European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

EU Aid Volunteers

What is it?

EU Aid Volunteers brings volunteers and organisations together from different countries, providing practical support to humanitarian aid projects and contributing to strengthening local capacity and resilience of disaster-affected communities. Participants in the EU Aid Volunteers initiative must be over 18 years of age and be a citizen of an EU Member State or a long-term resident in the EU. Volunteers receive accommodation and travel expenses, insurance, ongoing learning and development, a monthly allowance, and a resettlement allowance to help with expenses of returning home.

Why is this important?

Millions are affected by natural and man-made disasters each year. In the aftermath of a disaster, an affected population needs clean water, shelter, food assistance and protection. Humanitarian organisations are the first to respond to these basic needs.

Humanitarian disasters have dramatically increased the pressure on the humanitarian organisations and there is a need for a greater number of qualified people. However, it is not always easy to enter the humanitarian field. EU Aid Volunteers give European citizens a chance to show their solidarity by collaborating in humanitarian projects worldwide.

In many cases, this is the first opportunity participants have to be part of the humanitarian community. EU Aid Volunteers also allows organisations to cover their specific staff needs. The humanitarian community benefits from a higher amount of qualified people trained by the EU Aid Volunteers initiative.
How are we helping?

EU Aid Volunteers supports humanitarian aid organisations. EU Aid Volunteers projects, run by partners of EU-based and non-EU based organisations, strengthen the capacity of non-EU based organisations to prepare for and respond to humanitarian crises and to improve their volunteer management. It also provides funding for technical assistance to EU-based organisations to strengthen their technical capacity and meet the standards and procedures required to deploy EU Aid Volunteers.

EU Aid Volunteers complements humanitarian aid actions and strengthens the resilience of vulnerable communities in countries affected by disaster, contributing to disaster risk management activities agreed under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Humanitarian organisations need more highly trained people to help communities affected by disaster. EU Aid Volunteers enables European citizens to contribute to humanitarian assistance in countries where help is needed.

A training programme for EU Aid Volunteers ensures that candidates are thoroughly prepared before their departure to a non-EU country. The training, which consists of a mixture of both online and onsite training, is mandatory for all EU Aid Volunteers. Many existing volunteering schemes in Europe have a domestic focus and few provide opportunities to support humanitarian aid and disaster risk management.

EU Aid Volunteers brings volunteers and organisations together from different countries in joint project areas such as resilience-building, disaster risk management, and linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) as a practical expression of solidarity with communities vulnerable to humanitarian crises. EU Aid Volunteers participants are not deployed to emergency response operations, nor to areas of armed conflict.

Organisations aiming to deploy volunteers must comply with the initiative's standards on volunteer management and go through a certification process before submitting a proposal for volunteer deployment. Organisations can apply for certification at any time.

Investing in capacity building of humanitarian organisations, local communities and first responders in disaster-affected countries is essential for creating a more effective, principled humanitarian response, which is why it is also supported under the EU Aid Volunteers initiative.

The EU Aid Volunteers programme offers:

- Opportunities for European citizens to become volunteers in humanitarian projects worldwide, showing solidarity with people in need of assistance,
- Professional support by trained and well-prepared volunteers to communities affected by disaster,
- Capacity building for local staff and volunteers of aid organisations in countries hit by disasters,
- Technical assistance for organisations based in Europe to strengthen their capacities to participate in the EU Aid Volunteers initiative.

Individuals can apply to volunteer to take part in humanitarian projects worldwide. EU Aid Volunteers vacancies are announced through the year.

Funding opportunities with the EU Aid Volunteers initiative are managed by the Commission’s Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).