

**REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**  
**FOURTY-FIRST NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

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**COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AND OVERSIGHT OF THE  
EUROPEAN FUNDS**

**S T A T E M E N T**

**Subject: Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps EU Aid Volunteers, COM (2012) 514**

At a session held on **7 November 2012**, the Committee on European Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds (CEAOEF) discussed **the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps EU Aid Volunteers COM (2012) 514, included as item 46** of the Annual Work Programme of the National Assembly on European Union Issues (2012). The proposal for a regulation and the government's position on it were presented by the line ministries related to the subject: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Based on the discussion held, the Committee on European Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds **supported unanimously the following statement** that is to be sent to the European institutions:

1. CEAOEF welcomes the establishment of the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps as a mechanism of greater efficiency in the provision of humanitarian aid by rendering assistance to the victims of disasters on the part of all EU Member States. In this connection CEAOEF considers the Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps as a manifestation of the European values and a tangible expression of the EU solidarity policy.
2. We welcome the efforts and the enhanced commitment of the European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, Kristalina Georgieva, to the establishment of the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps framework in cooperation and interaction with all interested parties. The provision of active citizenship through wide public consultations as early as at the stage of the draft legislative act preparation contributes to the high public support, as well as to having better knowledge of the initiative and its effective implementation.
3. CEAOEF considers that actions envisaged on the Initiative, related to the training of candidate volunteers and the possibilities for apprenticeship placements, as well as to the informal experience they will acquire, will facilitate **the youth policy promotion**. Under the conditions of globalizing economy, the young people's adaptability to

labour market requirements, the development of skills and new competencies are essential. In this connection, CEAOEF considers the wider role of the Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps as an important tool for **investment in human capital** for achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy goals for intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth.

4. CEAOEF welcomes **the legal framework established to enable actions on the Initiative**, which provides clear legal status to volunteers, thus guaranteeing their safety and security in the implementation of humanitarian missions. The setting of standards for EU humanitarian aid volunteers, the introduction of a mechanism for certification of sending and hosting organisations and the maintaining of a Register of EU Aid volunteers are important steps creating a basis for efficiently operating European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps.
5. We welcome the idea of creating an **EU Aid Volunteers' Network** as a platform for **exchange of knowledge and dissemination of information** between the EU Aid Volunteers, towards its development into a unique pool of **European ambassadors for solidarity**. In this connection **we encourage further popularization of the Initiative in the Member States, especially among young Europeans**. We are open to and would support such initiatives at a national level.
6. We consider that the proposal for a Regulation introduces **good European practices** in the humanitarian aid field and that national volunteer schemes could draw from them. In view of improving the possibilities for EU citizen participation in humanitarian aid activities and operations, it is necessary **to provide consistency and coordination of voluntary activity in the Member States and in the actions on the Initiative**.
7. The proposal for a Regulation gives a new impetus to the Member States that are in a process of capacity building for participation in humanitarian aid volunteer missions, as well as for the overall **development of humanitarian aid culture in these Member States**.

Bulgaria is in a process of creating a single legal framework for volunteer involvement, which is a precondition for development of such kind of culture, for building a capacity at a local level and for better inter-institutional coordination of activities related to volunteer involvement.

8. We welcome the transnational character of the Initiative which facilitates the implementation of joint activities with the participation of volunteers from different countries. In this connection and based on the experience acquired from pilot projects under the Initiative, we encourage **participation in consortiums between organisations from different Member States** as a valuable tool for acquiring the necessary capacity, especially regarding Member States in a process of development of their voluntary schemes at a national level. In this connection, we encourage the study of local potential and the necessary preparation of every Member State in relation to volunteer involvement, for example, existing training centres which can be used for the purposes of future volunteer training.

It is our opinion that the **applying of integrated approach** makes it possible to optimise the performance of existing structures in the field of volunteer activity in the Member States. This approach is based on greater interaction, integrated capacity building and additionality of resources at a local, national and European level, thus guaranteeing cost efficiency.

9. In addition, the new Initiative **provides conditions for transfer of experience and capacity building for participation in voluntary schemes in the candidate countries and potential candidates for EU membership**. We consider such experience as contributing additionally to the Western Balkan Countries' moving closer to the European values in the context of European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes. The active regional cooperation and the inter-institutional interaction are a necessary step in this direction.
  
10. CEAOEF considers the **financial package proposed for the Initiative realistic and capable of providing normal volunteer activities for the period of 2014 – 2020**. In connection with this, CEAOEF expresses an expectation that the financial package will be preserved in the course of negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). At the same time, CEAOEF highlights the importance of protecting the EU financial interests by applying proportionate measures in terms of the costs for the entire period of performance, including prevention, detection and investigation of irregularities.