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Humanitarian Aid

**Review Concerning the Establishment of a European
Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps**

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A EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY HUMANITARIAN AID CORPS**

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***Roger Dumélie, Michael Kunze, Maggie Pankhurst, Jonathan Potter, and
Michel Van Bruaene (Team Leader).***

The comments and recommendations contained herein reflect the opinions of the consultants only.

ACRONYMS

<i>CFSP</i>	<i>Common Foreign and Security Policy (EU)</i>
<i>CIDA</i>	<i>Canadian International Development Agency</i>
<i>DEC</i>	<i>Disaster Emergency Committee</i>
<i>DG AIDCO</i>	<i>European Commission Directorate-General for Assistance in Development Cooperation (EuropeAid)</i>
<i>DG DEV</i>	<i>European Commission Directorate-General for Development</i>
<i>DG EAC</i>	<i>European Commission Directorate-General for Education And Culture</i>
<i>DG ENV</i>	<i>European Commission Directorate-General for Environment</i>
<i>DG ECHO</i>	<i>European Commission Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid</i>
<i>DG INFSO</i>	<i>European Commission Directorate-General for Information Society</i>
<i>DG RELEX</i>	<i>European Commission Directorate-General for External Relations</i>
<i>DIPECHO</i>	<i>Disaster Preparedness ECHO</i>
<i>DRC</i>	<i>Danish Refugee Council</i>
<i>ECPC</i>	<i>European Civil Peace Corps</i>
<i>EIDHR</i>	<i>European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights</i>
<i>EPRS</i>	<i>Emergency Preparedness and Response Section (UNHCR)</i>
<i>ESDP</i>	<i>European Security and Defence Policy</i>
<i>EU</i>	<i>European Union</i>
<i>EVHAC</i>	<i>European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps</i>
<i>EVS</i>	<i>European Voluntary Service (DG EAC)</i>
<i>FAFA</i>	<i>EC-UN Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement</i>
<i>FCA</i>	<i>Forgotten Crisis Assessment (DG ECHO)</i>
<i>FPA</i>	<i>Framework Partnership Agreement</i>
<i>GNA</i>	<i>Global Needs Assessment (DG ECHO)</i>
<i>HAC</i>	<i>Humanitarian Aid Committee</i>
<i>ICRC</i>	<i>International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent</i>
<i>IDRL</i>	<i>International Disaster Response Law (IFRC)</i>
<i>IFRC</i>	<i>International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent</i>
<i>IHL</i>	<i>International Humanitarian Law</i>
<i>(I)NGO</i>	<i>(International) Non-Governmental Organisation</i>
<i>JPO</i>	<i>Junior Programme Officer</i>
<i>KRC</i>	<i>Kenyan Red Cross</i>
<i>LFA</i>	<i>Logical Framework Analysis</i>
<i>LRRD</i>	<i>Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development</i>
<i>MIC (EU)</i>	<i>Monitoring and Information Centre</i>
<i>NOHA</i>	<i>Network On Humanitarian Action (Joint European Masters Degree)</i>
<i>NRC</i>	<i>Norwegian Refugee Council</i>
<i>OECD/DAC</i>	<i>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development / Development Assistance Committee</i>
<i>OFDA</i>	<i>Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (US)</i>
<i>RedR/IHE</i>	<i>Engineers for Disaster Relief / International Health Exchange</i>
<i>RRM</i>	<i>Rapid Reaction Mechanism (EU)</i>
<i>SMART</i>	<i>Specific Measurable Accepted Realistic Timed (indicators)</i>
<i>TOR</i>	<i>Terms of reference</i>
<i>UNDP</i>	<i>United Nations Development Programme</i>
<i>UNHCR</i>	<i>United Nations High Commissariat for Refugees</i>
<i>UNICEF</i>	<i>United Nations Children's Fund</i>
<i>UN-OCHA</i>	<i>United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid</i>
<i>UNV</i>	<i>United Nations Volunteers</i>
<i>USAID</i>	<i>United States Agency for International Development</i>
<i>VOICE</i>	<i>Voluntary Organisation in Cooperation in Emergencies</i>
<i>VSO</i>	<i>Voluntary Service Overseas (UK)</i>

PREAMBLE

This report is the result of an external and independent review of some key aspects of the world of volunteerism as it is today, with its very real strengths, but also its limitations and expectations in relation to humanitarian aid.

The review was launched at the request of the European Commission's Directorate for Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO). It is based on a provision of the EU Constitution, which states that: "*In order to establish a framework for joint contributions from young Europeans to the humanitarian aid operations of the Union, a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps ("EVHAC")¹ shall be set up. European laws shall determine the rules and procedures for the operation of the Corps.*" [Art. III-321(5)]

As the Constitution has not been fully ratified so far, the review must be considered as prospective only. The budgetary implications of some proposed options for EVHAC may present further constraints, in the current framework of EU budget restrictions for the period 2007-2013.

Nevertheless, some provisions of article 321(5) have consistently raised keen interest in various circles, and are likely to continue to attract attention in the future. An 'EVHAC' might contribute to involving young Europeans and developing their talents through EU programmes; it could demonstrate the interested concern of Europe for the countries of the world most affected by disasters; and it could indirectly enhance the image of the Union, both inside and outside of its borders.

It was therefore worthwhile to assess the potential feasibility of the concept, even though the task was made rather complex due to a number of constraints, e.g. the lack of usable benchmarks despite the considerable number of organisations already engaged in various forms of volunteering.

Key subsequent findings, conclusions and recommendations will be found in the executive summary below; they are complemented by detailed chapters and annexes. Some of them may look rather technical -with our apologies. We do hope that you will find as much interest in reading the report, as we have found pleasure in its preparation.

The review team.

¹ The acronym of EVHAC will be used throughout the report for facility purposes, although we do not recommend the adoption of this designation in any actual set-up (see chapter E.1).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

As an outcome to a long consultation process that can probably be traced back to several sources, among which the Greek Presidency of the EU in 2003, the Art. III.381.5 of the EU Constitution stated that *“In order to establish a framework for joint contributions from young Europeans to the humanitarian aid operations of the Union, a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps (“EVHAC”) shall be set up. European laws shall determine the rules and procedures for the operation of the Corps”*.

Throughout this process, EVHAC was supported at several political levels. Nevertheless, the initiative was also greeted with caution, and caveats were expressed by many key humanitarian actors and by DG ECHO, the humanitarian aid service of the Commission. Among a number of concerns expressed was a key one, that the EVHAC provision appeared to be possibly in contradiction with the overall effort to “professionalise” the response to increasingly demanding and dangerous humanitarian interventions, as “young” is generally taken for “inexperienced” [chapter A].

On the other hand, findings [chapter B and below] indicate that a severe shortage of qualified human resources is currently a key constraint in humanitarian aid delivery. Issues related to training, experience, availability and security must be addressed in order to overcome human resource constraints. Volunteers and volunteer programs could be part of the problem or part of the solution, depending how they are designed and managed.

As a consequence, an independent review was launched by DG ECHO, with the objective to “provide ECHO and other services of the European Commission with an analysis setting out the design, or range of designs, of a future EVHAC”.

After a standard tendering process, the project was contracted to a team of experts led by Prolog, a consulting company based in Brussels. The methodology involved multiple meetings in the EU and abroad with key stakeholders, some field visits, and several specific surveys that were disseminated to all of DG ECHO’s implementing partners, the representatives of the EU Member States in the HAC (Humanitarian Aid Committee), and a number of key organisations sending volunteers to the field, and some volunteers themselves.

Summary of Key Findings

From meetings and field missions

Throughout the findings’ collection process, very few unconditionally favourable reactions were registered, that supported the Constitution’s approach of a formal and identifiable European corps of young volunteers, to be involved in DG ECHO-funded humanitarian aid interventions [chapter B].

In the Commission, some expressed the hope that EVHAC could provide field training opportunities, e.g. for NOHA graduates. The annual number of such trainees is however likely to remain rather limited, whilst their academic qualifications would generally be quite high. Some UN agencies (UNHCR) would like to see more “European UNVs or JPOs” become available through an EVHAC scheme, to fill in current gaps. Whilst the above provisos of overall numbers and background would also apply, an additional issue would probably concern the visibility of the EU with such an approach. Some of the HAC members perceived EVHAC as an “important initiative” to “show Europe’s concern for the rest of the world” and to “facilitate positive public awareness”. However, all favourable responses were mitigated by strong concerns regarding security risks, budget, or the need for experienced staff. Upon analysis, these reactions also concerned rather more “post-crisis” or “development” activities than emergency humanitarian ones, i.e. these reactions were being expressed about ‘less’ riskier interventions. To make matters more complex, there were no internationally agreed single definitions to be found regarding either the terms of “young” or “volunteer”.

Most findings were not favourable to EVHAC.

- Reportedly, a key benchmark for the EVHAC idea had been the US Peace Corps, which is not itself an emergency humanitarian organisation, but rather a development-oriented one.
- According to some highly qualified volunteering organisations (IFRC), an additional body would be likely to provoke duplication and confusion instead of filling in crucial needs in supporting already existing structures.
- As already stated, a focus on young volunteers could be counter productive to the long-standing efforts of making humanitarian aid more professional and effective.
- It is also in contradiction with key lessons learned of volunteering: volunteers usually work better (i) locally rather than abroad (“volunteering is firstly a local issue”), and (ii) in a relatively sheltered environment that allows longer-term activities (development or post-crisis reconciliation programmes, working civil society...).
- Current trends aim at strengthening and increasingly relying on local/national volunteers in emergencies. Local volunteering is generally “faster, cheaper, and more sustainable”. Accordingly, EVHAC was sometimes described as a possibly “paternalistic” initiative.
- Sending young, relatively untrained volunteers to most current humanitarian crises would often amount to setting unacceptably high security –and political– risks (“Security is expensive; bad security is extremely expensive”).
- Most local (and EU) legislation and/or practices are often not (yet) adequately conducive to the use of volunteers in humanitarian activities, their status in particular could be problematical.
- DG ECHO is still one of the smallest Commission services, with limited resources. Its specific mandate entails a relative isolation in practice from other aspects of EU crisis management, also in order to respect international humanitarian law.
- More trained professionals –volunteers or not– are certainly needed in times of crises, and corresponding options should be considered. However, their profiles would probably also often fit the requirements of some other volunteering organisations that are being considered separately by the EU (ECPC, Civil Protection). Several separate databases could amount to duplication of efforts, inefficient use of budget resources, and confusion.
- According to some stakeholders (UN-OCHA, ICRC...), the direct use of EU volunteers by DG ECHO could also undermine some key humanitarian principles (independence, neutrality...).
- The acronym “EVHAC” itself does not sound appropriately evocative (reference to evacuation...)

Interviews highlighted other needs, as yet uncovered.

- To better support dissemination and understanding of volunteering principles.
- Where appropriate and feasible, to increase professionalism of key volunteering organisations already established in the EU. To support capacity building, training, management, operating framework, local branches... (“disasters are by nature unpredictable and so are responses; what you really need is to be able to put the right person at the right time in the right place...”).
- There is a strong need for experienced and skilled professionals to constitute a ‘surge’ response capacity, i.e. rapid expansion and deployment of key partners in times of crisis.
- To better support the capacity building of local/national volunteering capacities in key third countries, in particular in the field of disaster preparedness.
- Notwithstanding the above, volunteering or internship is often perceived as a very beneficial first experience (personal investment for the future) and should be encouraged.

Conclusions

Overall, the EVHAC initiative as it is formulated in the Constitution appears as a well intentioned idea; however, it is more political (or supply) in origin rather than field driven. The design may be mixing means and ends.

- EVHAC is combining several appealing ideas (humanitarian aid, enthusiasm of young people, the need to enhance EU visibility), though not from a sufficiently field driven orientation.
- It does not take into consideration certain essential lessons learnt (local volunteering is best) nor certain trends (i.e., de-centralise, build capacity of key third countries and consider them as partners rather than recipients).

- As stated above, the proposed EVHAC could risk duplicating existing structures with detrimental consequences (i.e., conflicts with key implementing partners and other –national, bilateral– stakeholders, lack of essential coordination during crises).
- Managing EVHAC alone (or even as a major leading body) would amount to an extremely difficult extra workload. The required structure would entail substantial administrative and management costs, with potentially low cost-effectiveness or value for money ratios².
- Responsibility for the selection, training and behaviour of volunteers would fall on the Commission.
- In the current international framework, humanitarian aid activities funded by DG ECHO usually entail high security and safety risks and require an increasingly professional, effective implementation. They do not seem appropriate for young, untrained volunteers, unless stringent security and supervision could be ensured.
- Being ‘supply-driven’, i.e. such a corps would have to maintain a minimum certain number of volunteers to justify the cost, the main benefits of EVHAC are likely to be primarily for the (young) volunteers themselves, rather than for the demand side, i.e. the beneficiaries of DG ECHO’s assistance.
- DG ECHO is probably not well positioned to take the leadership role of a formal EVHAC structure, especially with regard to liaison with already existing structures at national level, that have their own *modus operandi* and which could be considered more developmental in their orientation.

Provided that the Constitution were ratified and the necessary budget and human resources were made available, elements of an EVHAC-like scheme might however bring some added value to the volunteering world, i.e. some EU moral and financial support could perhaps be given to already existing humanitarian volunteering mechanisms.

- Rather than creating an entirely new EVHAC structure, DG ECHO could contribute to filling in the needs of existing voluntary organisations, by supporting principles (“volunteerism, which could be seen as the front end of a professional and well-trained cadre of humanitarian assistance workers, would only succeed in an environment governed by the basic donor consensus principles”), and providing capacity building, possibly thematic funding, to those international and NGO organisations in order to help them become more responsive to unpredictable crisis situations.
- There is a general shortage of qualified and experienced people needed in a crisis situation; any existing scheme, UN, Red Cross or other, that could be supported in order to effectively increase the pool of human resources would be welcome, as long as there is a commitment to communicate the EU’s role.
- Conversely, there are humanitarian-linked activities in the EU or abroad, and development-related programmes in quieter/sheltered areas, where young volunteers with DG ECHO partner organisations could start using their skills or learning new ones more adequately. Possibly DG ECHO could use its grants facility to support matters such as training initiatives by its partners.

The conclusions above also point towards a need for a coordinated approach by several Commission services potentially concerned by the benefits of volunteerism; a permanent EC inter-service working group on volunteerism could be of merit.

On balance of the above and based upon a logical framework analysis of the Constitution’s provision [see chapter C below], the conclusions lead the review team to consider that, the construction of an EVHAC in strict compliance with that envisaged in constitutional text, would not be a feasible option. This is because it would lead to an unjustifiably heavy and costly management structure (own database, training, local branches in recipient countries, full array of field security measures, contracts, logistics, insurance, etc). It would furthermore entail a number of significant risks (duplication, role confusion, security, safety, accountability and responsibility) that seem to preclude its effective management [see chapter D below].

Recommendations

As a consequence in the opinion of the evaluation team, there appears to be only two main recommendations that the team can make.

² The 2006 budget for the US Peace Corps amounts to US\$345 million (€300 m), to deploy some 7,800 volunteers.

1) No EVHAC should be set up. Taken literally, the Constitution text approach does not appear practically feasible and conflicts with most lessons learnt from the field, as well as with current trends towards professionalism and decentralisation. Furthermore, DG ECHO is not in an institutional position to take the lead in the Commission and in the EU, and is not structured to do it properly.

2) A possible realistic scaled down alternative for DG ECHO may arise in due course, and DG ECHO could pursue this alternative without the risks associated with the creation of an EVHAC. Several services of the European Commission are at present concerned directly and indirectly in promoting volunteerism in different fields, e.g. DG Education and Culture and DG Information Society. In the near future there may also be a 'Peace Corps', concerned with external programmes other than humanitarian ones and perhaps a structure for the use of volunteers in civil protection activities. DG ECHO could advocate for a Commission wide executive or independent agency for EU volunteers that would promote European volunteerism at EU and Member State levels across the different fields. Such a structure could be given an EU identity, e.g. it could be called "*European Volunteers*". Were it to be jointly managed and funded by the relevant Commission services, many costs could be shared, in accordance with the objectives of coherence and cost effectiveness of the 2007-2013 Financial Framework. A joint structure would also be more likely to reach a sufficient number of volunteers through various programmes, to achieve a measurable impact at the global EU and international levels³.

A multi-fold strategic approach could be followed by DG ECHO under this second scenario.

- DG ECHO should support existing humanitarian volunteering initiatives on the part of its humanitarian partners, by use of the grants facility for NGOs and thematic funding for international organisations to promote training and capacity building.
- DG ECHO should continue with its funding of the NOHA masters degree qualification and with its practice of using trainees at its headquarters. There is a need to support/promote different types of education schemes, both in Europe and in key third countries, to expand the global pool of humanitarian expertise.
- To advocate with other EC services for assistance to the existing volunteering structures in the EU, particularly for strengthening the existing management capacities for co-ordination within the EU and outside the EU, to ensure that "the right people will do the right thing at the right time", in order to promote efficiency and to make them better able to provide back-office or logistical support, but always outside of theatres of humanitarian operations.
- DG ECHO could also undertake communication initiatives to promote existing volunteering activities for experienced or skilled persons (both within the EU and outside), by dissemination of principles, code of conduct, contributing to maintain/upgrade standards improve guidelines, translate and disseminate key documents, promote common classification criteria in existing databases, promote quality, provide a limited amount of funds for some targeted activities such as IHL/IDRL, key training..., in a collaborative way with its partners. A dedicated website, or part of a website, could be used as a platform for information, promotion of the EU image, links with existing organisations, databases and volunteering/internship opportunities, exchanges of lessons learnt, etc.

A recommended option for the management of such a volunteering body could be to follow the already existing model of the joint DG EAC/INFSO Executive Agency, from which lessons can be learnt. This is a partially outsourced structure, which manages i.a. the EVS voluntary programme, is designed to be sustainable, cost-sharing, and includes a mixture of Commission and external staff (possibly to be seconded from experienced partners).

In this framework, a central management structure needs to be set up for the executive works. Contacts for training initiatives, hosting of conferences, harmonisation of conditions of recruitment and management for volunteers, development of standards and criteria, etc might be tasks that DG ECHO could develop with such an agency. Excellent communication would also be a prerequisite; promotion of safety and security would be considered as a first priority, first time volunteers for humanitarian actions would not normally go to the field but assist in support

³ The US Peace Corps was able to achieve global impact and reputation by deploying some 15,000 volunteers in the 1960s.

functions. The actual operational management of the volunteers (recruitment, contracting, monitoring, etc) would remain with the implementing partners who would involve them in their programmes. The partners would also apply their own standard conditions (selection, training, conditions, social reintegration after the volunteering period, etc) with a commonly agreed minimum European threshold. A detailed description of these proposals can be found in [chapter E].

