



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 23.4.2013
C(2013) 2273 final

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senato della Repubblica for its Opinion on the Proposal for a Regulation establishing the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps {COM(2012) 514 final}.

The EU Aid Volunteers initiative aims to provide European citizens with wider opportunities to demonstrate solidarity and to help countries most in need. The support of this initiative by national Parliaments is particularly important as negotiations in the European Parliament and the Council are on-going.

The Commission has proposed an EU-wide scheme building on the traditions in many EU Member States with existing disaster management or humanitarian aid volunteering schemes. These would be able to benefit from new opportunities in joint projects in humanitarian aid volunteering. National experience and good practices would be used in particular for the development of a common EU-wide training programme (Article 12) and of quality standards for volunteer management (Article 9), which would be applied by partner organisations selecting and preparing candidate volunteers or sending/hosting EU Aid volunteers.

As regards safety, which is particularly important in humanitarian crisis situations, the standards for deployment and volunteer management would impose specific conditions and requirements to be fulfilled by the implementing partners in order to ensure a high level of duty of care and protection of the EU Aid volunteers in the field. A specific security component would also form an essential part of the training programme in order to make sure volunteers have a good level of self-preparedness and situational awareness in the field.

The standards for volunteer management would further outline generic profiles creating an inclusive framework for less experienced as well as expert/professional volunteers, both identified in the consultation process as potential key beneficiaries of the scheme. The standards would provide more details on the different types of activities that the EU Aid volunteers could perform, such as 'back office' support or capacity building actions, taking also into account the specific context of the different types of humanitarian aid operations. The concrete terms of reference for each deployment would however be defined in the contracts to be signed between the volunteers and the "sending organization", usually driven by the needs of the "hosting organisations" on the ground.

*Mr Pietro GRASSO
President of the
Senato della Repubblica
Piazza Madama, 1
IT – 00186 ROMA*

Close coordination with key EU humanitarian aid partners should be sought in the implementation of the scheme. In practical terms, this would be done through an enhanced cooperation with the Framework Partnership Agreements¹ (FPA) partners' possible beneficiaries under the scheme. The Commission also expects synergies with the future programming of the EU humanitarian aid activities, as it would particularly encourage EU funded projects integrating EU Aid volunteers. Finally, the Commission intends to further develop the strategic dialogue with UN-OCHA and other key partners (e.g. VOICE and IFRC) established throughout the stakeholder consultation process in preparation of the legislative proposal.

The Commission hopes that these explanations serve to clarify the points raised by the Senato della Repubblica and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*

¹ More information, available at http://ec.europa.eu/echo/partners/humanitarian_aid/fpa_en.htm