium of 12 local members. The focus is on emergency preparedness, e.g. digital data collection and cash-based programming, the incorporation of Core Humanitarian Standards, with a focus on protection, gender and accountability mainstreaming principles, and staff/volunteer conduct, care and management.

The ‘**RESILIACT: Resilience-strengthening of local communities through a transnational EU Aid Volunteers capacity building action**’ project is implemented by four EU organisations and 19 non-EU partners. The action aims to contribute to strengthening the resilience of the most vulnerable and disaster-affected communities and the Union’s capacity to provide needs-based humanitarian aid on migration-related issues, climate change and disaster risk reduction and management, in order to save and preserve life in humanitarian crises.

¹² Article 10 and 15 of Regulation (EU) No 375/2014.

¹³ EACEA 14/2018.

¹⁴ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/euav_ta-cb_2018_publication_of_results.pdf

reached 208 (42 sending and 166 hosting organisations), providing opportunities for the deployment of more EU aid volunteers.

The chart below shows the number of organisations certified from 2015 to 2018.

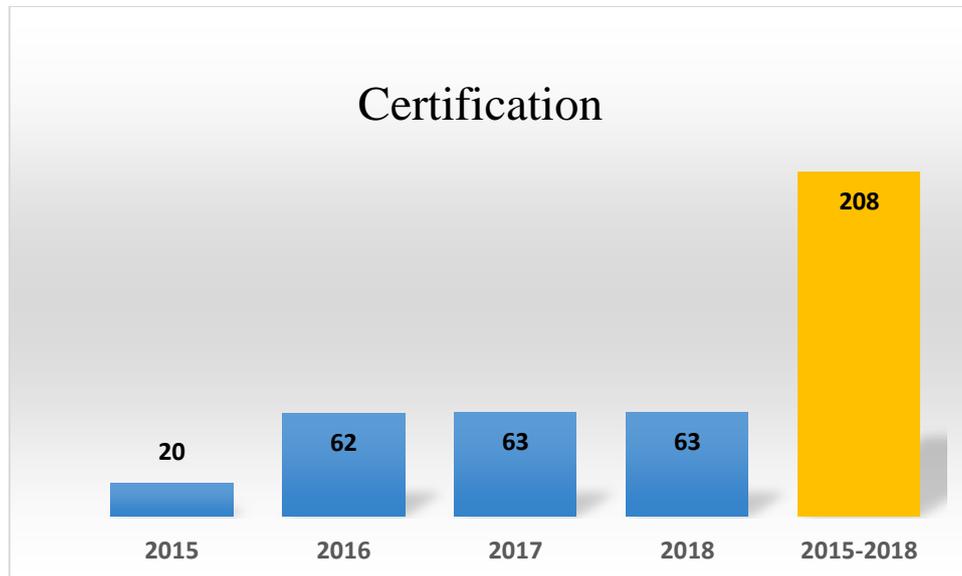


Figure 4: Sending and hosting organisations certified per year

Article 36(1) of Commission Implementing Regulation 1244/2014¹⁶ requires the certified sending and hosting organisations to undergo re-certification after three years of being awarded certification. In 2018, 20 organisations certified in 2015 had to go through the process of re-certification.

4. Training programme

The training programme for EU Aid Volunteers is delivered by a consortium led by the company ICF. It is based on a competence framework set out in Commission Delegated Regulation 1398/2014 and is delivered using a combined learning approach, with online preparatory learning and face-to-face classroom training comprised of mandatory and optional training modules and a scenario-based exercise¹⁷.

In 2018, 8 training cycles were held for 20 groups of candidate volunteers in training centres in Austria, Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands. A total of 295 candidate volunteers were trained. As in previous years, a number of reserve candidates attended the training to ensure that there are substitute volunteers if chosen candidates resign or are no longer available. The final selection by sending and hosting organisations takes place after the training is completed.