A. BACKGROUND

A.1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the EVHAC initiative

Although the exact origin(s) of this initiative could not be traced with complete accuracy, it appears to be the outcome of a long consultation process that probably received a substantial support during the Greek Presidency of the EU in 2003, with the underlying objective of enhancing the visibility of the Union. A parallel had reportedly been drawn at the time with the US Peace Corps, assessed in chapter B.6.

Throughout this process, EVHAC was supported at several political levels, e.g. by the Parliament⁴ and the Council⁵. Nevertheless, concerns and questions about the initiative were also consistently expressed by officials of many key humanitarian actors (VOICE, IFRC...) and by officials of DG ECHO itself, the humanitarian aid service of the Commission⁶. Among a number of caveats expressed was the crucial one that, the EVHAC provision appeared to be in contradiction with the overall effort to “professionalise” the increasingly demanding and dangerous humanitarian interventions, as “young” might be taken for “inexperienced”.

Objectives of the review

According to the TOR (see Annex I), DG ECHO “intends to obtain a review of the issues and objectives concerning the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps (EVHAC) which is intended to be set up under the EU Constitution”⁷. The overall objective of the review was therefore to provide DG ECHO and other services of the European Commission with an analysis setting out the design, or range of designs, of a future EVHAC. More specifically, the TOR stated that the review should answer the following points (list not exhaustive):

- the possible structures of such a body including but not limited to: (a) the management of volunteers through DG ECHO, (b) the establishment of a technical assistance platform under DG ECHO’s control to manage the functions of recruitment, financial management and logistical support to volunteers, (c) the creation of an agency to manage, among other things, the EVHAC;
- the numbers of volunteers that the corps could realistically be expected to manage, the nature and duration of assignments, the status under the Vienna Convention, etc;
- whether the corps should have several classifications of volunteers, the possible profiles of such volunteers, their level of education and training e.g. recent graduates in general disciplines, recent graduates in disciplines that correspond to DG ECHO’s core sectors of intervention medical, water and sanitation, food aid and nutrition, legal protection and shelter; graduates with relevant experience; non-graduates with relevant skills and experience e.g. logistics, security etc;
- the management mechanisms for volunteers, should there be one for rapid response to breaking crises as distinct from ongoing crises; should there be a policy that volunteers are encouraged to contribute as much at the headquarters of humanitarian organisations as they could perhaps in more sought after posts in the field;
- the conditions of recruitment, level of remuneration, insurance, type and contents of training, establishment of standards, that should be provided for volunteers e.g. humanitarian policy, security issues and needs, logistics, visibility (both for individual volunteers and also for the EVHAC); age; gender; and

⁴ See e.g. the amendment 0362 of 18 December 2003 to the budget line 19 02 13, regarding the “Voluntary technical assistance programme – Preparatory action”. This concerns both ECPC and EVHAC.

⁵ See e.g. the Council’s External Relations conclusions and the Action Plan on the Tsunami dated 31 January 2005, which mentioned the “potential role” that EVHAC could have played in this context.

⁶ See chapter B.5.1.

⁷ Art III. 381, paragraph 5: “*In order to establish a framework for joint contributions from young Europeans to the humanitarian aid operations of the Union, a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps shall be set up. European laws shall determine the rules and procedures for the operation of the Corps*”.

- the administrative, financial, legal and human resources requirements for each of the above mentioned options should be estimated, together with pros and cons for the various alternatives. Of specific interest for DG ECHO is: would the management of this corps cause DG ECHO to become more operational and the implications of this?

Methodology

The review was carried out over a period of 8 months, from July 2005 to February 2006, by a team of five independent consultants: Roger Dumélie, Michael Kunze, Maggie Pankhurst, Jonathan Potter (People In Aid/UK), and Michel Van Bruaene (Team Leader).

It was structured in accordance with the TOR (see Annex I) and included the following key steps:

- Interviews with key DG ECHO staff, in Brussels and based in the field;
- desk study of material on volunteer organisations at Brussels and analyses of comparable volunteer organisations codes of practice, mandates, modus operandi, etc;
- consultation with other Commission services concerned: External Services⁸ and DG Education and Culture (EAC) regarding the European Voluntary Service (EVS) programme;
- interviews with officials of concerned UN agencies and the Red Cross in Geneva; with key INGOs (via VOICE), Volunteer Sending Organisations and EU Member States where feasible;
- comprehensive surveys addressed to DG ECHO partners, representatives of EU Member States to the HAC (Humanitarian Aid Committee), key VSOs, and some volunteers themselves;
- Field missions to Nairobi (the preferred coordinating location for most of Horn, East and Central African humanitarian situations), Sri Lanka (in the post-Tsunami context) and Washington, DC (to collect the views of American stakeholders and information about potential benchmarks).

Key constraints were identified as follows:

- the considerable numbers of organisations –NGOs, civil society, official, umbrellas, etc– already engaged in various forms of volunteering. Despite, or because of the multiplicity of actors, the exercise of data collection was mostly partial and sketchy rather than comprehensive;
- the lack of usable benchmarks –existing organisations with comparable purposes and size, again despite the numbers;
- the lack of internationally agreed definitions of either “young” or “volunteer”. More worrying, the interpretation of “humanitarian aid” in the Constitution’s text could be ambivalent. DG ECHO, the principal Commission service for the funding of humanitarian aid, applies a definition that fits its legal mandate and means, and focuses primarily on emergency life-saving activities in the worst crisis situations. Conflicts or complex emergencies usually involve high levels of risk and require corresponding professionalism. At the opposite end quite naturally, EVHAC was mostly evoked as potentially useful in “peripheral” or humanitarian-related activities, such as helping in the “second wave” after natural disasters; and
- in parallel, the narrow focus of the review on humanitarian aid, which limited somewhat the possibilities of broader discussions (see footnote 8 and chapter A.3).

Preliminary understanding of objectives, values and constraints of volunteering and EVHAC

The value of volunteer programs, such as the proposed EVHAC, are primarily in local capacity building, human resources development, public awareness and fund-raising. In addition to this humanitarian assistance value-

⁸ The review followed the progress of two contiguous evaluations initiated almost simultaneously by other Commission services, and concerning the involvement of volunteers in EU programmes: the European Civil Peace Corps (ECPC), launched by EuropeAid, and the Volunteers in Civil Protection, followed by DG Environment. Although the TORs recommended to “bear in mind” the other surveys and to “facilitate exchanges” between consulting teams, a coordinated approach was difficult to achieve in the absence of formal coordination meetings or joint Commission steering committee for these evaluations.

added, volunteer programs can bring direct benefits to Europe (i.e. not only for the fulfilment of DG ECHO's mandate) in terms of building a European civil society and development of youth skills.

However, professionalism also tends to be a major and general problem for humanitarian assistance (HA); one that goes far beyond issues related to volunteers. The extremely demanding nature of HA needs, the lack of regulation in the historical evolution of HA and compartmentalisation (i.e. humanitarian actors may be specialised by sector, geographical region, or mandate and are thus less likely to work in a wider framework) all these tend to undermine efforts towards greater professionalism. Volunteers and volunteer programmes can be part of the problem or part of the solution, depending how they are designed. Volunteers and volunteer programs could be better linked to university training and 'on the job' training in the humanitarian assistance field as part of a larger EU program to improve professionalism, as long as the programme supports the activities of experienced humanitarian organisations.

A severe shortage of qualified human resources (HR) is a key constraint in humanitarian aid (HA) delivery. Issues related to training, experience, availability, safety and security must be addressed in order to overcome HR constraints by promoting staff retention. The problem of compartmentalisation and different donor objectives are also factors. While HR is a sector-wide problem, EU support for a properly designed volunteer programme could be a significant part of the solution, albeit only if the key elements of such a design respect and support the actions of experienced humanitarian implementing partners and do not duplicate them, but draw them together. In the opinion of the evaluation team an EVHAC would not only duplicate, probably in a costly way, existing volunteering activities, but could also be counter productive and against the lessons learnt, especially that volunteers should be local and already skilled and experienced.

Promotion of the development, implementation and monitoring of standards has become an important tool in efforts to improve the quality of HA. This could be further expanded to deal more specifically with volunteers. A scaled down alternative for DG ECHO to the EVHAC, to contribute to a future EC wide executive or independent agency for EU volunteers, could have as an important objective the assistance of humanitarian partners with their training, selection and placement of qualified volunteers in appropriate situations. EU assistance to humanitarian actors could play a useful role in improving coordination. It could also harmonise the conditions of recruitment of volunteers. There should also be efforts to discourage the inappropriate placement of poorly selected and/or poorly trained volunteers on a sector-wide basis.

As correctly stated in DG ECHO's policy, the "hidden or forgotten crises" and related funding imbalances are a significant problem. Part of a volunteer program could be designed to help redress this problem by providing support to the fund-raising efforts of DG ECHO's partners in their countries of origin.

Bringing European citizens closer to the EU is an important EVHAC objective. While this objective can be achieved through other ways including a scaled down alternative to the EVHAC, humanitarian aid provides a unique platform for European citizens, particularly in the promotion of the European tradition of non-discrimination, independence, impartiality and neutrality in implementation.

The promotion of volunteerism within and outside the EU should involve a European Commission wide approach. DG ECHO representing a major portion of humanitarian aid funding, it should be able to aid its humanitarian partners in their existing activities using volunteers and complement these activities with support for capacity building, training and coordination.

A.2. WORKING PARAMETERS OF DG ECHO

Mandate and complementary policies

The legal basis of DG ECHO (the Council's Humanitarian Regulation (EC) 1257/96) states under its article 1: "The Community's humanitarian aid shall comprise assistance, relief and protection operations on a non-discriminatory basis to help people in third countries, particularly the most vulnerable among them, and as a

priority those in developing countries, victims of natural disasters, man-made crises, such as wars and outbreaks of fighting or exceptional situations or circumstances comparable to natural or man-made disasters.” Major humanitarian principles (non-discrimination, independence, impartiality) are set out under article 7 of the Regulation. On that basis, DG ECHO insists that “humanitarian aid cannot be subsumed to the political logic of EU crisis management; it delivers aid solely on the basis of needs” (see also European context in section A.3).

DG ECHO-funded programmes are implemented through a network of nearly 200 partners, from major UN agencies and Red Cross family members to small NGOs, gathered under the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA). In this context, volunteerism has been a long established feature of humanitarianism. Since its creation, DG ECHO has funded expatriate personnel working as volunteers with its partners, both with international NGOs, the Red Cross (a key volunteering movement) and with UN bodies.

To better adapt its approach to challenging field requirements and to upgrade definitions of “humanitarian space” components, DG ECHO has defined a number of complementary policy measures, i.a.:

- results-oriented approach, SMART⁹ objectives and logical framework analysis (LFA);
- non-emergency decisions that can have a duration of twelve months –or eighteen where justified (the Regulation explicitly mentions only emergency actions with a duration of six months, as distinct from standard Commission decisions);
- focus on children;
- focus on low visibility, forgotten or neglected crises, where relatively small amounts of funding can have major effects;
- DIPECHO for disaster preparedness, mitigation and advocacy activities;
- global co-operation frameworks e.g. with UN partners (Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement – FAFA);
- LRRD (Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development).

Limitations

Nevertheless, DG ECHO is still faced with a number of well-known working parameters, as follows.

- Limited duration of financial decisions, and the lack of a guarantee for sustained funding. The operational time horizon and medium to long-term policy horizons for DG ECHO are relatively short, (reflecting DG ECHO’s mandate), when considering the requirements of the LRRD policy.
- Relatively scarce in-house technical expertise on various cross-cutting and technical issues, which is common to many public sector donors.
- DG ECHO can only finance international/EU-based NGOs, UN organisations, the Red Cross family, and a few selected other bodies.
- The distribution of DG ECHO’s budget is apportioned across humanitarian crises worldwide on the basis of identified and quantified needs. This starts with an assessment at field level, which is then reviewed at DG ECHO Headquarters using: a specific methodology (see below), the ‘Global Needs Assessment’ (GNA); the ‘Forgotten Crisis Assessment’ (FCA); and after consultation with other humanitarian actors at meetings called ‘Strategic Programming Dialogues’. However, the overall final yearly budget allocated to humanitarian aid is determined with regard to other Commission priorities, and periodically differences between the needs identified that DG ECHO would like to meet and the budget actually made available have arisen.
- The availability or presence at field level, and the financial and administrative capacity of its partners.

A.3. EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Owing to its distinct principles, legal mandate and modus operandi among other External Relations services of the Commission, DG ECHO is often relatively isolated, from an institutional point of view¹⁰. For example, although it

⁹ Specific, Measurable, Accepted, Realistic, Timed.

cannot be dissociated from the global framework of the EU crisis management instruments (below), DG ECHO insists on the fact it is not one of these instruments, being solely needs-based and not subsumed to the political logic of crisis management in the implementation of humanitarian operations, it remains needs driven.

Despite advocacy by DG ECHO, there are issues with the level of real linkages of DIPECHO with other Commission programmes concerned with disaster reduction and the recurrent problems of putting LRRD into practice. The definition of humanitarian aid, as applied by DG ECHO –the primary Commission service for the delivery of such type of aid¹¹ quite validly fits DG ECHO’s legal mandate and means with a focus primarily on emergency life-saving activities in the worst crisis situations. It is however not always conducive to establishing bridges over the “grey area” of LRRD –an issue that DG ECHO has consistently promoted in the Commission– whereas some current international efforts are aiming at re-defining humanitarian aid in a more holistic approach.

For example, as acknowledged in a recent OECD/DAC document¹², “any definition of humanitarian action will be subjective and include limitations. No one definition can embrace the demands of all humanitarian actors, implementing agencies, donors and the UN system, nor can it be expected to cover all aspects of humanitarian action”. It has also been proposed to break humanitarian assistance into three elements related to preparedness, emergency, and post-emergency, to better promote dialogue on the relations between humanitarian action and development cooperation.

A question should be posed, whether the “humanitarian aid” envisaged in the Constitution would be more consistent with the OECD/DAC definition, or with DG ECHO’s?

EU crisis management instruments

The European Council meeting in Cologne in June 1999 placed crisis management tasks, which include humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat-force in crisis management (known as the "Petersberg tasks") at the core of the process of strengthening the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). In this framework, a range of civilian instruments for emergency crisis management have been created, to cover actions ranging from conflict prevention to relief, rehabilitation, and long-term stabilisation and development. They aim at integrating the forms of political coordination and financial assistance established under the CFSP, and the instruments developed by the Commission and by the Member States. Among these civilian instruments, the following should be outlined.

The *EU Civil Protection Mechanism* (EU MIC), which is better known by its nerve centre, the “MIC” (Monitoring and Information Centre), is a 24-hours facility linked to civil protection centres in the participating EU countries, and is housed by DG Environment. Set up in October 2001 to reinforce an earlier and limited initiative taken in 1999, the MIC is a facilitating body that works with a database of readily available civilian experts from willing EU Member States¹³, but also with military experts. Assessment and coordination teams of 2-3 experts should be dispatched very rapidly (within 3 to 7 hours) to natural disaster spots in the EU and abroad (e.g. Bam in Iran, the tsunami-hit region, etc), followed by specialised support teams and equipment sent by the Member States, within 2 to 7 days. MIC’s procedures foresee close cooperation with ECHO¹⁴ and with OCHA, the UN humanitarian coordinating body, but the borderline is sometimes tenuous: MIC is not in charge of humanitarian activities, although it can address humanitarian consequences of disasters as well as environmental ones.

¹⁰ Compartmentalisation of the main players into groups (the UN system, the Red Cross, bilateral donors and NGOs), is also a key systemic problem of the international assistance community as a whole, despite some efforts such as e.g. the consolidated appeals process (CAP).

¹¹ http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/presentation/mandate_en.htm

¹² <http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?ID=2712>, an OECD/DAC article by Henrik Hammerargren

¹³ 16 Member States, plus Bulgaria and Romania, have agreed so far to channel their assistance through the MIC, and cooperation is carried out with the others.

¹⁴ MoU signed with ECHO in March 2003, and standard operating procedures defined in April 2004. Accordingly, there should be regular exchange of information, analyses, etc at HQ level, and liaison in the field to avoid duplication of efforts...

The legal basis of the *European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights* (EIDHR), covers also some areas of intervention that are contiguous to DG ECHO's. Among these: human rights monitoring; promotion of International Humanitarian Law; support for minorities, ethnic groups and indigenous people; promotion and protection of rights (civil, political, economic, social, cultural); and support to international criminal tribunals (an aspect of LRRD on protection issues).

The *Rapid Reaction Mechanism* (RRM) was created in 2001 and is managed by RELEX. It has been essentially designed as an emergency and short-term, limited in time instrument (projects of up to 6 months), though it could also -possibly- be used as a bridge to longer term assistance. The RRM uses funds from a dedicated flexible budget line and can operate in every non-EU country, with all types of partners including NGOs, though not in the humanitarian activities covered by DG ECHO. The RRM Regulation foresees that "in particular security or crisis-management circumstances, the Commission may...decide that intervention by means of the RRM is more appropriate if combined with ECHO action, as necessary. In such cases, close cooperation shall be established in order to achieve optimal overall coherence" (Art. 2.3). This mechanism is designed to work in CFSP-related activities and man-made crises: it should enhance the EU's civilian capacity to intervene immediately (in the initial period of a man-made crisis) and effectively against "threats to law and order, security and safety of individuals, situations threatening to escalate into armed conflicts or to destabilise the country, situations likely to jeopardise the beneficial effects of assistance and cooperation policies and programmes", etc.

The civilian instruments have been complemented by EU military instruments, placed under the supervision of the new *European Security and Defence Policy* (ESDP), and a common defence policy has progressively been set up. The Nice Council in December 2000 approved the establishment of several permanent political and military bodies to reinforce the ESDP structures. Some of these are probably bound to become actors and stakeholders in the civil-military interface (ESDP operations already took place in fYROM, DRC, BiH and Georgia) and should therefore be clearly identified by humanitarian actors.

2007 – 2013 Financial Framework

The complex relations described above should be streamlined to some extent by the new Financial Framework for 2007-2013, which states e.g. that one of its new simplified instruments, the "Instrument for Stability" will replace a number of thematic regulations (RRM) and will partly cover others (EIDHR, Civil Protection, etc) as from the 1st January 2007¹⁵.

