Volunteer deployment guide
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1. Introduction

EU Aid Volunteers brings together volunteers and organisations from different countries, providing support to humanitarian aid projects and helping to strengthen the local capacity and resilience of disaster-affected communities.

The purpose of this guide is to provide informal advice to help you make the most out of your volunteering experience. It builds on the lessons learnt by previous and current volunteers. It is organised into chapters matching the different stages of the deployment journey and focuses on useful tips to make the life of a volunteer easier.

This guide is not meant to replace the pre-deployment training and in-country induction provided by the sending and hosting organisations, or any instructions the organisations may give you during the deployment. The advice and tips included in this guide are not exhaustive and are for information purposes only. Full information on the rights and obligations of EU Aid Volunteers is available in the legal acts regulating the initiative (1).

The volunteer deployment guide is a living document that will be constantly updated with the help of EU Aid Volunteers sharing their experiences.

2. Advice for a successful deployment

You have applied, been interviewed by the organisations, successfully passed the training in Austria/Belgium/Italy/The Netherlands, and you been selected to become EU Aid Volunteer. Congratulations! It’s now time to prepare for your deployment!

The checklist below summarises your rights and obligations as an EU Aid Volunteer. The list is not exhaustive and you are strongly encouraged to consult the legislation for more details on your rights and obligations. You will find the links to the legal acts in the last chapter of this guide.

2.1. Pre-deployment

Do you have a valid passport (for the entire stay) and all necessary visas?
It is your obligation to make sure that you have a valid passport and if not, to apply on time to your national authority competent to issue the travel documents. Please note that depending on visa requirements, your passport may also need to be valid for a certain length of time after your deployment.

The sending organisation has the obligation to assist you with the visa issuance and to cover the costs.

Did the sending organisation provide you with travel tickets?
The sending organisation has the obligation to buy travel tickets for you — a return trip at the start and end of the deployment and one return trip home for deployments of longer than 6 months.

Did you have a pre-deployment medical check-up? Do you have all the necessary vaccinations?
The sending organisation must ensure that you have a thorough medical check-up prior to departure and provide you with the recommended medication and vaccinations for the risks in the country of deployment, as well as equipment, such as first aid and mosquito kits, where necessary.

Have you been enrolled in the insurance scheme?
The insurance is provided by the insurance company CIGNA, which has a contract with the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels (who implements the EU Aid Volunteers initiative). However, the sending organisation has the obligation to enrol you in the insurance scheme.
Following your enrolment you should receive a ‘welcome’ email directly from CIGNA. You must keep your personal reference number at hand and use it in all communications with CIGNA.

Make sure that you are aware of the coverage and conditions of your insurance.

**Have you been registered on the EU Aid Volunteers platform and created your profile?**

You need a profile on the EU Aid Volunteers platform to participate in networking activities, to learn about deployment opportunities, to track your learning and development activities and mentoring sessions, and to get your final certificate. First you need to go to the website [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/echo/eu-aid-volunteers_en/](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/echo/eu-aid-volunteers_en/) and create an account on EU Login by clicking on the ‘Login’ button in the right upper corner. As soon as your EU Login is created, send your username to your sending organisation and confirm that you agree a profile shall be created for you on the EU Aid Volunteers platform. Your sending organisation will set up a basic profile for you. Once this has been done you can use the same link and your EU Login to access and complete your EU Aid Volunteers profile.

**Did you sign the contract for your deployment, setting out your rights and obligations and the specific terms of your deployment?**

The contract has to be signed between you and the sending organisation. This should include your role and title, duration and location of your placement, duration of your contract, working conditions (hours and
leave), financial rights and obligations, expected conduct, learning and development, disciplinary policy, mediation mechanism, etc.

