

**STATEMENT**  
**ON THE FUTURE OF THE EU AID VOLUNTEERS INITIATIVE &  
THE PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION ON THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS**

On the occasion of the International Volunteers' Day, we, the undersigned organisations, would like to share our reflections regarding the European Commission's proposal for a new Directive on the European Solidarity Corps for the incoming 2021-27 period.

On 11 June 2018 the European Commission (EC) officially announced its proposal for a draft Regulation on the continuation of the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) from 2021 onwards, **that will include the actual EU Aid Volunteers Initiative as part of the ESC**, and the allocation of 1,26 billion € for its implementation.

The current EU Aid Volunteers Initiative, in place until 2020, is aimed at “contributing to strengthening the Union's capacity to provide needs-based humanitarian aid... as well as strengthening the capacity and resilience of vulnerable or disaster-affected communities in third countries... through the added value from the joint contributions of the aid volunteers in the UE, expressing the values of the Union and the solidarity with those in need and visibly promoting a sense of European citizenship”. To this date, 208 organisations around the world have certified to take part in this Initiative and are compliant with the different standards, in order to contribute to the fulfilment of this objective.

The undersigned organisations believe that the promotion of volunteering as a strategy to build an active and critic citizenship that gets involved in local and global causes is key to advance in the reduction of poverty, the social construction of resilience, and is in line with the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals and its pledge to “leave no one behind”.

In this line, **we believe that EUAV Initiative helps:**

- Transforming the society so that the European Union and its Member States are acknowledged as a space that promotes and fulfils respect for human rights and solidarity. To this end, new alliances and tools are needed.
- The institution of volunteering, through its different expressions, plays a crucial role in the political, cultural and social scope of the European Union.
- The EU Aid Volunteers not only provides for and supports interventions and actions in humanitarian contexts, but it also provides the Volunteers with the possibility to gain greater awareness regarding inequality and human rights, and the opportunity to contribute to the defence of those rights and EU policies that promote them. In this line, the volunteer can be regarded as a person able to stimulate an active and responsible European citizenship, key to the European values of democracy, solidarity, and active participation.

**We are concerned that the new Regulation proposal**, establishing the European Solidarity Corps for the 2021-2027 budgetary framework, and repealing the 374/2014 Regulation, **not only waters down the main features of the EU Aid Volunteers Initiative, but it also modifies its core objectives, diluting it among other expressions of volunteering** that in spite of their contribution to increasing solidarity, cannot make up for the humanitarian scope of action of the EU Aid Volunteers Initiative. The absence of the General Directory for the Civilian Protection and Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO), that currently sponsors, guides and supports the Initiative, from the scope of the new Regulation only comes to further showcase this fact.

The undersigned organisations have followed closely the evolution of this draft Regulation throughout the cycle of the ordinary legislative procedure and welcome the Draft Opinion of the Committee on Development 2018/0230 (COD), recalling the Committee on Culture and Education that the creation of the EU Aid Volunteers Initiative is a requirement set by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and the amendments proposed to the Regulation.

We advocate for a new legislative framework (2021-2027) that maximises the results of the activities implemented by all the organisations involved in the Initiative, both from EU and third countries, maintains its humanitarian essence and ensures that enough financial resources will be allocated for the capacity-building of most vulnerable communities.

In this spirit, the undersigned organisations strongly call on the European Parliament, the Council and the Member States to develop the proposal for a Regulation on the European Solidarity Corps accordingly, so that the new piece of legislation:

- Maintains the essence of EU Aid Volunteers regarding its objectives and the standards required to be part of it. The “quality label of the European Solidarity Corps” proposed in the new regulation, if applicable to all the actions included in it, cannot guarantee the achievement of certain levels of requirements necessary to manage volunteers within a humanitarian context. Furthermore, if all the beneficiary entities are required to comply certain standards, it would be too demanding for those who do not wish to be involved in this type of humanitarian volunteering (so called “second strand”). We believe that in order to participate in the EU Aid Volunteers Initiative, the certification process for both sending and hosting organisations should continue maintaining its specificities. Therefore, we propose that there be two quality labels or certification processes, one for each strand.
- Establishes that the priority objectives of the initiative continue to be met regarding the visibility of the humanitarian volunteering in the European society with the idea of continuing to contribute to build a more conscious and solidary society. All of this, with the necessary means to continue doing so.
- Does not set an age limit to participate as an EU Aid Volunteer. Restricting the participation to EU citizens under 30 years old would deeply affect the main objective of the Initiative to provide humanitarian aid to the communities affected by crises or disasters, as tackling their specific needs may not always be provided for by more junior and less experienced volunteers. The Initiative being based on the identified needs of the



recipient communities and hosting organisations, we believe that it is crucial to highlight the added value that the contribution and experience of senior volunteers has brought and will continue to bring to the Initiative, not the less the demands that come along with working in a humanitarian context. In this line, we welcome and support the amendment proposed by the Committee on Development not to introduce an age limit to the Regulation.

- Contemplates the support of activities complementary to the deployment of volunteers that contribute towards the building of capacities, both in relation to the domains of interest within a humanitarian scope in third countries and reinforcement of capacities and resilience of communities and local organizations, as well as to the capacities of managing humanitarian volunteering of the participant organizations.
- Includes a new budgetary framework in accordance with the specific characteristics and needs of the international humanitarian volunteering. The costs for the management and the development of the actions linked to the EU Aid Volunteers Initiative are very different to those of other European volunteering schemes. We call on the relevant European Union institutions to ensure that these needs be taken into account in the budgetary framework and in the annual budgets.

**This Statement is endorsed by:**

ActionAid Hellas

Alianza por la Solidaridad

Comhlámh

Danish Refugee Council

Esi labs!

FOCSIV Volontari nel mondo

Gruppo di Volontariato Civile

Hungarian Volunteer Sending Foundation

Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation

Lithuanian NGDO Platform

Nepal Friendship Society

Voluntary Service Overseas

Zavod Volontariat