Four of the five priority headings in the Framework are directly or indirectly relevant to the purposes of the review, and provide some arguments in favour of a wider approach to EVHAC (see chap. D and C):

- sustainable development (although this heading targets essentially the internal market);
- sustainable management and protection of natural resources;
- citizenship, freedom, security and justice;
- the EU as a global partner.

The three main criteria of *effectiveness*, *efficiency* (with a focus on better value for money) and *synergy*, which have been adopted to demonstrate the added value of the Framework, should also be outlined as highly relevant to any potential initiative such as EVHAC.

Under the last heading (Europe as a global partner), which covers all external actions, the emphasis is placed on the "need for the EU to achieve a level of political influence commensurate with its economic influence, so that, in its region and beyond, the EU can be active not only in economic and political areas but also in promoting stability, conflict prevention and crisis management". Although DG ECHO clearly states that "humanitarian aid cannot be subsumed to the political logic of EU crisis management", these three fields should correspond to some

¹⁵ See e.g. "Towards a new financial framework 2007-2013", <http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l34004.htm>

of the activities immediately contiguous to emergency humanitarian aid, where volunteering could most adequately be applied.

For this heading, and in an effort towards coherence and the importance of the results in relation to the attribution of resources, three new instruments have been set up to replace a large number of previous ones. Two of them (the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, and the Development Cooperation and Economic Cooperation Instrument) are also relevant to a broader EVHAC style body or agency that promotes volunteerism - but using already established organisations wherever possible, together with the Humanitarian Aid Instrument, and perhaps, to a certain extent, the above-mentioned Instrument for Stability.

EVS (European Voluntary Service)¹⁶

EVS, a component of the YOUTH programme housed by DG EAC (Education and Culture) is currently the only operational volunteering instrument of the Commission. Beyond providing a non-formal intercultural learning experience for young people, some of the EVS objectives are quite relevant to an EVHAC style body, such as supporting the development of local communities (capacity building) and encouraging the exchange of experience and good practice.

Although EVS is not integrated in the context of the external relations of the EU, it cross-cuts the Neighbourhood policy by applying a broad definition of Europe (32 countries, including Belarus and Ukraine) and has recently implemented pilot peace-building projects in the Balkans, in cooperation with the UN Volunteers programme. EVS has also been quite successful and has been able to involve some 25,000 young European volunteers since the year 2000, a potential recruitment basis which should not be overlooked by an EVHAC scheme (see also chapter B.5).

¹⁶ <http://www.4youth.info/>

A.4. VOLUNTEERISM

It is recognised that volunteering is playing an ever-larger role in the world, and is better organised and increasingly well-respected. Yet definitions of volunteering vary, and there are no consistent views on the benefits of volunteering: is the activity for the volunteer or for some sort of beneficiary organisation, collective or individual? The writers of this review support the principle of volunteering, in its broadest sense, and promote it as a means to an end (e.g. reaching the Millennium Development Goals) and not an end in itself (e.g. fulfilling volunteers' dreams). In this section we consider views of volunteering in order to establish a background for both the findings of the research project and the final proposals. We consider definitions of volunteering, features of volunteering, trends in volunteering, legislation around volunteering, all with, where appropriate, special focus on volunteering in humanitarian assistance.

“Levels of awareness (of volunteering) are growing....which is expected to translate into increased numbers of people participating in voluntary activity. Governments, the media and the private sector are increasingly vocal in their support for volunteering. Infrastructure is being developed to facilitate volunteerism, both in terms of the human capital needed to recruit, train and support volunteers, and in terms of the physical structures to sustain and enhance those activities. The legislative environment is becoming increasingly supportive of volunteering and the contribution that volunteering makes to individuals and societies is increasingly recognised”. [UN Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to the International Year of Volunteers July 2005]

A.4.1. Definitions of volunteering

There is no consistently applied definition of the word volunteer in emergency relief work. Indeed, in the development arena, alternative phrases such as co-operant, development worker or intern are used in preference¹⁷. There are volunteers who receive no financial gain, some who have to pay themselves, and some who are paid. There are some with employment contracts and some with volunteer agreements, but who are not employed. Generally we found 'volunteers' to be people who put the benefit of others before their own, but they might still be paid and have employment-type contracts. Others (see box) have a purer definition.

“Volunteering is undertaken of a person's own free will and without regard to financial gain”. [Manifesto for Volunteering in Europe 2003]

“Volunteering in the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is an activity that is motivated by the free will of the person volunteering and not by a desire for material or financial gain or by external social, economic or political pressure”. [IFRC Volunteer policy]

In terms of monetary 'gain', the volunteering models most traditionally used in the relief and development arena are:

- the host-based system (limited remuneration based on local costs);
- the Volontaire de Solidarité Internationale (VSI) model, offering an allowance based on maintaining costs at home, with an element for local subsistence costs while on mission. For this and the host-based system, accommodation is generally provided with a package of benefits which would include insurance, travel costs, training, resettlement allowance etc. ;
- volunteers paying their own costs, particularly found in expeditions for young people, this is not widespread in humanitarian assistance.

Perceptions of volunteering are also important. Often volunteer work is seen as the opposite of professional work and therefore less likely to have impact. This was found to be true in Sri Lanka for example, where UNV and the Red Cross are working specifically to raise the profile of volunteering. In the survey for this study DG ECHO

¹⁷ The field review in Africa indicated that the word volunteer may even sometimes be perceived as pejorative, e.g. linked to faith-based missionaries.

partners did not perceive volunteers as a threat to quality (Q.9, see Annex V). The key finding in Sri Lanka was that volunteering per se could add value but volunteering by younger, less experienced people would emphatically not do so.

A second perception is that volunteering is a way of getting free or cheap work which could or should be paid for. In relation to consultants, it is established that there are differences: the volunteer can be independent and a practitioner whereas a consultant is traditionally an advisor. In relation to paid staff, employers recognise the benefits of the employment contract (rights and responsibilities, training, career motivation etc), but in a sector such as emergency relief where the pool of experience is small, volunteering can be an alternative to a contractual relationship. For volunteers to replace opportunities for paid employment by local people, particularly those affected by the emergency, was anathema to many respondents.

In addition, it should be noted that definitions of “young” (a key parameter of EVHAC) varies according to sources. According to the Commission’s YOUTH programme of DG EAC, the definition of “youth” covers the ages from 13 to 30 years, whilst EVS considers those aged from 18 to 30 years. Another key EU source, Eurostat makes for demography purposes the following distinction: “young people” are between 15 and 24 years old, and “young adults” at 25-39 years old. Other international actors apply similarly fuzzy definitions: the age limit to enter a UN Junior Professional Officers (JPO) programme is considered as “in the early 30s” by the US State Department, whilst other governments are stricter: under 30 years in Ireland, 31 years in Switzerland, and up to 33 years old for specific categories (i.e., medical doctors) in Italy.

A.4.2. The value of volunteering

Within Europe the perceived value of volunteering in international contexts lies at three levels: the volunteer, the organisation engaging the volunteer, and society overall. Measuring the value of volunteering is complex as each of these levels must be evaluated against its own unique assessment criteria.

For the individual volunteer, the value includes the gains of satisfaction from volunteer activities, professional development and social citizenship which volunteers experience. Returning volunteers from developing countries have a greater understanding of different cultures, a greater openness to these cultures, and an increased ability to adapt to new and changing conditions. They also tend to have a continuing commitment to development in under developed countries and act on this through their life in various ways.

For the organisation, the value includes the unique qualities that volunteers bring to their work such as ‘surge’ response capacity, grounding its work in communities and promoting the organization through volunteer ambassadors. The cost savings and income generation that can be attributed to voluntary effort must be offset against the costs of engaging these volunteers.

The societal benefit of volunteerism, which many consider the most important consideration, include social cohesion, public awareness, social actions and a range of civil society functions. Returning volunteers are not only more aware and open to foreign cultures, but are also more open to different cultures within Europe. Returning volunteers are more aware of the value of volunteering and will tend to continue to do volunteer work when they return from international volunteering assignments. The training and experience they gain while on international assignments has long-term benefits for Europe.

Public awareness and fund-raising are two important functions that returning volunteers can play. While a strong case can be made for volunteers, the critical issue is whether they work in development cooperation or humanitarian assistance. To date, most international volunteers are placed in development activities rather than humanitarian assistance. There are a number of reasons for this, such as that development activities tend to be safer for the volunteer, and assignments can be longer term allowing for a better understanding of local conditions, languages and cultures.

The value that European volunteers bring to humanitarian assistance tends to be indirect. It is generally accepted that young untrained volunteers can be a liability in most humanitarian assistance situation. It is also accepted that the focus should be on trained local volunteers, who can play a critical role particularly during the first few days or

weeks of a natural disaster. The local society will always provide the vast majority of volunteers in a crisis (90% or more).

Volunteers are often compared to professionals; however the two terms are not mutually exclusive. Some professionals volunteer their time to provide humanitarian assistance with no remuneration. In other cases, professionals are sent as “volunteers” through their organisations. Volunteerism can be a useful step for developing professional skills, and it can also play a special and unique role in humanitarian assistance. At select times and situations volunteers play a critical role that professionals are unable to perform. More specifically in natural disasters where organised structures collapse, volunteer action is required for the critical first few weeks while professional humanitarian aid is mobilised. Local and international volunteers already “on the ground” can make a huge difference.

Local volunteers have stated that international volunteers contribute by providing solidarity and motivation, as well as changing values and attitudes. Capacity building for developing-country volunteer organizations is also cited as an important role for European volunteers.

Evaluations of volunteering show the most successful programmes are well-defined and highly-focussed interventions, also possessing long-term programming strategies with long-term vision and repeat volunteering assignments. It is important to assess both the tasks and the processes¹⁸. Volunteers need to receive systematic and relevant training, as well as ongoing support and guidance from their sending organisations and extensive management in the field.

A.4.3. Who are the volunteers?

The UN report cited above mentions “close to 1m individuals who volunteered in support of relief efforts”. This figure, far higher than others found, may include donors who volunteer their professional staff. Traditionally though volunteers give their time free rather than employers paying for their time.

Volunteers are of all ages and origins. For the purposes of this study we will focus on just a few characteristics:

- Age: the volunteering ages most often cited are youth and senior. A growing trend is the mid-career professional. The issue is that people between 30 and 50 tend to have family responsibilities which prevent them from undertaking HA assignments. While senior volunteers, in broad terms offer experience, younger volunteers are found by organisations which work with them to excel in areas such as willingness, networking and communications ability (technical as well as interpersonal). Younger volunteers are however perceived to be psychologically vulnerable. They are also reported to be more concerned with the ‘difference I make’, which is easier to identify in a longer-term intervention.
- Experience: all research for this study left us in no doubt that experience is more important than age in considering volunteers for emergency relief scenarios. This is increasingly true in other fields too: “The most important characteristic for volunteer recruitment is significant technical experience, although return or ‘professional’ volunteers are seen as more effective.”¹⁹
- Gender: there is no impression that any aspect of volunteering favours one gender over another.
- Origin of volunteers: volunteers, in relief and development, are not just Europeans. Tsunami evaluations have focussed on the massive and hugely successful response by local people before any foreigner could fly in; the same was true for the Bam earthquake. The IFRC is firmly of the opinion that volunteering should be in and for the local community, a factor supported by the statement that “The characteristics of volunteerism in any country or region are very much a function of the local social, cultural and political context” [UN Secretary-General’s report on the follow-up to the International Year of Volunteers July 2005]. These contexts make adaptation by a non-local a harder task.

¹⁸ The Future of International Volunteering, Cliff Allum 2000.

¹⁹ The value of International Volunteerism, Jill Keesbury for USAID 2003.

- Followers of a successful brand: there is some evidence to support the view proposed by the IFRC that Red Cross volunteers join the Red Cross rather than think what they want to do and then find how to do it. Volunteers with VSO (Voluntary Services Overseas – a UK-based volunteer-sending organisation) benefited from a reputation which meant they were seen by Sri Lankans as a breed apart from other volunteers. The reduced terms and benefits available to a volunteer on a first MSF assignment are a rite of passage reinforcing the level of commitment of the volunteer to the MSF movement and ethos.
- Volunteers are not the only available resource, even under the system probably most conducive to volunteerism in Europe (France's VSI). A 2003 study of 157 French agencies showed that they sent 2,656 volunteers overseas, who worked with 16,164 salaried local staff and 3,397 local volunteers²⁰. The feeling amongst INGOs interviewed in Sri Lanka, and particularly the local Red Cross, was that there was a risk that European volunteers could take work (paid and volunteer) which locals should have had.

A.4.4. Trends

There are a number of trends which DG ECHO would do well to consider at the point when decisions are being made about an EVHAC, or a similar body.

- The trend in international volunteering has been away from cross-cultural exchange and from benefits for the volunteer in experiencing the wider world, towards an active contribution to social change and the strengthening of civil society in host countries. Volunteering is considered as a means to an end, and not an end in itself therefore.
- Employment legislation in the EU is beginning to change the relationship between volunteer and INGO, both philosophically and practically. Volunteers receiving remuneration in the UK for example would be regarded as employees and subject to legislative benefits in regard to that employment.
- Responses to a survey conducted by People In Aid in 2004 indicate the following.
 - The volunteer agencies have the same problems attracting, keeping and developing senior field managers, but do not generally have problems recruiting or retaining other grades.
 - The volunteer agencies do not see themselves competing against the agencies which pay staff more, but they compete against each other.
 - The volunteer agencies do not find that the level of payment is a controlling factor in attracting or retaining staff and volunteers [Enhancing the Quality of Human Resources in Humanitarian Aid, Jim Henry for People In Aid 2004].
- Corporate volunteering: corporate social responsibility has been an important catalyst in encouraging mid-career professionals to take time out (perhaps hours during normal work, perhaps weeks out of the office).
- While most volunteering in the development arena is still North-South, a growing proportion is now through South-South and South-North relationships, e.g. Filipinos volunteering in South Africa or Kenyans travelling to help refugees in Norway.
- Local capacity-building: as the researchers were told: 'The right person in the right place at the right time is unlikely to be an EU volunteer'. As with other disaster preparedness work in the emergency relief arena, and NGO capacity-building in both relief and development, building local volunteer capacity to respond to a disaster is critical.

A.4.5. Legislation

For the Commission to compile the necessary legislation for an EVHAC, it must look at existing national laws and consider certain legal elements which distinguish successful volunteer legislation from bad.

A number of respondents to the survey pointed to national legislation which governed or facilitated volunteerism in their countries (e.g. Czech Republic, Portugal, UK, France, Belgium, Italy).

²⁰ Argent et Ressources de Solidarité Internationale. 2003. Commission Cooperation Développement [argentos.pdf].

A survey of national volunteerism legislation [A Comparative Look at National Volunteerism legislation, Taryn Nelson for IADB June 2005] identifies key considerations in legislation namely:

- level of regulation, with a recommendation to limit regulation;
- degree of formality, considering a balance between protection and flexibility;
- public or private emphasis, concluding that states often contract out volunteer activities;
- location of efforts; centralisation can offer more support but regional differences may suggest decentralising;
- target groups; youth, senior citizens and corporate employees are mentioned;
- definition of a volunteer; identifying the legal status;
- rights and responsibilities of volunteers; looking at how much of employment legislation (e.g. health and safety, confidentiality) should apply;
- budgetary supports are required and relate to infrastructure;
- a coordinating agency is recommended.

In this respect, the law adopted by France on 23 February 2005²¹ seems to provide an appropriate legal status and an overall framework for volunteers working in international cooperation or humanitarian projects: recognition, access, contractual aspects, obligations of VSOs, guarantees and social rights after the volunteering period, etc.

The risks incurred by humanitarian workers in many crisis situations where DG ECHO is currently funding its programmes, have been acknowledged as a major concern when considering the involvement of young volunteers. From a legal point of view, several bodies of law and statements concerning the rights of humanitarian aid workers may provide a protection for international volunteers, i.a. the following.

- The *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961)* establishes rights and protection for diplomatic and consular staff for nations and recognised international organisations signatory to the convention. This includes the inviolability of premises and documents, and immunity from judicial process. The IFRC and ICRC are among recognised international organisations. The protection of this convention can extend to members of the administrative and technical staff of the mission, together with members of their families forming part of their respective households.
- The *Human Rights law* obliges states to protect all those on their territory. Fundamental laws and principles in most constitutions and in many treaties and conventions recognise fundamental human rights.
- *National laws* further define the obligations of States towards their own citizens and foreigners of different status within their borders. States are obliged to ensure that national law reflects obligations they undertake through the ratification of international treaties and conventions.
- Where applicable, *Refugee Law* also protects humanitarian workers (in refugee situations, many national staff members of NGOs may come from within the refugee population).
- During situations of conflict and occupation, the *International Humanitarian Law (IHL)* sets out the types of protection due to non-combatants in situations of armed conflict. This includes humanitarian workers.

²¹ Law n° 2005-159 on the “Contrat de volontariat de solidarité internationale”.

B. FINDINGS: CURRENT SITUATION AND PERSPECTIVES

B.1. POTENTIAL “CLIENTS” OF EVHAC IN THE EU

B.1.1. FINDINGS FROM KEY MEETINGS

Meetings were arranged, wherever possible, with some of the implementing partners of DG ECHO who seemed to be most concerned by the potential deployment of EVHAC volunteers. The findings are presented according to the alphabetical sequence of the partners interviewed.

IFRC (The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent)

Several interviews took place with key representatives of the IFRC: at HQ in Geneva, at the Liaison Office in Brussels, and in the field (Kenya, Sri Lanka, USA). The main findings were as follows.

General

- Volunteerism is essential for IFRC. The organisation works mostly with volunteers at all levels, including in the decision-making process. IFRC actually is a volunteer organization, with a real sense of ownership in policy, guidelines, etc. Even those who have become paid staff members have mostly kept the volunteer's spirit. IFRC's principles emphasise the virtues of unpaid volunteering –the opposite of e.g. UNV–, though the reality can vary with each of the 181 national societies²².
- Volunteerism takes place at the local level. “Volunteers only exist at local level; the most effective response comes from local communities and local resources; you will not be more useful at 1,000 Km from your home, but in your own community and town”.
- The best added value of volunteerism is to strengthen the local civil society (with potential longer-term impact on governance, possibly through LRRD).
- It is also very difficult to ‘structure’ volunteers, who are flexible and perhaps high spirited by nature. Volunteers therefore require good administrative management (support, coordination, depending on the type of job and capacities), and they always need to be under the guidance of staff members (1 paid coordinator for every 30/50 volunteers). They need regular training (turnover, refresher courses, maintenance of motivation...).