The courses were delivered mainly in English. Four out of the 20 groups of volunteers were taught in Spanish and one group was taught in French. Candidate volunteers' satisfaction with the training remains high, with an average score of 8.7 out of 10 points.

¹⁶ OJ L 334, 21.11.2014, p. 52-83.

¹⁷ Annex II of Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1244/2014.

Since 2018, representatives of sending organisations and former EU Aid Volunteers have been invited to join parts of the training to share their experience. In the course of 2018, representatives of three sending organisations took part in the training to present their organisation and exchange views with the candidate volunteers.

5. Support measures

In 2018, communication work related to the initiative included the production of a series of infographics in all EU official languages, flyers and social media posts. A social media campaign for International Volunteer Day (5 December) reached a wide audience. Material produced in previous years was also widely distributed on social media. By the end of 2018, around 450 000 people were reached, mainly through YouTube and Instagram. The campaign continued in 2019.

The EU Aid Volunteers Platform continued to be a hub for volunteering-related information, providing details of vacancies for full-time deployment and online volunteering. It also provides tools for managing EU Aid Volunteers, a database of successfully trained volunteers, tools to manage online volunteering assignments, collaborative spaces for volunteers and projects, a public forum where updates about the initiative are posted, the possibility of posting stories from the field, and reporting and survey tools. The platform has 3 360 active registered users.

The platform is consulted by visitors worldwide and the subscriptions service for volunteering vacancies had around 2 656 subscribers at the end of 2018.

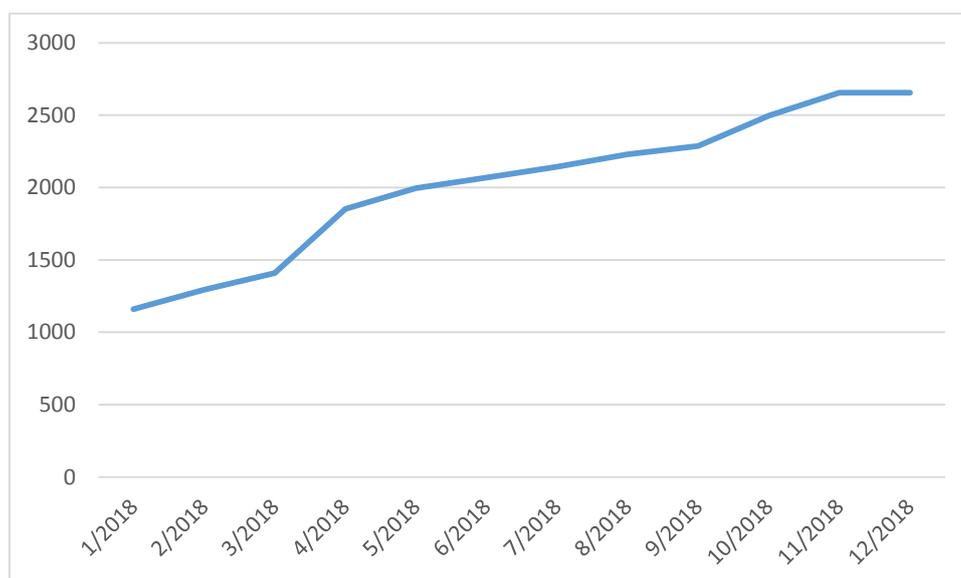


Figure 5: Number of people subscribed to receive EU Aid Volunteer vacancies on the EU Aid Volunteers Platform in 2018

Moreover, the Commission organised two major EU Aid Volunteers events in 2018. The second EU Aid Volunteers network workshop was held in April 2018¹⁸ and was attended by 100 participants from 34 countries (16 EU and 18 non-EU). The workshop brought together organisations that have been active in EU Aid Volunteers deployment projects and were certified under the EU Aid Volunteers initiative, and those that have been active in capacity building projects. The objective of the workshop was to share experiences of the deployment process, exchange good practices and discuss how to help further grow and develop the EU Aid Volunteers initiative. For organisations just beginning EU Aid Volunteers projects, this was an opportunity to learn from more experienced organisations.

