



European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps (EVHAC)

A European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps (EVHAC), foreseen in the Lisbon Treaty, would aim to encourage young Europeans to contribute to EU humanitarian aid operations, and make them more visible. The European Commission is preparing a legislative proposal, expected for the second half of 2012, with the aim of establishing the Corps by 2014.

Background

The idea of a "European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps" (EVHAC) was first proposed in 2003 by the Greek Council Presidency. The Lisbon Treaty included, in Article 214(5) TFEU, provision for the setting up of EVHAC. The idea was [brought back](#) onto the agenda in 2010 by then UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown who took inspiration from the model of the [US Peace Corps](#).

Recent relief operations in [Haiti](#) (2010) and in [Pakistan](#) (2011) have highlighted that EU humanitarian aid is often overshadowed by that of other international organisations. The EVHAC could contribute to making the EU's humanitarian aid ([€840 million in 2012](#)) more visible. Moreover, a 2010 [Eurobarometer](#) survey (see figure 1), together with a wide range of activities held during [the European Year of Volunteering \(2011\)](#), have shown that volunteering in the field of humanitarian aid has a strong appeal among Europeans, suggesting the time is promising to set up EVHAC.

Content of the legislative proposal

After a [review](#) carried out in summer 2010, a [Communication](#) from the Commission presented in November 2010 set out the main conditions and requirements for EVHAC:

- the use of young volunteers should avoid an over-supply of volunteers without appropriate skills,
- any funding should respond directly to the needs of people in disaster situations,
- maximum preparation before deployment is important, to avoid having young

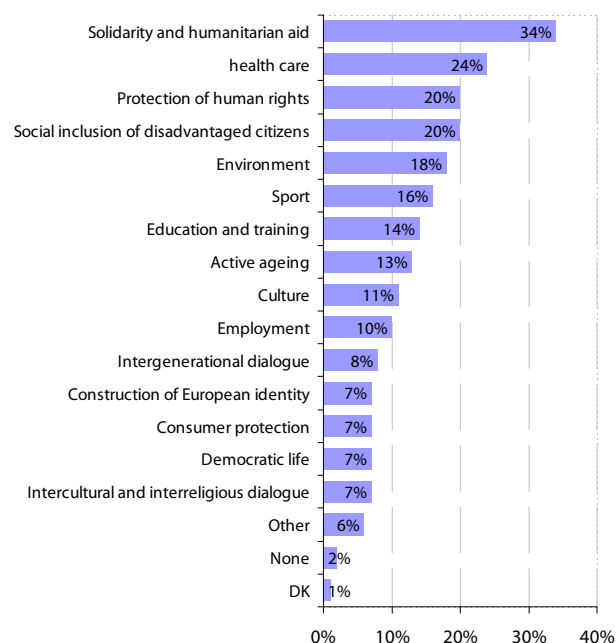
and inexperienced volunteers in difficult settings,

- EVHAC should support local capacities because most support activities can be done by local workers, and
- the wide range of existing voluntary organisations should cooperate together.

From February to May 2011 the Commission conducted an open stakeholders' consultation, detailed in an [analysis report](#) from June 2011. The findings of this consultation confirmed the thinking set out in the Communication. Respondents were convinced that the Humanitarian Aid Corps has the potential to be the appropriate platform to promote structured training, common standards and good practices for involving volunteers in cooperation with existing actors.

Figure 1. The role of solidarity and humanitarian aid in volunteering

In which of the following fields do you consider volunteering to play an important role?
(max. 3 answers)



Source: [Standard Eurobarometer 73](#), covering EU27: May–November 2010, pp 167–172.

A first [call for proposals launched](#) in 2011 was aimed at implementing projects focused on volunteers in crisis prevention and post-crisis recovery. A second [call for proposals](#) in 2012

was set up with the aim of enlarging the scope of options being piloted, and included civil protection and crisis response as eligible activities. The deadline for submission of proposals was on 5 March 2012. An [online forum](#) was set up to find an attractive name for EVHAC.

The legislative proposal, expected to be tabled in the second half of 2012, will define the structure of the future European Humanitarian Voluntary Corps and its role in the humanitarian framework. The Commission aims to see EVHAC established by 2014.

Pilot projects

The [pilot actions](#) have been designed to test possible activities of the future Corps. Three areas of action have been selected for these pilot projects: strengthening of resilience, building civil protection capacities and disaster response.

The results to date have provided valuable information on ways of developing training curricula for volunteers in humanitarian aid based on best practice of humanitarian organisations, on how to add value to existing humanitarian aid operations through volunteering and by promoting partnerships between humanitarian organisations and civil protection operations; and finally on the means to strengthen local capacities to support resilience and respond to crisis. [Save the Children UK](#) and [Red Cross France](#), together with partners from other humanitarian NGOs in the EU, have run the first pilot projects. The results of the second pilot projects are not yet known.

Council position

In its [conclusions of 17 May 2011](#), the Council supported the Commission Communication and its step-by-step approach to the establishment of the EVHAC. The Council believes that this EU Aid Corps should provide concrete and positive added value to the EU's global strategy on humanitarian aid. The Council insists on the fact that it should be cost-effective and build upon existing national and international voluntary schemes without duplicating them.

European Parliament position

The European Parliament adopted on 29 September 2011 a [written declaration](#) signed by [381 MEPs](#) on the establishment of a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps. The declaration supports volunteering at EU level and the setting up of the Corps. In accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, the EP will adopt jointly with the Council the Commission's EVHAC proposal.

Stakeholders' position

The "[VOICE](#)" network (Voluntary Organisation in Cooperation in Emergencies), is the major NGO representative in discussions with the European institutions on humanitarian affairs. It represents 84 European NGOs active in humanitarian aid. It [supports](#) the setting up of EVHAC. VOICE members have been pleased to participate in the pilot projects.

Nevertheless, the NGO network believes that the EU Voluntary Corps should not compromise the trends towards increased professionalism in the humanitarian sector and local capacity-building efforts. VOICE insists on the fact that EVHAC should be cost-effective and not encroach upon the Commission's existing humanitarian aid budget. VOICE considers that EVHAC's main challenge is to provide added value to the work of professional humanitarian organisations in order to be complementary rather than duplicate actions in the humanitarian field.

The German Institute for International and Security Affairs ([SWP](#)) has reported that the UN Office for Humanitarian affairs and The International Committee of the Red Cross have demanded that EVHAC should be in line with the principles of humanitarian aid and should avoid overlapping with military missions.

On the other hand, from the [Eurosceptic side](#), there is opposition to setting up EVHAC on the basis that it will duplicate the work of existing agencies. In this view, humanitarian aid should be left to trained professionals and must be provided by non-governmental organisations and the United Nations.