Young volunteers

- Accordingly, young volunteers (15-25 years, trend going now to 30) are welcome since they will work in their own communities (mobilization, advocacy, networking, support) rather than abroad (where they may become a problem rather than a solution due to inexperience, stress, emotional breakdown or worse –injuries, deaths with detrimental impact on image...). If they go abroad, they should preferably be used for longer-term developmental activities, promotion of friendship, environmental protection, cultural understanding, etc.
- Young volunteers are appreciated for their knowledge of technology and IT, languages (although more French, Spanish, Arabic speakers are needed), and for their idealism.
- Some former volunteers stressed that getting experience abroad (in safe places, in development projects) may be essential for young volunteers, although this must be considered as an “investment for the future”, since the aim is really about the young volunteers' own education and development, rather than helping beneficiaries.
- In any case, young volunteers should not be sent abroad in countries where there are (i) already enough local volunteers, (ii) paid international volunteers –UNVs, etc– and (iii) dangers.
- Activities should also be designed before beginning to work with volunteers: these will then follow the job descriptions and fill in the designated tasks.

²² E.g. the French National Society uses the purest form of volunteering (the “bénévoles”), but has only 60,000 volunteers vs 20,000 staff. The German national society would use a mixed system of volunteers, delegates, other staff and consultants.

- Image is extremely important for the motivation of the volunteers. “You do not join the losers”, and “to be a volunteer is to respect the organisation”.

Policy

- As disasters are by nature highly unpredictable, so are the responses. In some cases, money and resources will flow in, in others not. The real challenge is to put “the right person in the right time at the right place in emergencies”, and to coordinate this properly. Any attempt to rationalise the current framework is welcome, but with flexibility, bureaucracy must be avoided”.
- Even for IFRC, a widely known body with good local representations and contacts with many governments, to send emergency response volunteers to countries where disasters happen creates problems at least 3 times out of 4. National laws are strong constraints, and recipient countries in all parts of the world will not easily accept foreign aid workers (discussions about limited mandate, limited numbers, etc..) for a number of reasons (e.g. national pride...).
- IDRL (International Disaster Response Law) is a programme supported by IFRC to identify gaps in EU and international laws that may prevent or delay the rapid/timely intervention of disaster response volunteers. This appears as one of the current ‘gaps’ in the emergency response framework.
- IFRC has determined in its new “Strategy 2010” that volunteering should be decentralized (subsidiarity), that national societies from developing countries should increasingly depend on their own expanding and largely untapped human resources, and less on the already overstretched expertise from developed EU or US societies. *This South-North policy is exactly at the opposite of a Euro-centric EVHAC*, which might amount to a type of “humanitarian colonialism / paternalism”. However, IFRC acknowledges that much more capacity building is still needed to achieve this objective.
- The main challenges for the future will concern large developing countries with huge potential: China, Egypt, Brazil, India.... There is a need for a common base of understanding and for more promotion of principles, a new “vocabulary” (solidarity instead of humanity?), and coherent development plans.

Key conclusions for EVHAC

- IFRC staff repeatedly stressed that there is no need for an additional structure such as EVHAC in volunteering. This would only create confusion and duplication. Instead, existing ‘professional’ structures should be supported, the existing framework should be clarified, and principles promoted.
- This could be done by a two-fold strategy, with the overall objective to “contribute to reinforce the contextual framework and coordination, to ensure that the right people will do the right thing at the right time”. A ‘light’ EU agency would be preferred, that would not impose its structures and procedures. This agency could use the expertise of some staff seconded from IFRC and other specialised organisations/partners.
 - 1) To further strengthen the existing management capacities, to be able to better respond to the unpredictability of crises (support training of managers, translate and disseminate key documents, contribute to raise common standards, promote quality, improve guidelines, codes, behaviours, support parts of IDRL, promote cooperation and coordination..).
 - 2) To promote volunteering globally: principles, strengthening linkages with concerned local communities, support local capacity building especially in developing countries (N-S cooperation), indirectly strengthening civil societies, governance and LRRD...
- The above demonstrates how closely several issues are inter-linked, and stresses the need for a coordinated EU approach. DG ECHO’s legal mandate and resources are not sufficient. Other contiguous EU/EC bodies and services should be involved, if possible (DG DEV, DG ENV Civil Protection...).
- The French national society uses a system of highly qualified volunteers who agree to devote some short-time periods to intervene in emergencies, and who are still paid during these periods by the private companies of organisations where they usually work (similar to VSO in the UK). This system could be applied to a larger extent in the EU.

UNHCR

- UNHCR supplements the skills available to its core staff of circa 1,500 international professional staff²³ with circa 100 Junior Professional Officers (JPO)²⁴, with experts from external rosters, and with interns. The total staff amounts to circa 6,000, including local personnel. The Emergency Preparedness and Response Section (EPRS) and the Technical Support Section, which becomes more active during the Care and Maintenance stage of a UNHCR intervention, both use volunteers.
- UNHCR has a number of favoured suppliers of external personnel of which the most used are UN Volunteers (UNV), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Danish Refugee Council (DRC). In October 2005 some 700 UNVs were deployed with UNHCR, constituting some 15% of the total workforce. EPRS, by September 2005, had deployed 59 UNV/NRC/DRC experts (from a total of 157 people deployed, the balance being staff) as from January 1st 2005.
- Contrary to IFRC, UNHCR's volunteers are paid. EPRS defines them as "volunteer to go", and the Technical Support Section as "those who propose spontaneously their application and are not motivated principally by incentives" (to be compared with the definition applied by the UNV itself).
- The advantages to UNHCR of these external rosters are as follows.
 - Financial: they cost circa \$15m in a year²⁵ whereas staff costs for these posts would have cost \$60m. NRC volunteers are paid by the Norwegian government. UNVs are also paid out of the "operations" budget line and not the "staff" one.
 - Availability: at times of recruitment freezes, they will be brought in for non-core roles. A UNV can work for a minimum 3 months, with extensions available, for a maximum of 8 years. Circa 50% of UNVs work longer than 6 months.
 - Specifically in the eyes of the EPRS the advantage of working with these particular organisations is both the speed of response and the lack of encumbering bureaucracy and reporting needs.
 - Quality: the quality of expertise available is consistently acceptable. Fewer than 10% of volunteers or staff managers report dissatisfaction, though the volunteers' capacity is generally "limited" and they need supervision.
 - As also stated below, and contrary to JPOs, UNVs are expected to have a suitable work experience (usually between 5 and 10 years). In this respect, UNHCR tends to prefer UNVs originating from developing countries (who are often experienced) to EU/US volunteers with an academic background only.
 - Interns are not paid, i.e. they are the only 'volunteers' according to the IFRC definition. Most of them are young graduate students, using their summer holidays for some educational tasks, though others are in their late 40s.
 - UNHCR has a memorandum of understanding with UNDP, to use the same UNVs in LRRD.
- There were gaps which UNHCR staff would like to fill. What would not be acceptable would be inexperienced people, heavy bureaucracy or those requiring full costs. The gaps were as follows.
 - For experts in many particular areas (IT, protection, registration, watsan, nutrition, engineers or architects for shelter were mentioned as examples). UNHCR appears to be much in need of additional UNVs with higher capacities –which is not easy to find considering the relatively low conditions offered.
 - For experts who could, if they performed well and vacancies occurred, be taken onto UNHCR's core staff, which UNV does not allow. Conversely, UNHCR's bi-annual invitations to enter the International Professional Roster (IPR) are not quite adapted to UNVs' qualifications (e.g. the IPR does not include Health...).
 - For sponsorship for posts. Some Junior Professional Officers (JPO, an entry-level post) are sponsored by a national government for the term of their contract with UNHCR.
 - Training. UNVs are expected to be operational from their first day in post yet they are often arriving within a month of being selected. The idea of training in security, IHL, the UN system, even the mandate and admin processes of UNHCR would be welcomed.

²³ Approx. 950 are deployed in the field and 550 at HQ.

²⁴ JPOs are considered as "international professional staff", but they have temporary contracts only, and lower grades.

²⁵ Full insurance, luggage, hardship or family conditions, training, vacation and resettlement allowances, etc.

- Quality. Any further initiative which would increase the range of quality available to field offices would be welcomed. Quantity was not seen to be important.
- Some language skills: in particular French, Spanish, Portuguese...
- In relation specifically to young Europeans, they are selected less than other groups. Although UNV is now offering people with far less experience than five years ago, and younger, UNHCR's field offices prefer the more experienced candidates from the developing world, who are more likely used to the conditions they will be working in. The likelihood of young Europeans 'breaking down' was mentioned. Nevertheless we heard that younger people are welcomed in Care and Maintenance stage because the structure exists by then to support them. Equally the recruitment section prefers younger UNVs as they have, if they are ever taken on as staff, the potential to be trained and developed in the organisation. That 60% of UNHCR posts are hardship posts reduces the potential for placement of the young and relatively inexperienced.
- EPRS expressed strong reservations regarding the possible "strings" (reporting and other bureaucratic requirements) that may be attached to an EU voluntary scheme. These would be highly detrimental to efficiency, and could be compared to the flexibility and trust currently enjoyed with e.g. NRC (Norwegian Refugee Council).
- Several preferred options were put forward by UNHCR staff:
 - that companies be encouraged to contribute staff through 'humanitarian release' schemes (in particular firemen, 1st line medical staff, etc);
 - that any DG ECHO funding available fund (even partially, as already done by Switzerland, Finland, Monaco...) Europeans through the existing UNV or JPO systems: this would contribute to increase considerably their numbers (at present, 20% of UNVs are Europeans);
 - that specific tasks be allocated to volunteers inside UNHCR e.g. activities for Refugee Day;
 - a shadowing programme.

VOICE

During the preparatory phase of the Constitution, VOICE has strongly supported the reservations and concerns expressed by some of DG ECHO officials regarding the EVHAC²⁶. The current approach is still very prudent, and was expressed by a Working Group of key members (Action Aid International, Handicap International, Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfswerk, Malteser International, Norwegian Refugee Council and Oxfam UK) that had been specifically set up to follow this review.

EVHAC is generally perceived as 'wrong and counterproductive' for key humanitarian issues as professionalism, safety, security, or principles. Furthermore, considering the three separate volunteering initiatives (EVHAC, ECPC and Volunteers in Civil Protection) which are being considered by the Commission, VOICE has raised the issue of coherence. Specific questions concerned the need to know "what are the gaps in the existing systems which need to be filled by the initiatives?", and "Are these gaps around values (in which case the need for EHVAC would be solidarity), political (thus getting people involved), or awareness-raising (thus visibility)"?

B.1.2. FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEYS

Background

In order to reach all implementing partners of DG ECHO, a specific survey was disseminated, which contained altogether 33 questions, including several "open" questions where respondents could express their opinion in detail. The objective of the survey was to gather the opinion on the involvement of young volunteers in humanitarian operations. 50 partners of DG ECHO (out of 192) have responded to the survey and contributed their views and inputs, which amounts to a reply rate of about 26%. The survey to the DG ECHO partners was structured as follows:

²⁶ See e.g. VOICE's letter to the European Parliament dated 24/11/2003, or the press release of 27/10/2003.

- basic information (basic variables);
- general information on young people and volunteering;
- information on volunteers deployed abroad;
- standards, guidelines and training;
- plans for the future (involvement of volunteers);
- added value of EVHAC and suggestions.

The VOICE organisation and the Coordination Office of the Red Cross in Brussels have supported the review team to inform their members and to stimulate participation to the survey.

Additional details about the survey are presented in the Annex V to the present report.

Summary of Results

Currently about 70% of the responding DG ECHO Partners (35 out of 50) are regularly working with volunteers, either in the EU or abroad. The organisations' definitions²⁷ /understanding of volunteers can be generally be summarised as follows: *"People that are willing to donate time and efforts for people in need – while receiving low or no payment"*.

When asking for the strengths and weaknesses of volunteering, the respondents state that the major strengths are motivation and enthusiasm of the volunteers. Often highlighted weaknesses are: lack of experience, limited reliability/ availability, and also the high turnover of volunteers. The core motivation of the volunteers was described as *"to help people in need"* and to a lesser extend *"to gather work experience"*. The majority of the respondents stated that the *"identification of suitable candidates"* for the posts to be staffed is an essential challenge when thinking to involve volunteers in their operations. Nevertheless, the administrative burden (contracting, management, follow-up, supervision) and the training and mission preparation have also been mentioned as essential or important challenges to the involvement of volunteers.

When it regards the benefits of the volunteers for the organisation, *"Positive Image for the Organisation"* and *"High Level of Job Dedication"* score highest, closely followed by *"(positive) Impact on the Beneficiaries"*.

With respect to the remuneration of the volunteers involved in overseas operations, only a minority did not receive any payment (about 4%). This is quite different for those volunteers involved in activities of the organisations inside the EU (about 22% did not receive any payment). Details on payments and insurance coverage are documented in the survey results presentation.

One core finding of the survey relates to the types of volunteers that the organisations involve in their operation abroad. Most often, *"Young Professionals"* and *"Just graduated in relevant Sectors"* have been deployed in operations abroad. The free text answers to different questions suggest that the n° 1 priority are volunteers falling in the group *"Experienced Professionals"*, but the identification of adequate persons in this group cause logistically major difficulties.

Regarding the types of tasks assigned to volunteers working abroad, *"Specialised technical Expertise – health, water, logistics"* and *"Auxiliary Services to Projects Implementation"* show the highest frequency. The results for volunteers working inside the EU are slightly different, and *"Auxiliary Support Services to the Organisation"* is the task most often indicated.

²⁷ See Q8 - results and definitions provided by the respondents for further details.

Almost all respondents (31 out of 37) established standards and guidelines for the involvement of their volunteers. Where it relates to training courses for volunteers, 24 (out of 37) organisations run courses for EU volunteers, whereas 21 (out of 37) run courses for volunteers working abroad²⁸.

The plans for the future involvement of volunteers vary quite significantly in two groups: (a) 35 organisations working with volunteers and (b) 15 organisations not working with any volunteers up to now. From those organisations already working with volunteers, 77% intend to increase the number of volunteers involved, mainly based on the actual operational demand. In the other group of organisations, those not working with volunteers today, only 27% indicate the intention to create volunteer posts in the next 12-24 months – again depending on the operational demand. The need for “*Experienced Professionals with relevant Field Experience*” is clearly expressed by both groups. The organisations already involving volunteers indicate strongly as a second priority group the “*Young Professionals right after their professional education/graduation*”.

Both groups of organisations (a + b) express strong concerns with the involvement of your volunteers in their operations abroad (about 66% in both groups). The major concerns are “*lack of qualification/experience*”, “*Time for coaching / supervision*”, and “*Security Concerns*” to a lesser extend.

Despite the expressed concerns, 20 of the 35 organisations involving volunteers today (about 57%) indicated that they see an advantage in involving young volunteers in humanitarian actions funded by the Commission. However, when looking at the answers to the complementary “open” questions, the critical statements outbalance by far the positive ones. Indications are most often that the humanitarian/emergency operations require experienced staff and that the management and supervision of inexperienced young staff adds an additional burden to the operations in difficult situations. With respect to post-disaster and rehabilitation operations, the statements are more favourable to the involvement of young volunteers.

The questionnaire also asked for alternative uses and added value of a formalised EVHAC system, which would involve young volunteers in humanitarian/emergency operations. The suggestions and recommendations that were most often provided covered two issues: (a) Harmonisation - institutionalisation of issues related to involving young volunteers (Training, Common Standards, Certificates, etc.), and (b) the creation of a database of volunteers.

²⁸ For better understanding of the results: from the responding organisations, 24 work with volunteers in emergency situations abroad, 25 are working with volunteers in other operations abroad and 26 are working with volunteers in the EU. This changes the interpretation of the results, which is that near to every organisation runs training courses for their volunteers working abroad or in the EU.

B.2. POTENTIAL “CONTRIBUTORS” TO AN EVHAC OR AN EVHAC STYLE BODY

Background

Key volunteer-sending organisations (VSOs) or umbrella groups that have been contacted directly -to benefit from their views and experience- include: **VSO** (UK), **Skillshare** (UK), **RedR/IHE** (UK), **CLONG** (France), **PSO** (Netherlands), and **UNV** (Bonn and Nairobi) – this organisation having also completed the survey. Relevant findings and recommendations are disseminated throughout the report.

The survey was structured in approximately the same manner as the DG ECHO partner survey:

- basic information (basic variables);
- general information on young people and volunteering;
- information on customers and on volunteers deployed abroad;
- standards, guidelines and training;
- plans for the future (involvement of volunteers);
- cooperating with EVHAC;
- open suggestions and comments.

A relatively limited number of sending organisations (six) have answered to the survey. The respondents are predominantly involved in sending volunteers in development- oriented projects and programmes, which further limits the relevance of some of the statements provided.

More details can be found in Annex V.

Summary Findings

VSOs have been found to use several definitions of the term “volunteer” as well as different names, such as “development worker” or “participant”. For example, the United Nation Volunteers (UNV) provided the following definition:

«Volunteering brings benefits to both society at large and the individual volunteer. It makes important contributions, economically as well as socially. It contributes to more cohesive societies by building trust and reciprocity among citizens. It is based on free will, commitment, engagement and solidarity»

Most organisations indicated that their volunteers had the necessary professional background to cope with the requirements of quite specific works in developing countries.

Regarding the positive aspects and benefits of volunteering, the organisations highlighted commitment and job dedication, the positive impact on the beneficiaries of development assistance, and also the positive impact on the volunteers themselves.

Major constraints and challenges were identified as the *identification of suitable volunteers* (matching of volunteers and placements), followed by the requirement for *proper training and mission preparation*.

The most sought-after type of volunteers are the *experienced professionals* with more than 5 years of experience. The most important factors of motivation for the volunteers were “helping people in need” and “offering one’s expertise”. All sending organisations are paying a moderate reward (of about 1,000 to 3,000 US\$/month) to their volunteers.

The sending organisations expressed their concerns about the involvement of young volunteers in emergency operations, mainly directed to credibility, but also to the potential lack of professionalism of young people.

With respect to a possible cooperation with a future EVHAC, some (e.g. UNV) presented defined options and offered to develop a dialogue (for details see survey analysis). Some organisations did welcome the initiative, whilst others did not see any advantage or complementarity (3 answers). 4 respondents were concerned about disadvantages of a future EVHAC for different reasons (e.g. credibility of volunteers, bad image of inexperienced staff, bureaucratic burden, etc.).