**Did you receive a thorough pre-deployment induction?**
This should include, for example, information about the organisation's management structure and processes, the context of the project, the legal framework, standards and procedures, security and health and safety briefings, support mechanisms, the learning and development plan, information on the EU Aid Volunteers network and platform, communication activities and the debriefing process. You should also make yourself aware of the relation between your sending and hosting organisations and the respective role of each of them during your deployment.

**Were you informed by the sending organisation about:**

- the tax rules in the country of the sending organisation?
- the amount of your financial allowance and how you will receive it?
- who your line manager will be?
- who your learning and development manager will be and how learning and development will be organised and ensured during your deployment?
- who your mentor will be and how mentoring will be organised during your deployment?
- your rights to the protection of personal data?
- the project you will be working in and your tasks?
- the code of conduct on your expected behaviour?
- who your contact person at the sending organisation will be during your deployment?
- the European Commission’s humanitarian aid field office and the EU Delegation at your place of deployment?
- whether your national authority was informed that one of their citizens is deployed as an EU Aid Volunteer?
Tips from your fellow EU Aid Volunteers

- Try to get as much information as possible about your future deployment, to manage your expectations and avoid disappointment.

- Know your rights and speak to your sending organisation if you have doubts.

- Ask the organisation for information on line managers, mentors and budget beforehand.

- Contact previous volunteers at your place of deployment through social networks or the EU Aid Volunteers platform to get first-hand information.

- Learn about your country of deployment before departure. Make yourself aware of the health and safety conditions there.

- Plan wisely which personal belongings to take with you and what to leave in your home country: you may decide not to take objects of high monetary or sentimental value.

- Have the equipment needed for your place of deployment.

- Try to get information on the costs of living in the country of deployment and see if you may need a financial reserve. Save money before your deployment and familiarise yourself with the amount of the subsistence allowance for your country of deployment and what it covers.

- Think about the needs you might have at your place of deployment and approach your sending organisation if you need information or support (e.g. health issues or special equipment).

- Be patient, pro-active and be flexible.
2.2. First days/weeks of the deployment

Did you register with your country’s embassy or consulate or, if your country is not represented, with one of another EU Member State? This might not always be obligatory. However, it is highly recommended and you should do it by following the procedures established by the country whose citizen you are.

You could also contact the field offices and the European Commission delegation based in the country of your deployment.

Have you received a thorough in-country induction?
The hosting organisation is responsible for providing the in-country induction. This should include, for example, information about the organisation and management structure of the hosting organisation, its mission statement, the relevant local legal framework, a security briefing (within 24 hours of your arrival in the country), information about the supervision and performance management system, a cultural briefing, and information about the debriefing process at the end of your placement to handover your tasks.

Make sure that you are aware of the security management procedures, your personal responsibility and the duty to refrain from risk-taking behaviour.
- Have a line manager and a mentor been appointed to you?
- Have you provided your phone number and location to the hosting organisation (at all times, including when on leave)?
- Were your performance objectives set during the in-country induction?
- Have your details and your learning and development plan been entered into the EU Aid Volunteers platform?
- Were you provided with a dedicated working space in accordance with your task assignment and secure, safe and healthy working conditions?
- Were you provided with a safe and adequate accommodation located at a reasonable distance from your main working location?
Tips from your fellow EU Aid Volunteers

- Ask who your point of contact is.
- Know your new hierarchy — who is your mentor, your learning and development manager?
- Insist on regular meetings with the hosting organisation to talk about work and personal adaptation.
- Keep in touch with your sending organisation.
- Mix with the local team from the beginning and adapt your behaviour to local conditions.
- Make an effort to understand the local and organisational context in which you are working.
- Always keep a service attitude.
- Do not expect detailed instructions about what you should do. Be there, listen, learn and bring in your skills.
- Ask for the local security policies if they were not presented in the in-country induction meeting.
- Learn how to manage stress (do sport, skype with friends outside your work, meet people, etc.).
- Do not be afraid to speak up. If something does not work, talk to your mentor or line manager. If nothing changes contact your sending organisation. As a last resort you can always contact the European Commission.
- Communicate about your stay and do not forget that future volunteers might feel the same or have the same experiences. Be honest and communicate with others to get the most out of your stay.
- Be proactive, do not wait for someone else to organise your volunteering experience for you. Create it yourself, especially if you see that there is a need for something.
2.3. Halfway through the deployment

Do the sending and hosting organisations maintain the standards of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative throughout the whole period of deployment?