Another event took place in October 2018 — the EU Aid Volunteers Back-to-Base workshop. It brought together more than 70 participants (EU Aid Volunteers and organisations) who have been active under the initiative since the EU Aid Volunteers legislation entered into force in 2014. The EU Aid Volunteers shared their experiences of the different phases of deployment and provided feedback to the organisations. A ‘Volunteer deployment guide’ was published as a result of the workshop¹⁹.

The EU Aid Volunteers initiative was also promoted at several other 2018 events, such as the Partnership Forum for partners in development cooperation, the European Development Days, the Spanish Volunteering Platform, the Annual Partners` Conference for the Commission’s humanitarian aid partners, and the Global Humanitarian and Development Aid Event (AidEx). A dedicated info session was also organised on International Volunteer Day on 5 December at the External Cooperation Infopoint in Brussels.

6. Other activities

Following the evaluation report provided by independent evaluators²⁰, in 2018 the Commission submitted to the European Parliament and to the Council an interim evaluation report on the results obtained and the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the implementation of Regulation No 375/2014 on the EU Aid Volunteers initiative²¹. It included assessments of the initiative’s impact on the humanitarian sector and the cost-effectiveness of the programme during the first three years of implementation, following its establishment in 2014.

In the context of the new Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, on 11 June 2018 the Commission adopted a proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Solidarity Corps programme and repealing the European Solidarity Corps Regulation of 2018 and Regulation (EU) No 375/2014²². This proposal envisages the integration of the current EU Aid Volunteers initiative into the European Solidarity Corps as of 2021. The proposed integration is informed by the interim evaluation of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative and aims to streamline the various volunteering programmes and improve cost efficiency. The integration is expected to simplify processes and provide a one-stop-shop for individuals and organisations, while preserving the

¹⁸ The first EU Aid Volunteers network workshop took place in February 2017 (see Annual Report for the Implementation of the EU Aid Volunteers Initiative in 2017).

¹⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/eu-aid-volunteers_en

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/echo/funding-evaluations/evaluations/thematic-evaluations_en

²¹ COM(2018) 496 of 28.6.2018.

²² COM(2018) 440 of 11.6.2018.

specificities of the current EU Aid Volunteers initiative, such as respect for humanitarian aid principles, high standards and a strong focus on safety and security of volunteers.

IV. Conclusions and way forward

The implementation of the deployment and capacity building/technical assistance projects funded in previous years paved the way for progress made on the EU Aid Volunteers initiative in 2018. Eleven new projects for deployment of volunteers, one technical assistance project and six capacity building projects were selected for funding in 2018. The total number of EU Aid Volunteers deployed to non-EU countries by the end of 2018 reached about 400 and at least 368 more will be deployed in 2019. The training programme again had high satisfaction rates among volunteers and more training sessions in English, French and Spanish are planned for 2019.

The ongoing certification process resulted in a total of 208 certified organisations in 2018 and a high number of these applied for re-certification for another three years.

In 2018, the EU Aid Volunteers Platform was increasingly used to publish stories from volunteers and organisations (69 new stories in 2018). It was further adapted to respond to what organisations needed to manage their volunteers. The platform performs better now and is more user-friendly.

In 2019, in line with the objectives and priorities of the initiative as set by the Annual Work Programme²³, the activities described above will continue to provide opportunities for more hosting and sending organisations to benefit from capacity building and technical assistance activities and funding for more EU Aid Volunteers to be deployed to countries outside the EU.

Communication activities will continue to provide information to potential organisations and volunteers about the EU Aid Volunteers initiative and its key achievements and impact. The EU Aid Volunteers network will be supported through an event that will take place in 2020 and will bring together volunteers and participating organisations.

More information on the EU Aid Volunteers initiative can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/eu-aid-volunteers_en.

²³ Commission Implementing Decision C(2019)4 of 14.1.2019 on the financing of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative and the adoption of the work programme for 2019.