One concrete recommendation with respect to the EVHAC was *“to establish a body to act as a support to the (existing) volunteers sending agencies in different EU countries, sharing experiences, developing best practices, etc.”*

Practical suggestions made during face-to-face meetings with these organisations have appeared elsewhere in this report and contributed considerably to the conclusions.

B.3. VOLUNTEERS

Background

With the objective to learn more about the young volunteers' opinion on and the experience with working as a volunteer, a web-based survey has been conducted of different websites of sending organisations. We looked to learn more about the opinions and experiences of volunteers themselves also. We distributed a web-based survey to organisations in contact with returned volunteers in a number of EU member states. We relied on these organisations to distribute the web link for the survey so the evidence collected is more qualitative than scientific. Altogether 56 volunteers have provided their views and experiences. The survey was structured as follows:

- general information (age, location of assignment, sending organisation, duration, remuneration, etc.);
- motivation of the volunteers;
- experience with volunteering;
- context of volunteering;
- major concerns.

Although the small number of replies does not provide representative results, it nevertheless provides interesting and useful indications about the expectations, motivation and practical experience of some young people having completed a volunteering assignment abroad.

As for the other surveys, additional details are presented in Annex V.

Summary Results

Many replies have been received from young French volunteers (36 out of 56). One reason might be that the French NGOs are in general perhaps less hesitant to involve young volunteers in their operations (e.g. MSF, ACF).

The indicated locations of the assignments are spread over the world and include such countries as Afghanistan, Sudan, Liberia, Iraq, Burundi and Sierra Leone. The typical duration of the reported assignments was between 12 – 36 weeks (>50 % of the replies).

Most of the volunteers working abroad received payments (80%), with the majority having received between €150 – €250/week. Regarding the period in the professional life cycle, the majority of the respondents have been volunteers “*During or shortly after studies/professional education*” or “*as young professional < 5 years of experience*” (together >50% of the respondents).

The core motivation is clearly “*to help people in need*”, followed by “*to gather work experience*” and “*to develop specific skills – e.g. languages*”. To a much lesser extent, the volunteers wanted to develop career opportunities.

The degree of satisfaction with the first volunteering assignment was in general reported as quite good. The aspects of “*degree of personal satisfaction*” and “*development of skills*” received the highest ranking, whereas “*the level of remuneration*” followed by the “*adequacy of training and mission preparation*” received the highest numbers of negative rankings.

Of the reported assignments, about 57% took place in emergency relief operations and about 50% in development related work. Only a minority of 8% of the respondents stated that they were not ready to work in emergency-like situations – the majority even indicated to be ready to work in crisis situations such as e.g. in Darfur or Niger.

The concerns regarding volunteering in emergency operations were as follows (by order of importance):

- professional support of the sending organisation;
- mission preparation and training;
- personal security;
- skills required;
- psychological impact on themselves.

The “*Distance from Home*” or the “*level of remuneration*” were not much of a concern to the respondents.

Overall, a clear message appears from the replies: the young volunteers expect professional support/management and adequate mission preparation and training from the sending organisations, to enable them to cope with the requirements and challenges of the missions.

B.4. RECIPIENTS

This chapter presents key views from some of the potential “local users” or recipients of EVHAC activities in two cases studies that were carried out during the field visits.

B.4.1. Key findings from Sri Lanka in the post-Tsunami context

The main findings and conclusions were as follows. A fuller report can be found in Annex VI.

- It was hard to define a useful role for young volunteers immediately after the Tsunami; volunteers, particularly lesser-skilled ones, would not generally have been welcomed until some 6 months after the disaster. INGO and International Organisations’ voices were generally in agreement that in the immediate aftermath of a disaster they were not prepared to receive volunteers – too much is happening too fast to welcome or prepare any but the most essential contributors. Virtually all interviewees gave the very clear message that inexperienced volunteers, by implication if not explicitly 'young', would not be useful at the time of a crisis. One INGO with young volunteers in Sri Lanka at the time of the tsunami (Canada World Youth) actually pulled these volunteers out of the country when the tsunami hit because of the risk and burden of young volunteers. Any volunteer in the first six months after the tsunami would have had to be able to 'hit the ground running'.
- The conflict also added considerably to the risks young volunteers would have faced after the Tsunami. For example, even ten months after the tsunami, conditions in Batticaloa (one of the hardest Tsunami hit areas, on the east coast less than 200 km away from Colombo) would have been very tough for a young volunteer. An army intelligence officer was killed the day before the field visit in Batticaloa, and six more army personnel were shot while the visit took place. All hotels were fully booked by humanitarian assistance/ development workers, donors, etc. Restaurants are either very scarce or do not exist.
- The perception of international volunteers, VSOs excluded, by local society appeared to be often quite low. There were stories of unprofessional conduct (non-English speakers, with no knowledge of the local languages or culture, arriving to do psychosocial work for two days; volunteers with their own religious or other agendas that were inappropriate; and volunteers that undertook activities such as pumping out wells letting the water run off into other wells. Some brought dog food and winter clothing). There is also a feeling that volunteers may be of a 'lesser status' than other expatriates.
- Visas and local regulations are also a problem. Many volunteers arrived on tourist visas, for a month, and recently there was a military sweep to 'pick up tsunami volunteers' and deport them. Longer-term workers now have trouble receiving working visas; volunteers would find it very difficult. Labour law requires that volunteers work no more than 8 days a month: this was ignored during the Tsunami recovery operation but is now being self-enforced by responsible organisations. According to UNV, GoSL recognised the contribution volunteers could make but discouraged it because it could not control volunteering.
- Conversely, the volunteer input by Sri Lankans themselves immediately after the tsunami, played a huge role. All reports were that Sri Lankan volunteers did an exceptional job immediately after the tsunami hit; they were the first to respond. The Sri Lanka Red Cross claimed that its local volunteers responded even better than they had expected. However, this went largely unrecognized by the international community. The local voluntary sector reported that experienced INGOs and UN agencies marginalised local volunteers, or recruited them, with longer-term negative consequences.
- Nevertheless, a role for some international volunteers could have been envisaged in the “second wave” (two weeks or a month after the disaster), in particular with organisations that were already present in Sri Lanka before the Tsunami, who had the expertise, and who wanted to “balloon” their reconstruction efforts and respond to their needs for surge capacity. For example, in Batticaloa again, a training program (for teaching the basic skills needed to build houses) and a centre dealing with crisis trauma (originally set up for civil conflict cases) both appeared to be working well, and both could have used volunteers to expand their operations in the post-Tsunami period. In a second phase, volunteers could also assist in administrative procedures (report and proposal writing, coordination, ‘smart gofers’) that are usually much more cumbersome and time-demanding than in the first emergency phase.
- Before the role of international volunteers can be considered, the future programming directions of humanitarian assistance must be mapped out. Donor consensus principles, if applied to humanitarian assistance, would have a major impact on how and why volunteers would be used. The partnership principle, for example,

would support the use of local/third world volunteers rather than the traditional donor-recipient model. Local ownership and the use of local volunteers must also play a key role.

- Priority must be given to the partner organisations that are already present in the field before a disaster happens, who have demonstrated good local understanding (culture, politics, logistics), experience, and established network, to build up and use local volunteers according to principles, and to support EU volunteers.
- A sheltered environment and sound management is required for any volunteer programme. Volunteers would work better in longer-term development programmes.
- Incentive structures and a highly fractured delivery system work against the use of volunteers. While humanitarian assistance is an over-riding objective for all players, each comes to the table with its own set of objectives. Small NGOs with religious and fund-raising objectives are often cited as bad examples. Donors may also have unstated objectives, which could have equally counter productive consequences for efficient aid delivery. In order to give a proper analysis of the possible use of volunteers, it would be important to analyze the humanitarian objectives of the key players as well as their objectives in using volunteers.
- *There is a need to re-affirm the basic principles.* Volunteerism, which could be seen as the front end of a professional and well-trained cadre of humanitarian assistance workers, would only succeed in an environment governed by the basic donor consensus principles. An EVHAC style body could play an important preparatory role in contributing to setting principles and guidelines for volunteer management (international and local – and in doing so, supporting the local voluntary sector) in a disaster.
- An EVHAC style body could also help to collect and disseminate examples of good practices, assist in LRRD and relations between INGOs (see IFRC /IDRL), etc.

B.4.2. Key findings from stakeholders in Nairobi, Kenya

CARE, Nairobi Regional Office

- CARE is trying to use as much as possible the legal provision for local volunteers under the Kenyan law (“volunteer contract” with allowance of less than 310 US\$/month only). These are mostly used mostly as teachers (1st job opportunity for those freshly graduated from universities with bachelor and master degrees, etc).
- In case of crisis (flooding...), people from local communities would often propose their assistance as volunteers, without any payment. CARE would however register their names, and pledge to use them “for the next opportunity, with stipends”.
- Furthermore, CARE has an internship programme in cooperation with CIDA and the Norwegian “ARC Aid” organization, specialized in refugees from Somalia. There are currently 2 Norwegians and 1 Canadian interns working for CARE/Kenya, with more deployed in East Timor, Zambia, Bangladesh.... The Canadian interns are doing 6-8 months of field work as a part of their graduation programme in development studies.
- ARC Aid is also deploying young interns for periods of up to 8 months, to better assist in the integration of the rather large (and often troublesome) Somali caseload of refugees and asylum seekers in Norway. This apparently very useful facilitation programme uses both specialized ethnic Somalis (many are living in Kenya) who would go to Norway to help, and members from the Norwegian Peace Corps who would work in Somali refugee camps in Kenya for education, youth empowerment programmes, but also to learn the language and develop cultural understanding, to take back home.
- There is always a need of people with the right language skills at the very beginning of a crisis. EU citizens originating from disaster-prone areas (see list of DIPECHO countries) who would be ready to volunteer, might be registered in a database, provided that this does not entail political risks.

ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), Nairobi Regional Office

- ICRC does not use volunteers, all staff are highly trained professionals.
- The strongest point of volunteers (in other organisations) is usually their commitment, but this can also lead to rapid frustration.... Volunteers should preferably be used for local work, not in conflicts; to operate in optimum conditions, they also preferably need a functioning civil society (i.e. that is not too much disrupted by conflicts).
- Young expatriates in Africa have problems with: the respect of Africans for “grey hairs”, their lack of cultural sensitivity, of patience, their naiveté, and the need for supervision, especially regarding security. There seems to be a need for a framework of “don’t!”.

- ICRC is reluctant about the idea of EC involvement because of perceived heavy, non-flexible bureaucratic procedures. If an EU agency is set up, it needs to have very flexible procedures (such as e.g. RedR).
- It may also be difficult to maintain some humanitarian principles (neutrality, independence...).
- Detachment / secondment of qualified professional volunteers from their companies/organisations for short periods (2-3-4 weeks) in times of crises is a very interesting idea. They must retain their pay/benefits, to be possibly assisted by some subsidies/tax incentives from EU. Such volunteers would be needed in priority in (i) life-saving medical activities (doctors, nurses from hospitals), (ii) water and shelter (civil engineers), and (iii) for logistics (executives from express transport companies, cargo airlines, maintenance technicians, etc).

Kenyan Red Cross

- The Kenyan Red Cross (KRC) is the lead agency in emergencies in Kenya; they have built capacity to meet this responsibility, such as e.g. their own standards, quality control, and a regional response team covering East Africa, the Horn and Indian Ocean Islands. They usually provide the first response, before the international community, with local staff and volunteers (“their numbers and skills are not short in Kenya”).
- Regarding EVHAC, KRC estimates that a new structure will increase competition and create coordination problems. EU youth will not know how to help in an emergency (you can get better value for money if you buy expertise locally). Any EU organisation that wants to work in a developing country should prove that they have a good partnership in that country.

MERLIN, Nairobi Regional Office

- Merlin uses British volunteers in the UK (periods of 3-6 months, no pay, no per diems), and local volunteers in Sudan (these may also be from the diaspora), who receive “incentives”.
- The NGO has interns in Kenya (expatriates and nationals), for periods of 3/6 to up to 12 months with allowances/per diems, but no fees. Internship is an opportunity of 1st professional experience for young graduates with relevant diplomas. After 6-12 months, they may have a chance to become full staff members. The number of interns depends on the budget available.
- White European “volunteers”, even if they are not paid, are still seen as “rich people” in Africa. The term “voluntary” is also regularly perceived as having a “US religious missionary” connotation.

UN-OCHA, Nairobi Regional Office

- The idea of sending young inexperienced people to humanitarian crisis situations is contradictory with the trend towards increased professionalism.
- Being supply-driven, the main benefits of EVHAC are likely to be primarily for the (young) volunteers themselves, rather than for the beneficiaries of DG ECHO’s assistance.
- There is a risk for the principles of neutrality and independence. To remain neutral will be difficult to some volunteers. Others may be used as “tools” by their countries to collect information, etc.
- What would be the value added to existing structures? (Why create a parallel structure to e.g. UNV?) Volunteers already have lots of opportunities if they seek them out. It would be better to invest in the capacity building of national partners. EVHAC could also divert money to something where there is not a proven need.
- As OCHA uses some interns, they would be interested in taking e.g. NOHA graduates on placement for one year (but not for a shorter period, as you would be making a great investment for little or no payback).

UNV (United Nations Volunteers), Nairobi Regional office

- There are 140 UNVs in Kenya (incl. 32 international and 54 national). 162 Kenyans are working overseas.
- International volunteers are much sought after as they are often highly skilled. However, young UNVs need a lot of support and follow-up. International UNVs are also considered as important by some humanitarian customers e.g. UNHCR, since locals may not be always able to maintain the required sense of neutrality.
- However, in many cases, UNVs are also placed in host institutions including government, where they work in non-emergency programmes (governance, outreach, environment, etc). In such cases, the spirit of volunteerism is often lost. UNV is seen as a job, the allowance is seen as a salary. UNV allowances are also higher than most government salaries, which can be disruptive. Local contracts are for 4 years and people want renewal at the end.

B.5. DG ECHO AND OTHER EU INSTITUTIONS CONCERNED WITH EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE AND VOLUNTEERING

B.5.1. FINDINGS FROM KEY MEETINGS

DG ECHO

The EC Commissioner Nielsen, in charge of humanitarian assistance 1999-2005, the main implementing partners for DG ECHO (see VOICE above) and certain officials of DG ECHO itself consistently expressed strong reservations about the EVHAC initiative during the preparation process of the Constitution. These concerned mainly the key aspects of high security risks for young humanitarian workers, the need for increased professionalism and training by the implementing organisations, or the budget that would be required and its potential consequences for diverting management time from DG ECHO's main activities.

Examples of these concerns can be found in numerous documents, for example the letters sent by the Commissioner to the Members of the European Parliament, or his statement at an annual DG ECHO experts' seminar²⁹, where he declared that "providing humanitarian assistance means nowadays operating in complex and often dangerous environments (...) and it is professionally degrading to consider humanitarian aid workers as well-meaning-do-gooders! (...) I believe that such a corps would run counter to current efforts to bring professionalism into an activity which has become more technical and increasingly dangerous".

Among DG ECHO's staff, the reactions are consistent with the above arguments, stating e.g. that:

- NOHA graduates and EU interns /trainees could be used. DG ECHO regional offices and EC Delegations could deploy some of them. EC Delegations have also to employ "young experts" on occasion. Such a training period could be a valuable reference for future careers. However, there should be a trade-off between personal development of volunteers (investment for one's future) and assistance to beneficiaries ("what can you bring?").
- There is a need to "bridge the gap" between the young graduates who are trying to find an opportunity for a 1st practical experience, and the qualified professionals, who are mostly not volunteers any more (this phenomenon was called the "age waste" by some). There is an erosion, an evaporation of humanitarian talents between these two poles. There was a suggestion to set up an "EC volunteers database" to help bridging this gap.
- Any opportunity to promote volunteerism should be encouraged.
- Twinning, sharing and exchanges in volunteering should be encouraged, especially North-South relations (a programme where young Europeans go to Africa and young Africans go to Europe).

Most findings, however, indicate concerned and prudent opinions and are reproduced below; some of them were collected in Nairobi and are more specific to a field situation in the African context.

- DG ECHO is not in a position to act alone or even take any real leadership in an EVHAC-like initiative. It could/should however take part, facilitate, etc.
- Africa does not need young "privileged" Europeans (as they are all perceived by locals) with plenty of goodwill, but mostly unprepared for to face the local culture; they need to learn cultural sensitivity, patience, etc.
- Young people and volunteers in general work better in a development environment, without the pressure of time and distress of people. Adequate time scales and a relatively friendly atmosphere are naturally more conducive.
- The US Peace Corps is often considered to be politically linked, rather than neutral or independent. It is sometimes used as a recruitment ground for US diplomatic service, USAID, etc. It nevertheless provides valuable information about local conditions at grassroots level: the Peace Corps people live with and like the locals, and deal mostly with education, low-level infrastructure (roads, bridges, wells...).

²⁹ Held in Brussels on 29 September 2003.

- In some countries, volunteers can become frustrated after their work period, since this type of commitment is not always seen as a valid first professional experience by private firms (this would be the case in France and Belgium, perhaps less so in the UK and some Nordic countries), but rather like a sign of unstable, not sufficiently mature character, seeking adventure. In such cases, former volunteers need the benefit of social protection (French law in 2005), or unemployment might be looming.
- Putting young people into insecure situations is not acceptable. How many current HA situations are benign enough for young volunteers? All emergencies are complex – people cannot be fully prepared for it-, but putting people in as their first experience is not a good idea.
- What will be the selection process and who will carry it out? NGOs will still want freedom of selection.
- Such a scheme will not be cheap, and the actual cost of volunteers is quite high: it can be estimated at around €3,000 per month for non-staff people in DG ECHO projects in 2000.
- The Backbone (90%) of humanitarian work is done by local volunteers; the impact of international people coming in is often greatly overstated.

ECPC/RELEX

A draft report on the prospects of a European Civil Peace Corps was handed over to the Commission in November 2005. It was still being assessed at the time of the conclusion of the present review. Findings seem to have been rather different from those of this review. The report was e.g. primarily oriented towards experienced volunteers rather than young ones, and concluded that these would need to be paid to become volunteers rather than e.g. contracted staff in a project, which would hardly qualify them as volunteers anymore.