Are you regularly receiving the subsistence allowance?
The sending organisation shall provide subsistence to you in the form of a lump sum paid in good time and in regular instalments. It covers your regular expenses for food, toiletries and household products, clothing, local and in-country transport.

Are you sick and need to contact the insurance company CIGNA?
When you need to contact CIGNA, make sure that you always provide your reference number and clearly state your status as an EU Aid Volunteer. It is important to provide them with the necessary information so that they can give you the correct answers.

If you need medical treatment, try to find medical centres that have a contract with CIGNA. If a medical centre or hospital does not have a contract with CIGNA and you are therefore asked to pay a large amount as a guarantee before being treated, contact CIGNA.

Tips from your fellow EU Aid Volunteers

- Organise regular meetings or phone calls with your line manager and sending organisation to review and adapt your work plan.
- Reflect on what you have already achieved and what you can improve or do differently going forward.
- Do not wait to be approached by your line manager. Be proactive.
- Promote EU Aid Volunteers and what you are doing as a volunteer within the local community.
- Provide feedback about your stay to your hosting and sending organisation and the European Commission (e.g. when asked to fill in a survey).
- Do not be shy and claim your rights.
2.4. Before you leave the country

Have you received a proper debriefing by your hosting organisation?
The hosting organisation has to provide you with personal or group 
debriefing, including a final performance review, and a project handover to 
the team and counterparts that will continue the activities carried out by 
you to ensure the sustainability and continuity of your work.

Tips from your fellow EU Aid Volunteers

- Leave good handover notes and contact details for future volunteers 
  so that your work can be continued and sustainability ensured.
- Participate in ‘wrapping up’ (debriefing) activities to present what 
  you did.
- Keep in close contact with your hosting organisation — who knows, 
  future job opportunities might arise.

2.5. When back home

Were you debriefed by the sending organisation?
Your sending organisation shall provide you with timely personal or group 
debriefing and operational or project debriefings based on feedback 
from the hosting organisation and the finalisation of the learning and 
development plan.
Please help us improve the experience of future volunteers and provide 
constructive feedback on the EU Aid Volunteers initiative, i.e. by filling out 
surveys sent to you by email.

Have you downloaded the EU Aid Volunteers certificate from the EU 
Aid Volunteers platform?
Your sending organisation will close your learning and development 
plan on the platform. This automatically leads to the creation of your 
volunteering certificate.
You can access it from your profile (learning and development plan).

Do you know your insurance rights?
If your deployment has been longer than 12 weeks, you will be insured 
for a further 2 months in your home country. However, be aware that the 
insurance will cover follow-up medical treatment only for illnesses and
Tips from your fellow EU Aid Volunteers

- Give yourself some time for readjustment and adopt a positive attitude to change.
- Provide advice to future volunteers and participate in follow-up activities.
- Bring your new experiences (both positive and more difficult ones) to the next job or volunteering opportunity and grow professionally.
- Stay engaged in volunteering. Use volunteering to foster your career.
- Communicate about EU Aid Volunteers within your own networks.
- Ask your sending organisation for a recommendation letter.
- Ask if you can keep in touch with your sending and hosting organisation, e.g. through its network and databases.

3. Useful links and contact

EU Aid Volunteers legislation:
Regulation 375/2014, Implementing Regulation 1244/2014, Delegated Regulation 1398/2014

EU Aid Volunteers Platform:

Contact:
EU-AID-VOLUNTEERS@ec.europa.eu, EACEA-EUAID-VOLUNTEERS@ec.europa.eu