CIVIL PROTECTION (EU MIC)

An evaluation on the subject of “Volunteers in Civil protection” had been launched in 2005; it is due to be completed in 2007 only. The main tasks of this project are focused on formulating recommendations for minimum standards regarding the rights and obligations of voluntary relief workers involved in civil protection, as well as their education and training standards. A coordination should therefore be ensured with the standards proposed for EVHAC or an EVHAC style body, considering e.g. the fact that in Germany alone some 80,000 professionals would qualify as experts/volunteers for the EU Civil Protection work. Their profiles may in many cases be quite similar to those that a possible EVHAC would seek to locate and deploy in humanitarian emergency situations.

EVS (European Voluntary Service, DG EAC)

Since 2000, EVS has been able to enlist some 25,000 young Europeans –for 32 countries of the enlarged Europe– in its volunteering activities, and the Youth programme of which EVS is a component, has reached some 700,000 young people between 18 and 25 years old during the same period. This seems to represent a significant European achievement that might be used as a potential recruitment basis by a future EVHAC or EVHAC style body, an EC executive or independent agency for volunteers. For its part, EVS would look forward to be able to propose some types of subsequent activities to those who would be interested, possibly oriented towards development or humanitarian assistance, provided that some “bridges” including relevant academic studies and necessary training are set up.

A first attempt has already taken place between EVS and UNV. Joint pilot “post-crisis reconciliation” projects were successfully implemented in the Balkans in 2005, and the two organisations are now envisaging a wider “framework partnership agreement” for their cooperation.

Furthermore, reduced budget perspectives for 2007-2013 increasingly appear as a powerful incentive for EVS and DG EAC to join forces with contiguous programmes and institutions, and to set up joint management schemes. In the past, the “EuroMed Youth Programme” was a first example of cooperation (joint administrative management and budget) between EAC and AIDCO/MEDA.

Since January 2006, DG EAC and DG INFSO have set up a joint “Executive Agency” to manage their various programmes and create synergies. This agency, promoted by the Commission reforms, has replaced the former Technical Assistance Unit. It aims at providing increased transparency, stability (20% of the staff would be Commission officials and the balance would be contract and temporary agents), and value for money (economies of scale in the budget). The Executive Agency is a partially outsourced body, allowing both flexibility and integration/control by the Commission. It might therefore provide an example of executive structure for a possible EVHAC or EVHAC style body, even though the DG EAC Executive Agency is much larger than an EVHAC one would need to be (approx. 300 staff to manage 8 different programmes).

EU Member States

Recent initiatives from several EU countries regarding volunteering schemes for young people are briefly outlined below, whilst others have responded to a survey addressed to the members of the HAC Committee (see B.5.2).

Belgium has decided in September 2005 to initiate a volunteering service for the international Technical Cooperation service³⁰. However, the actual legal provisions should not be adopted before spring 2006, and the question of the allowances remains to be settled. According to the preliminary text, the volunteers should be remunerated on the basis of the guaranteed minimum monthly wage: this seems to have created some tensions with Belgian NGOs, who fear that such fees might be bound to attract more volunteers to the official cooperation service.

In **France**, president Chirac announced in November 2005 the creation (in 2006 or 2007?) of a “Service civil volontaire” that would deploy up to 50,000 youths a year, paid at SMIG level. Furthermore, possibly in the perspective of the upcoming presidential elections, the French socialist party indicated that it would support the re-inclusion of young citizens in the armed forces.

The **Irish** Government is to launch a major initiative to involve citizens in emergency crisis relief and long-term assistance projects in the Third World, in the aftermath of the Tsunami and Pakistan, through the establishment of two volunteer groups for humanitarian aid and development:

- a rapid-response corps of 50 to 100 professional and other skilled personnel who would be ready to travel at short notice to carry out emergency humanitarian work; and
- a volunteer corps, much larger, consisting of individuals who would serve as development workers on a long-term basis.

The rapid-response corps will be separate from the proposed volunteer corps, the mandate of which should be “to harness the strong volunteer spirit which exists across the country”. The mainly civilian rapid-response corps would be organised and co-ordinated by the Defence Forces, who have the capability for organising such a unit. The Volunteer Corps Unit should be attached to the Department of Foreign Affairs. The scheme, which would cost some €75 million in 2006 and twice that by 2012, should “bring the volunteer tradition into the mainstream” and “encourage partnerships between Irish companies and State agencies and their counterparts in the developing world”. “There is a deep fund of goodwill in our society waiting to be tapped. Young people - and their elders - should be encouraged to provide skills which are not otherwise available to struggling overseas communities, thereby enriching giver and receiver. But the days of well-meaning amateurism are past: only high-quality assistance should be offered”³¹.

Furthermore, the **British** government seems to be planning a similar subsidised volunteer scheme for young people. In his pre-budget report in November 2005 the British Chancellor announced funding, from both public and private sectors, for 16 to 25 year-olds to broaden their horizons, to ‘harness idealism and willingness to serve’.

³⁰ <http://www.btcctb.org/showpage.asp?iPageID=1316&sLangCode=EN>

³¹ “The Irish Times”, Nov. 2005

B.5.2. FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY

Background

The Members of the Humanitarian Assistance Committee (HAC) have been invited to contribute to the review with their opinion regarding the potential implementation of EVHAC, and to make suggestions and recommendations in this respect. Out of 25 members, 6 have answered to the invitation (Austria, Germany, Finland, France, Latvia and The Netherlands). DG ECHO has directly invited the HAC Members to complete a survey containing 14 questions. The survey was structured as follows:

- basic information (about the respondent);
- general views (regarding EVHAC);
- young volunteers (advantages / disadvantages);
- constraints and challenges;
- alternative options for EVHAC;
- existing volunteering mechanisms in the Member States; and
- suggestions and comments.

Details about the survey are presented in the Annex V to the present report.

Summary Results

To summarise the results of the survey was rather difficult, as the replies present a wide spectrum of reactions, from a quite supportive statement to a questioning of the entire idea. One HAC member called the EVHAC a “necessary initiative”, whereas three others stated that it was probably not so. All respondents expressed concerns of varying degrees.

Major concerns included the following issues.

- The involvement of young people (generally also understood as inexperienced) could lead to amateurism in assistance provision, which should not happen. The requirement of professionalism for the delivery of emergency assistance should not be weakened by involving young volunteers.
- Any involvement of young volunteers leads to an additional administration and supervision burden to humanitarian field operations.
- The costs involved in the substantial and systematic involvement of young volunteers could reduce available resources for the recipients/beneficiaries (competition for resources).
- Young volunteers are not adequate for actual emergency situations; if they are involved, it should be in post-crisis and rehabilitation programmes.
- The added value of the involvement of young volunteers is questionable.
- The creation of a new institutional structure (EVHAC) could be very costly with little value added.

Major potential advantages would be as follows:

- enhancing visibility of humanitarian actions;
- increasing awareness in the EU;
- advocacy;

- high motivation and flexibility of young people.

In the open questions, several recommendations and suggestions were also provided, i.a.:

- young volunteers should only be involved in post-disaster and rehabilitation missions;
- a roster / database of young volunteers might be a potential value added of EVHAC;
- to allow also “young retirees” to participate;
- to strengthen and connect existing structures, rather than to create new ones;
- to develop joint training schemes for volunteers;
- to use young volunteers at HQ level rather than deploying them abroad;
- to integrate EVHAC within DG ECHO structure, and avoid creating a separate institution.

B.6. OTHER SOURCES OF FINDINGS

Key U.S. Stakeholders

The policy of the current Bush administration is to promote international volunteering; this approach is supported by some external stakeholders, for several reasons. The President seems quite keen to emphasise the “compassionate” image of the American citizen, which can be suitably expressed through volunteering. Others stress the need to improve the country’s image abroad, much degraded after Iraq. They hope that a “people to people” approach through international volunteering (see below) could contribute to restore “more favourable attitudes among foreigners toward the United States”. The “soft instrument” of volunteering presents the additional advantage to be considerably less costly than “hard” instruments of power (e.g. the armed military). A draft policy document on US international volunteering³² has listed 53 organisations (government agencies, INGOs, private companies, faith-based bodies) currently deploying some 46,000 volunteers, although the total number should probably be around 50-60,000. Three of the organisations most relevant for the review are briefly presented below.

US Peace Corps³³

The US Peace Corps was created in 1961 by President Kennedy, and may reportedly have been used as a possible benchmark for the original EVHAC idea, under the last Greek presidency of the EU. A major objective of the Corps is to achieve “people to people” contacts between young Americans and needy local communities around the world. To this end, freshly graduated volunteers are usually sent abroad for periods of 2 years, during which they integrate with host communities, sometimes living in very harsh conditions, to better share hopes and problems. This experience has often a significant impact on the life of the volunteers on their return. They are expected to disseminate better understanding of foreign countries in their home communities. They can also more easily access careers in e.g. government agencies dealing with external relations or INGOs, to use their experience. Since its inception, the Corps has deployed more than 178,000 volunteers in 138 countries. In 2005, some 7,800 volunteers were present in 72 countries, for a total annual budget of \$320 million. In accordance with the current administration’s policy, the budget for the Corps is being regularly increased: from \$310 million in 2004, it should reach \$345 million in 2006 (roughly €300 million, see details in Annex II).

However, behind these impressive figures, a number of issues and concerns must be outlined.

- The number of host countries is limited for several reasons. Countries must express their “interest” and commitment to receive Peace Corps volunteers; the programme is therefore demand-driven. A country office must be established. Security is also a major concern: “maximising safety and security is the top priority of the Peace Corps”. The Corps has a dedicated office that organises training courses –to “develop personal safety strategies” –, conducts country assessments, and sets up country-specific emergency action plans in close cooperation with concerned US embassies. A fully equipped “situation room” was established in 2003 at the Corps headquarters.
- The Corps claims to have “no agenda”, although it is funded at 100% by the US government and reports directly to the “USA Freedom Corps”, a volunteering umbrella established at the White House. In the current context of increasing blurring between civilian and military/political interventions in crisis situations, such a structure is bound to create confusion and limits somewhat the scope of action of the Peace Corps.
- Activities of the Corps are oriented towards development and not humanitarian aid, which greatly restricts its value as a potential benchmark for EVHAC (see also Crisis Corps below). Volunteers are usually providing training in sectors such as agriculture, business development, education, environment, health, HIV/AIDS, etc.
- The Peace Corps focuses on the personal development of its volunteers rather than on operational efficiency or effectiveness. It is not results-oriented and does not have any monitoring or evaluation procedure to measure outputs or impact on the beneficiaries’ situations (the quality of personal relations and their longer-term impact are hardly measurable items)³⁴.

³² “Reaching out: Americans serving overseas” by Lex Rieffel, Brookings Institution, 3rd draft, Dec. 2005.

³³ www.peacecorps.gov

³⁴ The Corps has developed a “Quality Statements and Indicators Project” (QSIP) that essentially aims at measuring the performances of some inputs (recruitment, training, management, etc).

- The Corps could hardly be qualified as “cost-effective” either – and this is not one of its objectives. An estimated 1,200 staff³⁵ are employed to support and manage 7,800 volunteers. At 2005 budget levels (\$320 million), the average Peace Corps volunteer costs \$41,000 (€35,500) per year, or \$3,400 (€3,000) per month. It should be stressed that volunteers do not receive any fee, but only living allowances, health benefits, travel costs, and a “length-of-service award” of \$6,000.
- Numbers of Peace Corps volunteers have sharply declined since the mid-1960s (from more than 15,000). The current figure of 7,800 is an improvement as compared to the 1980s (below 5,000), even though this figure actually covers a period of 2 years, with new volunteers numbering around 4,000/year.

US Crisis Corps

A recent offshoot (1996) of the Peace Corps, the Crisis Corps was created to use experienced returned volunteers who can obtain leave and absence from work for periods of 3-6 months. They are usually deployed through implementing partners (INGOs, UN agencies, etc) and work in 5 main programme areas, including “humanitarian response”. However, although such experienced professionals are expected to be able to “hit the ground running”, they are only being deployed in countries where “safety can be reasonably ensured” and after a lengthy period of time (3-4 months) required by various administrative processes (security and health clearance...), which excludes any actual emergency response capacity.

US Volunteers for Prosperity (VfP)³⁶

This rather small unit (3 regular staff only) was set up in 2003 by president Bush. It is housed within USAID but depends also from the Freedom Corps in the White House. VfP defines itself as complementary to the Peace Corps, being a “clearing house for international volunteer opportunities”, a facilitating body for a large network of partners (circa 220 charitable or not for profit making bodies and companies). These partners can potentially tap into a pool of some 54,000 skilled professionals who (i) are working in sectors related to the “Global Health and Prosperity Agenda”³⁷ and (ii) are not already returned Peace Corps volunteers. VfP estimates that some 9-12,000 volunteers have been deployed abroad by the network in 2005. Being itself a “lean” organisation, VfP argued strongly in favour of a similar approach for EVHAC, which would be significantly more cost-effective than a big structure while facing irregular and unpredictable crises.

Other External Stakeholders

The Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) was created in 1963 in the UK. It brings together a unique alliance of the UK's aid, corporate, public and broadcasting sectors to rally the nation's compassion, and ensure that funds raised go to DEC agencies best placed to deliver effective and timely relief to people most in need. Its members, who include some key DG ECHO partners, are: ActionAid, British Red Cross, CAFOD, CARE International UK, Christian Aid, Concern, HelpAge, Islamic Relief, Merlin, Oxfam, Save the Children, Tearfund and World Vision.

DEC's perception of EVHAC is that it seems supply rather than demand driven. DEC, whose members are the major players in humanitarian aid in the UK, does not see how EVHAC can work and feels that it will cause more problems than it resolves. Obviously each emergency is different but the Sudan emergency has highlighted the problem of getting senior experienced staff to go to Southern Sudan for appropriate periods of time. This has not been the same for the Tsunami but in many cases the aid agencies actually sent their own senior staff to the area and then tried to backfill in the UK. The need for young volunteers from outside the country is not proven. There is normally a ready supply of young people to carry out the many necessary tasks e.g. burying bodies in the Tsunami and they are in a much better position to carry out that work than outsiders. The trend in humanitarian aid and development work is to ensure that labour is trained and supplied from within the country rather than from outside. Bringing in inexperienced young people is likely to hamper the emergency efforts rather than provide the much needed support and may well result in “damage” to the young person as well.

³⁵ Approx. 600 staff at HQ, 8-9 staff in each of the 11 regional US offices, and between 5-20 staff (min. 2 Americans) in each of the 72 country offices abroad. See also Annex II.

³⁶ www.volunteersforprosperity.gov

³⁷ i.e. doctors, nurses, bankers, business people, lawyers, teachers, engineers, etc.

C. ANALYSIS OF THE EVHAC CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION

This chapter should be seen as an *ex-post* attempt –since, to the best of our knowledge, this had not been done beforehand- to review the EU Constitution’s provision regarding EVHAC through a logical framework analysis. To make the listing of activities appear more ‘logical’ in this frame, we have used the overall objective of our TOR as the starting point of this analysis. The key aspects of the Constitution’s article are presented under the ‘specific objectives’ section, with the ‘expected results’ providing a link between these two approaches. “Assumptions and constraints” mostly reflect the findings collected during our work.

Table 1

	Intervention logic	Objectively verifiable indicators	Sources of verification	Assumptions / constraints
Overall objective	To provide DG ECHO and other services of the European Commission with an analysis setting out the design, or range of designs, of a future EVHAC.		TOR, §8.	
Specific objectives	1. To establish a framework for joint contributions...		EU Constitution, Art III-321(5).	
	2. ...from young Europeans...			
	3. ...to the humanitarian aid operations of the Union...			
	4. ...a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps shall be set up.			
Expected results	1. A “Corps” is set up as a framework.			-“Corps” induces a notion of formal and identifiable organisation. -It can also have a military connotation and be confused with the “Eurocorps”. -Non-English speakers will often pronounce it as “corpse”, which is detrimental.
	2. The Corps involves “young” people.			There is no universally agreed definition of “young”.
	3. The Corps involves “volunteers”.			There is no universally agreed definition of “volunteer”.
	4. The Corps involves “Europeans”.			Citizens of 25 Member States and accession countries.
	5. The Corps involves “joint contributions” of 2-3-4 above.			Inter-connected databases, equal chances, mixed teams, or also coordination of the effort by the Commission?

Establishment of a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps

	6. The Corps is involved in “humanitarian aid operations of the Union”.			-“Humanitarian aid” is to be taken in the restricted sense of DG ECHO’s emergency life-saving interventions. -“Union” includes the Commission/DG ECHO (donor, not operational), but also the Member States (bilateral operations).
	7. The Corps contributes to enhancing the EU’s visibility and advocacy.			Un-stated in the Constitution, though this might be a key overall objective for a “politically-driven” initiative.
Activities	A. The “Corps” is set up as a framework			
	1. To determine the institutional position of the Corps and plan the optimum administrative structure.	Budgetary and administrative provisions adopted and followed by all concerned authorities.	Relevant documents from the Commission, EU Member States, and partners.	1. DG ECHO is not in an institutional position to take the lead on EVHAC in the EC and EU. 2. DG ECHO does not have the structure to manage EVHAC internally or alone.
	2. To adopt the corresponding legal base.			3. A change in DG ECHO’s legal base could entail a long and difficult procedure.
	3. To obtain the corresponding budget.			4. Might be very difficult due to high costs involved and current restrictions (see also pre-condition). 5. Budget allocated to EVHAC might be to the detriment of actual humanitarian aid actions. 6. The actual value for money might be low.
	4. To set up the structure (HR, management, procedures, database, website...).			7. Risks of duplication and confusion with existing structures and databases. 8. A heavy HQ structure is likely to lead to heavy/non-flexible bureaucratic procedures. 9. Adapted local branches for field supervision must also be set up. 10. Such a database would be very difficult and costly to maintain and update. 11. Contracts, logistics, insurance would also be difficult and costly to manage.
	5. To establish working relations with EU Member states, VSOs, implementing partners, volunteers, other international stakeholders...			12. Risks of complicated relations with partners (volunteers are imposed to partners/ EU countries who do not want them) and other stakeholders (competition).
	6. To monitor and supervise.			13. A heavy structure would be very difficult to supervise, considering DG ECHO’s usual lack of human resources.

Establishment of a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps

B. The Corps involves “young” people			
7. To agree on a definition of “young” for the EVHAC programme.	Budgetary and administrative provisions adopted and followed by all concerned authorities.	Relevant documents from the Commission, EU Member States, and partners.	14. All others (mature experts, older people) might be excluded, whilst these are the ones partners want most.
8. To set up appropriate standards, code of conduct, guidelines, selection criteria and process.			15. Objective of programme may become using young people rather than giving HA. 16. The Commission would be perceived as responsible for the output.
9. To establish links with providers (universities, youth organisations...).			
10. To establish links with customers (partners...).			17. Not needs based, might have to be imposed.
11. To set up, implement and update appropriate training schemes.			18. The Commission would be perceived as responsible for the output.
12. To set up and implement appropriate field security and supervision.			19. The Commission would be perceived as responsible for security problems.
13. To set up links with further career opportunities.			20. Career opportunities limited (local skills). 21. Need of coordinated EU laws, for equal chances. 22. The Commission would be perceived as responsible for the lack of such linkages.
C. The Corps involves “volunteers”			
14. To agree on a definition of “volunteer” for the EVHAC programme.	Budgetary and administrative provisions adopted and followed by all concerned authorities.	Relevant documents from the Commission, EU Member States, and partners.	23. Duplication detrimental to normal partners’ staff must be avoided. 24. Laws and regulations (EU and local) still not very conducive to volunteers.
15. To set up appropriate standards, code of conduct, guidelines, selection criteria and process.			25. Objective of programme may become using volunteers rather than giving HA. 26. The Commission would be perceived as responsible for the output.
16. To establish links with providers (VSOs...).			
17. To establish links with customers (partners...).			27. Not needs based, might have to be imposed.
18. To set up, implement and update appropriate training schemes.			28. The Commission would be perceived as responsible for the output.
19. To set up and implement appropriate field security and supervision.			29. The Commission would be perceived as responsible for security problems.

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20. To set up links to use expertise in future profession or to re-integrate career, and to benefit from social protection...			30. Would need strong political guidance and backup.
D. The Corps involves “Europeans”			
21. To set up and maintain appropriate relations with major providers in all EU and accession countries.	Budgetary and administrative provisions adopted and followed by all concerned authorities.	Relevant documents from the Commission, EU Member States, and partners.	31. Political work, common legal framework needed for equal chances and commitment. 32. Contrary to lessons learned and trends (‘locals do it better’), might be seen as ‘paternalistic’ to impose Europeans. 33. Might endanger principle of independence for DG ECHO. 34. The EVS programme includes 32 member states (EU, accession, and EFTA/EEA countries)
22. To set up selection criteria that ensure equal chances and access.			35. The Commission would be perceived as responsible for the output.
23. To ensure translation of key documents in all relevant languages.			36. Costly and time-consuming.
E. The Corps involves “joint contributions” of B-C-D above			
24. To set up and maintain balanced multi-national teams of young European volunteers across humanitarian programmes.	Reports of complaints or satisfaction.	Relevant documents from the Commission, EU Member States, and partners.	37. DG ECHO could not argue, as for partners, that effectiveness is more important than nationality.
F. The Corps is involved in “humanitarian aid operations of the Union”			
25. To include teams as above (B-C-D), wherever possible, in DG ECHO-funded programmes.	Reports of complaints or satisfaction.	Relevant documents from the Commission, EU MS, and partners.	38. Not needs based or demand-driven but rather supply-driven; may have to be imposed (partners do not want them). 39. Not results-oriented, might be detrimental to effectiveness.
26. To include teams as above, wherever possible, in bilateral humanitarian programmes of EU Member States.			40. Some Member States may not agree to have their bilateral programmes coordinated by the Commission.
G. The Corps contributes to enhancing the EU’s visibility and advocacy			
27. To set up an appropriate communication policy.	Levels of visibility, understanding and satisfaction of the EVHAC initiative in all EU and accession countries.	Relevant surveys and statistics.	41. For optimum effectiveness, it would be advisable to outsource/tender out the communication to a specialised firm. 42. Such surveys are difficult and costly.
			Pre-conditions 1. The EU Constitution must be adopted. 2. The required budget must be available.

The results of the above frame have been used to prepare the main recommendations of this review (see chapter D.1). The summary of the planned activities reflect the “heavy administrative option” in complete compliance with the Constitutional text, and points out to numerous and recurrent potential constraints, to be found on almost every single activity.

The analysis tends to indicate that the “heavy administrative option” would not be practically feasible without in-depth impacts, with unknown long-term consequences, not only on DG ECHO’s structure and mandate, but probably also on its mission and its principles.

As a consequence, two options will be recommended below to the choice of the Commission: either to discard the current EVHAC initiative and revise the Constitution’s provision, or to agree on a “scaled down” compromise between an interpreted version of the Constitution, practical management constraints, efficiency, effectiveness and lessons learnt from the field.

D. CONCLUSIONS

According to the logical framework analysis developed in chapter C, and even provided that the preconditions of the ratification of the Constitution and availability of the budget are fulfilled, a literal application of article III-321(5), i.e. a fully fledged formal and identifiable structure designed to send young European volunteers to carry out field tasks in humanitarian situations, with DG ECHO –the sole humanitarian aid service of the Commission– as its main operator, *does not appear feasible or desirable*.

In the analysis of this “heavy administrative” scenario, the expected results, necessary processes and potential activities are contradicted by the findings collected throughout this review and by the lessons learnt by the most knowledgeable actors in the field.

In most cases, the result is quite negative. Overall, the fully fledged option appears as a well intentioned idea; however, it is more political (or supply) in origin rather than field driven, and the design may be mixing means and ends. Among others, the following points can be outlined.

- EVHAC is combining several appealing ideas and values (humanitarian aid and solidarity, enthusiasm of young people to get involved, and the need to enhance EU visibility), though not from a field driven orientation.
- It does not take into consideration certain essential lessons learnt (local volunteering is best) nor certain trends (i.e., de-centralise, build capacity in key third countries and consider them as partners rather than recipients).
- The proposed EVHAC would risk duplicating existing structures with detrimental consequences (i.e., conflicts with key implementing partners and other –national, bilateral– stakeholders, cooperation imposed rather than based on partnership, leading to a lack of essential coordination during crises).
- Professionalizing humanitarian aid is a priority for all stakeholders.
- The heavy structure required would entail substantial administrative and management costs (benchmarking of the US Peace Corps has shown a total budget US\$345 million for 2006, out of which no less than 42% are absorbed by various administrative and support functions). In such cases, cost-effectiveness or value for money may be quite low. A heavy administrative structure would also typically lead to rigid procedures.
- In the current international framework, humanitarian aid activities funded by DG ECHO –often in conflict areas– usually entail high security risks and require an increasingly professional, effective implementation. They do not seem appropriate for young, yet-to-be-trained volunteers (in fact, they are not suitable for untrained/ inexperienced people of any age).
- Security and safety issues would also raise potential legal/relations problems with local authorities, and the responsibility for selection, training and behaviour of volunteers would fall on the Commission. This would require very good political management and mitigation skills (usually not the professional background of DG ECHO’s current field experts).
- Being supply-driven, the main benefits of EVHAC are likely to be primarily for the (young) volunteers themselves, rather than for the beneficiaries of DG ECHO’s assistance. This is likely to be highly detrimental to needs-based, results-oriented and cost-effective approaches.
- DG ECHO is probably not well positioned in the EU or Commission frameworks to take the leadership role of a formal EVHAC structure³⁸, especially with regard to liaison with already existing structures at national level, that have their own modus operandi and which could be considered more developmental in their orientation. Managing EVHAC alone (or even as a major leading body) would amount to an extremely difficult challenge for DG ECHO and would require major amendments to DG ECHO’s organisation and mandate. There is no provision in the current legal base, the Humanitarian Regulation 1257/96, that prevents DG ECHO from supporting some volunteering activities, but the “heavy administrative” structure required would probably require complementary implementing rules (e.g. activities and implementation procedures should be duly mentioned), with unknown long-term consequences on its operating principles (including the risk of becoming again involved in the implementation of operations) and the ability to focus on its main objective –the funding of emergency humanitarian assistance.

³⁸ See e.g. the current ‘relative’ institutional isolation within the Commission of DIPECHO, also housed by DG ECHO.

However, the review has also identified a number of acute needs in the volunteering world. Findings indicate that an EU voluntary scheme –although different from the heavy structure considered above– could contribute to filling in some of these needs and bringing added value as well.

- Key needs of existing volunteer organisations were found in the enhanced promotion and support of principles (“volunteerism, which could be seen as the front end of a professional and well-trained cadre of humanitarian assistance workers, would only succeed in an environment governed by the basic donor consensus principles”³⁹), and in the provision of a range of capacity building measures to help them become more responsive to unpredictable crisis situations.
- There is often a shortage of qualified and experienced people needed in emergency humanitarian crisis situations; any scheme that would effectively increase this pool would be welcome.
- Conversely, where “humanitarian aid” can be considered in a somewhat wider sense (“humanitarian plus”?), a number of related activities –that may still be appealing enough to attract large numbers of volunteers– would appear much more adequate for volunteering purposes. Among them, preparedness, mitigation, “second wave” assistance after e.g. natural disasters in the EU or abroad, post-conflict normalisation and peace-building, local capacity building, education and other relevant development-related programmes in quieter/sheltered areas, or working at the integration of asylum seekers in the EU, funding raising or logistical support in countries of origin may be frameworks where volunteers could both provide added value and develop their own skills⁴⁰.
- Furthermore, the above conclusion points towards the need for a coordinated approach by the various Commission services potentially concerned by the benefits of volunteerism.

As a conclusion, two main options seem to emerge from the analysis. Both options are proposed for the consideration of the Commission.

1. No EVHAC should be set up. Taken literally, the Constitutional provision does not appear practically feasible. It conflicts with most lessons learnt from the field and with current trends towards effectiveness, professionalism and decentralisation. Furthermore, DG ECHO is not in an institutional position to take the lead in the Commission and in the EU, and is not structured to do so properly. The modifications required may jeopardize in the long term the principles of DG ECHO and its administrative capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies.
2. A possible realistic scaled down alternative for DG ECHO may arise in due course, a compromise between (i) avoiding some of the problems created by a heavy structure, (ii) whilst contributing to fulfil some of the needs identified, and (iii) yet abiding by a slightly wider interpretation of the Constitution’s text.

Recommendations corresponding to the second option (the first option does not need to be developed) are presented in the chapter E below.

³⁹ Pattern of findings collected during the Sri Lanka case study.

⁴⁰ The US approach is similar. According to USAID/OFDA, volunteers should be used primarily in (i) restarting activities +/- 2 weeks after natural disasters (capacity building, economic revitalisation, cash for work for local volunteers...) and (ii) in development, though NOT in conflict areas.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter of the review presents the overall recommendations for a scaled down alternative to the EVHAC, i.e. DG ECHO contributes to a Commission executive or independent agency dealing with all relevant aspects of involvement with volunteerism. This is complemented by specific sections dedicated to some key aspects of the option, i.e. a tentative management structure and the standards to be applied. The recommendations will mostly remain at the global/policy and strategy levels. It would arguably be somewhat premature to investigate, at this stage, most operational level details, which would require a number of preliminary decisions.

E.1. OVERALL APPROACH

Policy level

A tentative definition of the “**vision**” and global objectives of EVHAC could be: “*EVHAC strives for a world of justice and humanity, within which Europeans play a leading role by providing direct or indirect voluntary actions to help those in need of humanitarian assistance, and to provide them with the means to restore or develop their own capacities in a perspective of sustainable development*”.

A tentative “**mission statement**”, i.e. the niche that EVHAC could fill in achieving the vision could be: “*to support and strengthen EU-based structures by assisting the creation and maintenance of reserves of trained volunteers to respond to humanitarian related situations wherever they arise*”.

Should a scaled down EVHAC type body or agency be conceivable in a broader framework than the emergency interventions funded by DG ECHO, it could seek to become an example of good practice in the field of international cooperation. It could follow an approach to promote sustainable development (a key objective of the 2007-2013 Financial Framework) and initiating two-way flows, North-South exchanges and capacity building, twinning etc. with recipient countries, rather than the traditional one-way development⁴¹. This approach would also avoid the recurrent reproach of being “paternalistic”.

Scope

A new initiative, aiming at becoming popular among European youth, is more likely to attract wide support if it has a relatively broad mandate, especially once it has been recognised that needs-driven emergency humanitarian aid activities funded by DG ECHO could only use a very limited number of highly qualified volunteers. Similarly, focusing essentially on highly skilled professionals or graduates from prestigious academic programmes would miss the valuable target of being appealing to European youth, possibly as a follow up to e.g. the popular EVS programme of DG EAC.

As stated among the conclusions above, a number of activities closely related or contiguous to emergency humanitarian aid –i.e. taking place before and after the crisis itself, often under the coverage of the EU crisis management instruments– would both be appealing to volunteers, more conducive for their involvement, and would provide frameworks for value added from volunteering.

While respecting humanitarian principles, a more coherent, co-ordinated approach between concerned Commission services should therefore be promoted regarding the field of volunteering, to develop synergies where feasible in a joint management structure (see E.2). It is acknowledged that preconditions must be fulfilled, such as interest of the services (e.g. EuropeAid must still be interested in pursuing and broadening the ECPC initiative) and inclusion of the mechanism among their priorities. Such an example however exists already (the EAC/INFSO Executive Agency) and lessons can be drawn from it. A number of potential advantages can be listed: opportunities to enhance European citizenship and a more coherent position of EU in the world, to promoting LRRD⁴², avoiding risks of duplication and confusion, cost sharing in the current budgetary restrictions (economies

⁴¹ Several valid examples were found, e.g. the Kenyan Red Cross, a highly impressive body that still needed some material and technical advice from the international community to respond to any emergencies.

⁴² As stated by the World Bank, there is a real need to think developmentally even in relief work, or “relief is also a developmental exercise”.

of scale might become appealing), reaching a higher overall threshold for better impact, etc. An excellent communication policy would be a prerequisite, and safety/security must be considered as a first priority.

Such an approach would be in line with the objective of enhanced coherence in external actions, as expressed in the 4th main heading of the 2007-2013 Financial Framework. It would also promote the key criteria of effectiveness, efficiency (with specific focus on the value for money) and synergy adopted by the Framework⁴³.

Finally, promoting existing EU volunteerism through an EC wide agency could formally respect the text of the Constitution –though with some slight interpretation- which would not require any amendment: it would still be a framework for joint contributions from young Europeans (and for other categories as well), and it could be involved primarily in humanitarian aid operations in the broader sense i.e., the volunteers need not be deployed to locations with risks to safety and security).

Designation

The actual designation of what is being called EVHAC for facility purposes in this review, should be reconsidered according to several factors.

- Organisations that aim at being clearly perceived/visible/understood by a wide, non-specialist target population such as EVHAC need to be known either by relevant acronyms or by their full names –provided that these are short, evocative and potentially appealing.
- An acronym such as EVHAC could remain obscure to the public at large and is likely to limit its appeal. It may also be potentially misleading (reference to “evacuation”, etc).
- The term of “Corps” should be avoided in the final designation. It has strong military connotations (“Eurocorps”) for a programme that aims at involving civil society and neutrally mandated organisations. It could also easily be confused, for non-native English speakers, with “corpse”.
- “Humanitarian aid” is both too restrictive in scope, not the most appropriate –by far– activity to place volunteers (preference should go to preparedness/mitigation, post-crisis and development), and could lead to false expectations by would-be volunteers.
- As a result, a clearer name such as “*European Volunteers*” could probably be found.

Strategy level (specific objectives)

In the opinion of the review, a multi-layered strategy could be followed by DG ECHO under the scaled down scenario.

- DG ECHO could support existing humanitarian volunteering initiatives on the part of its humanitarian partners, by use of the grants facility for NGOs and thematic funding for international organisations to promote training and capacity building.
- DG ECHO could continue with its funding of the NOHA masters degree qualification and with its practice of using trainees at its headquarters. There is a need to support/promote different types of education schemes, both in Europe and in key third countries, to expand the global pool of humanitarian expertise (see below).
- DG ECHO could advocate with other Commission services for assistance to the existing volunteering structures in the EU, particularly for strengthening the existing management capacities for co-ordination within the EU and outside the EU, to ensure that “the right people will do the right thing at the right time”. This would promote efficiency and make them better able to provide back-office or logistical support, but always outside of theatres of humanitarian operations.
- DG ECHO could also undertake communication initiatives to promote existing volunteering activities for experienced or skilled persons (both within the EU and outside), by dissemination of principles, code of conduct, contributing to maintain/upgrade standards improve guidelines, translate and disseminate key documents, promote common classification criteria in existing databases, promote quality, provide a limited amount of funds for some targeted activities such as IHL/IDRL, key training..., in a collaborative way with its partners. A dedicated website, or part of a website, could be used as a platform for information, promotion of

⁴³ See Chapter A.3.

the EU image, links with existing organisations, databases and volunteering/internship opportunities, exchanges of lessons learnt, etc.

Support to a global pool of humanitarian expertise

As stated, there is a need to support/promote different types of voluntary schemes (in which either successful training course and/or field deployment could be rewarded with an “European Volunteer” certificate -a guarantee of acquired skills that could also encourage mobility), or to establish programs with volunteers, both in Europe and in key third countries, to expand the global pool of humanitarian expertise.

- The induction of *academically qualified* but as yet *untrained young professionals* (NOHA, some ERASMUS, other graduates, etc) through “*internship*” programmes following the examples set by CIDA, Norway, UNVs, JPOs and various NGOs such as Care, Merlin,
- As yet untapped sources of highly qualified mature professionals to increase the “surge capacity” of partners in the 1st and 2nd waves (emergency medics, engineers, logisticians, and later some administrators). These skilled professionals should be released for short volunteering periods of leave and absence from work by their companies or organisations. Such *corporate volunteering* already exists on a limited and fragmented scale. It could be developed with the assistance of some flexible EU incentives (to be adopted country by country, e.g. tax reduction, facilities to use interim workers...), and access to regular humanitarian training and refresher courses. Corporate volunteering by EU companies and organisations established in third countries should also be encouraged, to authorise local employees to act as volunteers, e.g. with their national Red Cross society or key local NGOs. The experience of skilled organisations such as RedR should be duly considered in this respect, in particular regarding the possibility to keep the experts involved in the longer term (by e-mails, etc).
- Other types of internships, e.g. for experienced “young retirees”, “returners” (former volunteers), two-way exchanges with third country nationals and twinning...
- A major concern expressed by some NGOs and many young volunteers themselves is that requirements of professionalism do not allow/encourage youth to get involved. There should therefore be more opportunities of linkages for young enthusiastic volunteers already involved in related/ contiguous schemes (social works, EVS, etc) to bring in gradually, through a succession of increasingly specialised training steps, more “fresh blood” to humanitarian aid in the longer term. These opportunities should also provide young Europeans with valuable skills and experience, and develop a greater understanding and appreciation of other cultures worldwide, through volunteering in developing countries.
- In parallel, to support also the development of local volunteering (indirectly, through the umbrella of trusted EU partners or twinning?), strengthening linkages with concerned local communities, supporting local capacity building especially in developing countries (N-S co-operation), indirectly strengthening civil societies, governance and LRRD... Locals can and should do the bulk of the immediate work needed after a crisis. A large number of examples were collected during all field visits and discussions: Sri Lanka, Kenya, etc. The same approach is shared by USAID/OFDA, which indicated that Bam in Iran was a good example of the effectiveness of local volunteers (Red Crescent) vs international ones.

It should generally be stressed that the effectiveness of volunteers would depend from the degree of (i) their professional skills, (ii) their cultural sensitivity, (iii) the service/time ratio (a volunteer for 1 month is almost twice as cost/effective as a volunteer staying for 15 days only), and (iv) their proficiency in local and vehicular languages⁴⁴. The training courses to be proposed, to be carried out by partners with an EVHAC branding, could be of multiple types: from basic introductory courses on principles, code of conduct and safety for EVS volunteers, to much more specialised or refresher courses for skilled experts.

E.2. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES AND COSTS

In accordance with the §9 of the TOR, the main components of a structure for an EVHAC type body or EC wide executive agency or independent agency for volunteers are listed below. It must be stressed that, considering the

⁴⁴ It was repeatedly stated by field actors that languages such as French or Arabic were in high demand.

general lack of relevant benchmarks, figures and statistics –despite the surveys and interviews carried out, these indications are very tentative only.

Management structures

An EVHAC type body or agency for volunteers should be demand- or needs-driven rather than supply-driven, to retain an acceptable measure of value-for-money, although the scheme would definitely not be inexpensive. It should also use as much as possible the existing structures of its operating partners (training facilities, programmes, databases). A central management structure needs nevertheless to be set up, for policy, coordination, facilitation, funding and communication purposes. Preference should be given to a type of structure that already exists, from which actual lessons can be learnt. The table below summarises the key SWOT characteristics of three main management options. The preferred option, after cross-checking of the numbers and impact of strong and weak points, is indicated in yellow.

Table 2

Management models for EVHAC	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Internally, by a <u>DG ECHO specific Unit</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-house knowledge. - Optimum coherence with DG ECHO's policy, incl. FPA and communication. - Optimum reaction time to crises (emergency appeals). - Feasible with current legal base of DG ECHO. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the EC, DG ECHO is in a weak institutional position. Managing EVHAC alone would undermine its capacity of coordinating with other volunteering activities. - Managing EVHAC internally and alone would still be a challenge with a light structure. - Any surge capacity would require a complete re-organisation. - The envisaged number of staff (50+, see table 3) is much larger than a standard Commission Unit (12-25 staff). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop in-house knowledge. - Increase leverage/ influence of DG ECHO in humanitarian space. - Increase visibility of DG ECHO. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Limited) risk of DG ECHO becoming more involved with implementation. - (Too) small numbers of volunteers may have no EU or international impact.
By a <u>partially outsourced body</u> , (e.g. on the model of the joint EAC/INFSO Executive Agency, though to a more limited extent), contracted and supervised by DG ECHO with other EC services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooperation, coherence, LRRD, budget saving. - Professionalism. - Good levels of coherence and reaction time. - No major structural / management / legal changes needed for DG ECHO. - Not completely new EU organisation. - The model of "Executive Agency" is already an existing and operational structure, a tested option. - The Executive Agency is designed to (i) be sustainable, (ii) cost-sharing, and (iii) include a mixture of EC and external staff (possibly seconded from experienced VSOs and partners)⁴⁵. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partial decentralisation of competences. - Need to manage some burdensome EC contracting procedures. - Separate legal base for the Agency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase leverage /influence of DG ECHO in humanitarian space. - Increase visibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Limited) risk of DG ECHO becoming more operational. - (Limited) risk of losing time / data during contractors' changes / transition periods: the Executive Agency can be set up for a 4-years period, and 50% of staff belongs to the EC and is permanent.
Externally, by an <u>independent agency</u> , as	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professionalism. - Less burdensome option for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lost opportunity for DG ECHO communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An independent EU agency may use its 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yet another EU body. - Strong risk of the agency

⁴⁵ It has been suggested to manage EVHAC entirely by some qualified external partners. This might be a problem (i) for EU image, (ii) for coordination with other EC services and (iii) for accountability. However, an Executive Agency scheme could consider including seconded personnel from highly skilled partners (IFRC, RedR, VSO, etc), in a partnership participatory approach.

<u>distinct from executive agency.</u>	DG ECHO's management.	policy. - Decentralisation of competences. - Separate legal base for the Agency.	distinct approach to visibility in order to offer to the EU public an image that does not add to the Commission's overall public profile.	becoming operational, with corresponding confusion (image, communication, relations with FPA partners and other actors). - Risk of the agency developing links with CFSP, and losing track of humanitarian principles of neutrality and independence. - Risk of conflicts of competence, and overall coordination problems.
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Numbers of volunteers

Setting a numerical goal of volunteers for EVHAC or an EVHAC type body or agency is a difficult exercise, considering (i) the largely incomplete information⁴⁶ that could be found about potential numbers of would-be volunteers and 'customer organisations' for volunteers, and (ii) the fact that a demand- or needs-driven programme related to largely unpredictable crises can hardly set up accurate goals, contrary to a supply-driven one. It is also difficult to assess to what extent different forms of support (training) or facilitation would impact on supply and demand.

On the other side, to achieve a measurable impact at the global EU and international levels, there would be a need to involve a sufficient number of volunteers in the various types of supported activities. The fact that several modes of volunteering (young graduates as interns, skilled professionals, young retirees, etc) would be considered, as well as the possibility of collaboration from several Commission services to reach some critical threshold, might be quite helpful.

In that respect, benchmarking may have provided some assistance. Very tentatively, and on the basis of the global impact and lasting reputation achieved by the US Peace Corps during its heyday of the mid-1960s, one can assume that a goal of supporting the annual deployment in the field of a total of some 10-15,000 European volunteers when the EVHAC structure is fully in place, should provide the desired result. This number would include all types of activities, but most of them not in emergency interventions and in the case of emergency interventions volunteers would not deploy to zones of risk. The volunteers would be deployed for periods that would vary, on the average, between 3 weeks (very short-term highly skilled professionals) to a complete year (interns), with an estimated average of 3-6 months. To that number should be added (i) a larger number of EU volunteers⁴⁷ undergoing various training programmes, and (ii) a commensurate number of local volunteers from key third countries, who would also receive EVHAC-funded training for capacity building purposes.

Classification of volunteers

The different categories and modes of volunteering to be considered (internship, corporate volunteering, etc) are listed in chapter E.1, at the strategy level.

Management mechanism

An alternative structure to EVHAC involving all EC services involved with volunteers would leave the operational management of the volunteers (recruitment, contracting, monitoring, etc) to the implementing partners (UN, Red Cross or INGOs) who would involve them in their emergency (exceptionally) or non-emergency programmes. The main roles of a volunteer agency in this respect would be the promotion of the various schemes, the facilitation of contacts, the standardisation of criteria where relevant and feasible (e.g. criteria of selection, training, conditions, social reintegration after the volunteering period, etc –see chapter E.3), and the management of the web site.

Conditions

As stated above, the implementing partners would apply their own standard conditions with a commonly agreed minimum European threshold, whilst an EVHAC style body or agency would work at further updating and developing these where and when relevant. It should also be noted that the actual payment of the allowances and

⁴⁶ With very few and mostly indirectly relevant exceptions only, e.g. the German civil protection volunteers or the EVS.

⁴⁷ Very tentatively, and for the budgetary purposes of the review, this number is estimated at 30,000 per year.

other direct operational costs of the volunteers to the implementing partners should probably be undertaken by the usual contractual channels of DG ECHO and the other services concerned, to avoid different payment modes and timetables between staff and volunteers in the same projects.

According to a calculation based on a number of partners and external actors (see Annex II), the average total direct monthly costs per *international volunteer* (travel, allowances, accommodation, insurance) range between €1,600/1,800 (VSO, IFRC) and €2,800/3,000 (international UNV or US Peace Corps). The average monthly direct costs can therefore be estimated at approximately €2,250, although this amount does not include indirect costs such as general programme administration and field support/monitoring. Other modes of volunteering that mainly concern young people can be less expensive (e.g. VSO's Youth Exchange Programme at €1,150).

In comparison, *local volunteering* could be considered as relatively inexpensive: most volunteers would often work for a "stipend" in emergencies, whereas national laws would sometimes define specific maximum allowances for volunteers (e.g. maximum €270 per month in Kenya, which appears rather high). National UNVs, costing on the average €510/month, can be considered as an exception. Such levels of allowances are often higher than salaries in national administrations, which can be disruptive.

Budget and resources

Based on the few benchmarks that were sufficiently detailed (e.g. the US Peace Corps, the 2006 budget for the DG EAC/INFSO Executive Agency had not yet been published at the time of completion of this report, see Annex II), a tentative management structure and related costs might be envisaged as in the table below.

Table 3

INDIRECT COSTS		
Department/ Unit	Approx. N° of staff	Approx. annual budget
Director's office	4	€1 million
Internal auditor	3	€0.5 million
Communication, visibility, external relations with volunteers and providers, web site management	5	€3 million
IT management, relations with providers' databases	3	€3 million
Support to principles, standards	2	€0.5 million
Support to implementing partners –emergency humanitarian aid	4	€1 million
Support to implementing partners –preparedness, post conflict, development (?)	6	€1.5 million
Support to implementing partners – civil protection (?)	6	€1.5 million
Support to local volunteering in third countries and exchange programmes (through implementing partners)	4	€1 million
Safety and security	3	€1 million
HR management	6	€1.5 million
Finances, budget, planning	6	€1.5 million
Sub-total indirect costs		€17 million

DIRECT COSTS		
Activity	Calculation	Approx. annual budget
Funding of EU volunteers deployed to field projects (<i>to be mostly channelled through usual programming/ geographical operations</i>).	12,500 volunteers X monthly average of €2,250 X 4.5 months	€25 million
Training of EU volunteers.	30,000+ volunteers X average of €400	€12 million
Training of third country volunteers.	30,000+ volunteers X average of €135	€4 million
Thematic funding for capacity building.		€2 million
Sub-total direct costs:		€53 million
GRAND TOTAL:		€70 million

E.3. STANDARDS (see also Annex III)

Introduction

It is essential for an EVHAC style body or agency to have a set of agreed standards. It is essential for a number of reasons. First, because the proposed alternative structures to EVHAC are part of a chain where responsibility is shared and therefore clarity is required over which link in the chain is responsible for what. Second, because organisations have obligations towards volunteers (e.g. keeping them safe, deploying them productively) and volunteers have obligations towards their organisations (e.g. commitment to organisational values and mission). To avoid misunderstandings, or worse, it is necessary to formalise these obligations. Third, related, the areas of liability (e.g. repatriation, workplace accident or abuse of locals) must be clear.

It should also be stressed that any standards proposed for humanitarian volunteers should aim at being compatible with those that may be produced following the contiguous evaluations on “Volunteers in Civil Protection”⁴⁸ (although this project should not be finalised during the contractual period of this review) and on ECPC.

Our recommendation is that any EC wide executive or independent agency would contribute to disseminating and promoting sets of standards, for which a framework is suggested below, and that these are signed up to by all parties, whose performance is independently assessed. Models are also detailed below and in the appendix. By ‘standards’ we do not mean detailed minimum standards of the type ‘every volunteer shall have a four-hour introduction to International Humanitarian Law’. We mean a standard such as ‘all volunteers must be sufficiently acquainted with IHL’. This is because some NGOs may have an excellent two-day course, some volunteers may have a masters degree in IHL already, or a future agency may itself support a training course covering IHL, and other topics, which ensures ‘sufficient acquaintance’

The sets of standards which a body or agency for volunteers promotes might be bespoke or already in existence. They might be derived from an in-house example or accepted widely by the sector. They should cover:

1. the relationship between the body/agency and the volunteer;
2. the relationship between DG ECHO partners and the volunteers;
3. the quality and content of the work to be undertaken in Europe or elsewhere;
4. possibly, the relationship between the body/agency and local volunteers.

Findings

A number of the findings from the research carried out for this study are relevant to this section.

- 34 ECHO partners responding to the survey said they had ‘established guidelines, standards, code of conduct for volunteers’ (7 had none). In many cases these were internal documents like contracts, security policies. In some cases they are ‘volunteer policies’ though most volunteer policies concern themselves with principles rather than detailed actions.
- INGOs in Sri Lanka were overwhelmingly concerned that volunteers were more disruptive than productive if they didn’t fit into a management structure with capacity to oversee them. In the first six months after a natural disaster or in a volatile conflict situation the management structure is not normally able to oversee volunteers. UNHCR had a similar response, being more welcoming of volunteers in the Care and Maintenance stage of a response, because the structure exists to support them.
- INGOs doing relief and development, which also have volunteer programmes, tend to use the same policies for many activities (recruitment, health and safety, briefing) for volunteers as for employed staff.
- Any receiving organisation must have a volunteer management structure.
- Any volunteer arriving without firm TOR is bound to fail and will probably end up wasting the receiving organisation's time and efforts.

⁴⁸ Formulating standards regarding the rights and obligations of voluntary relief workers involved in civil protection, as well as their education and training standards are considered as some of the main tasks of this project.

Proposed models

Two models are necessary: the content and the process. The annex III contains a number of documents (or references to documents) which could be useful bases for an EVHAC style body or agency to use for content. These are:

1. The Volunteer Charter and Sending Organisation Code of Good Practice developed by Comhlamh on behalf of Irish agencies. This is the best most recent summary of volunteer responsibilities and sending organisation responsibilities located by the researchers.
2. The People In Aid Code of Good Practice in the management and support of aid personnel. This identifies all the areas where agencies should assure themselves of the quality of their management. A version for volunteer-sending organisations is due to be produced in March 2006.
3. UNHCR Code of Conduct.
4. IFRC rights, responsibilities and benefits chart.
5. The SPHERE Standards.

In producing the suggested areas where standards are suggested below ('Framework'), these and more have been consulted.

The process model proposed is that of the People In Aid Code, an existing framework for managing human resources specifically in this sector. The essence of the model is that the Code demands that NGOs ask themselves, and their stakeholders, whether they are compliant in key areas of staff management. Local, cultural and institutional characteristics clearly dictate how an NGO is compliant. For example the leave entitlements for DG ECHO employees, under European/Belgian law, will be differently construed from those in a Muslim charity taking off Fridays, or from an African HIV collective where days off for funerals may be the priority. All, however, can hopefully say with confidence that 'time off, and leave entitlement, are clearly set out in written policies'. People In Aid arranges an external audit to check compliance, based on stakeholder feedback.

In a possible future version of the FPA, this framework may include a separate clause detailing the relationship when a partner uses volunteers (e.g. code of conduct and standards for volunteers, specific budgetary provisions, etc).

Framework

1. Relationship between an EC body or agency for volunteers and the volunteer

The standards in this area need to cover:

- recruitment and selection criteria, including diversity;
- placement;
- confidentiality;
- learning, training and development;
- communication;
- compensation and benefits (financial, including national insurance, insurance, flights etc, as well as soft rewards such as holidays);
- code of conduct;
- recognition;
- the return (assessment, placement, support after any travel to another country);
- evaluation.

2. Relationship between DG ECHO partners and the volunteers

As suggested above, when talking of models, it is recommended that standard policies are agreed between DG ECHO and its partners using volunteers. DG ECHO partners should self-certify their fulfilment of agreed standards and undergo occasional external assessments.

Areas to be covered would necessarily include the following.

- Briefing and induction: both to the organisation, to the function and, if the volunteer is not in their home country, to that country.
- Role description: it must be clear to the volunteer what they are expected to achieve and the support they will receive in doing so.
- Agreement: it must be stated what the mutual obligations between organisation and volunteer are to be. Many of these (reward, training, hours etc) we would expect to be pre-agreed between a future body or agency for volunteers and DG ECHO's partners.
- Learning and training: it must be clear what training the volunteer can expect. It is not expected that organisations will offer training much beyond what is necessary for the volunteer to fulfil their role.
- Management: it must be clear who manages the volunteer's work and how performance is assessed and encouraged. It must also be clear what the relationships are between volunteers and paid staff.
- Discipline: arrangements should be specific, and part of the briefing process.
- Health, safety and security: particularly for volunteers travelling outside their own country it would be expected that they receive the same support as employees in regard to, for example, medical prophylaxes, insurance, security briefings, work-life balance, counselling.
- Code of conduct: this will specify what a volunteer must not do while working for the organisation e.g. speak to the press, carry a firearm, drink in a Muslim country.
- Post-placement support: this might simply be willingness to supply a reference.

3. The quality and content of the work to be undertaken in Europe or elsewhere

There are standards for many different areas of activity in the humanitarian sector, many internal to an agency but also many sector-wide (see e.g. the relevant FPA and audit provisions for DG ECHO partners). It is to be expected that volunteers are made aware of internal standards or any external standards, relevant to their work, to which the agency has signed up. Such standards might cover:

- operational humanitarian work, such as the Sphere guidelines and the Humanitarian Accountability Principles of HAP-International;
- use of images, such as Dóchas' Code of Conduct on Images and Messages relating to the Third World;
- fundraising;
- child protection, such as the Keeping Children Safe standards;
- educational work, such the INEE's Handbook of Minimum Standards of Education in Emergencies;
- work with HIV/AIDS, such as the IFRC's 'Renewing Our Voice: Code of Good Practice for NGOs Responding to HIV/AIDS';
- working with local partners (see DG ECHO's Cross-Cutting Model Guidelines); and
- psychosocial work, such as Antares' Managing Stress in Humanitarian Workers.

4. The relationship between an EVHAC style body or agency for volunteers and the partners

There needs to be an agreement between any body or agency for volunteers and any partners using the service it provides. A reference in the FPA can govern this. The agreement will need to cover:

- use of volunteers: what they may do;
- timings: selection deadlines, length of service;
- funding: what a body or agency funds and what the partner must fund;
- conditions of the volunteer's service: minimums and maximums in relation to hours worked, reward, briefing, assessment;
- **liabilities.**