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EVALUATION

Evaluation

Accompanying the document

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL**

on the final evaluation of the 2014-2020 EU Aid Volunteers Initiative

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1. Introduction

Article 27(4) of the Regulation (EU) No 375/2014¹ establishing the European Union Aid Volunteers Initiative (‘the EUAV’ Initiative, or ‘the Initiative’) required the Commission to submit to the European Parliament and to the Council an *ex post* evaluation report for the 7-year financial period of implementation of the programme (2014-2020) no later than 31 December 2021. However, this Regulation was repealed by Regulation (EU) No 2021/888 establishing the European Solidarity Corps. Since the Initiative was extended for 2 additional years and finally discontinued at the end of 2022, this *ex post* evaluation report covers the 9 years of operation of the Initiative (i.e. from 2014 to 2022).

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to support the European Commission in fulfilling its obligations under Article 27(4) of the Regulation (EU) No 375/2014 establishing the EUAV Initiative. This evaluation aims to assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and EU added value of the Initiative.

1.2 Methodology of the evaluation

This evaluation of the EUAV Initiative is based on the findings of a first “*ex post*” evaluation study of the Initiative, which covered the period 2014-2020² and was published in 2021. The findings from this study of 2021 have been complemented by an additional study implemented in 2023 and 2024³ that reviews, updates, and complements the findings of the first study, focusing on the last years of the Initiative until its termination at the end of 2022.

A mix of different methods was used during the evaluation process, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches. These methodological approaches were treated as complementary. For instance, the results of quantitative methods were used to improve our understanding of qualitative results and vice versa. This was done to ensure a well-evidenced approach and triangulation of evidence. The specific methods are set out in the following six bullet points.

- **Desk research:** This included a review of: (i) relevant literature; (ii) administrative and monitoring data; (iii) policy documents; (iv) studies; (v) evaluations; (vi) assessments; and (vii) technical and operational documents. The review informed both the report’s findings and the preparation of case studies. Desk research also supported other evaluation methods such as interviews, surveys, and cost-effectiveness assessments.

¹ Regulation (EU) No 375/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2014 establishing the European Union Aid Volunteers (EUAV) Initiative.

² ADE (2021). Ex-post evaluation of the EUAV Initiative, 2014-2020. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1d172a85-0b96-11ec-adb1-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

³ Interim evaluation for the 2021-2027 European Solidarity Corps, final evaluation for the 2018-2020 European Solidarity Corps and final evaluation for the 2014-2020 EU Aid Volunteers Initiative. Available at <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/5736339>

- **Targeted surveys::** The evaluation team conducted two targeted surveys across different stakeholder groups, including individual volunteers and organisations involved in the EUAV Initiative. Surveys were designed based on evaluation questions and feedback, translated into multiple languages, and conducted online.
- **Interviews:** The evaluation team conducted 31 interviews with a diverse range of stakeholders from various backgrounds and regions to gain in-depth insights and expand its understanding of the impact of the Initiative's various projects.
- **Public consultation:** This was hosted on the European Commission's 'Have your say' portal and disseminated through various channels. It generated 215 responses, which were analysed and summarised in a factual report.
- **Case studies:** These included two country-level case studies and a cross-cutting case study on gender mainstreaming.
- **Cost-effectiveness assessment:** This evaluated the costs and benefits of the EUAV Initiative across different programming periods.

1.3 Limitations and constraints

The evaluation was carried out according to the Commission's 'Better Regulation' guidelines. It provides reliable evidence covering the five evaluation criteria against which the Initiative's implementation were assessed: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU-added value. Overall, the evaluation of the Initiative provides robust findings based on the triangulation of quality data collected through a variety of methods as mentioned above.

To each evaluation question, we assigned indicators; assessment parameters; information sources and information-analysis methods. These indicators, assessment parameters, information sources and information-analysis methods were used by the study to collect and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data. This made data triangulation possible and provided an appropriate mix of evidence for the evaluation questions at hand.

The response rate and number of responses to the targeted surveys varied between different stakeholder groups. To ensure a sufficient number of responses, the study team adopted: (i) a user-friendly, thoroughly tested survey design; (ii) an extended survey deadline; and (iii) additional reminders to encourage respondents to complete their survey. This led to active participation from many groups. Although a satisfactory response rate was achieved, the number of individual volunteers and organisations was relatively low due to the small size of the Initiative and the limited scope of the evaluation (focusing only on the final years of the Initiative). However, the number of responses collected for all target groups was sufficient in absolute terms to carry out statistical analyses. By their very nature (particularly in relation to the coherence criteria), some of the answers to the evaluation questions relied heavily on desk research and interview data. To triangulate with other sources of evidence and mitigate this issue, the study team carried out interviews with: (i) representatives of management and implementation bodies; (ii) national authorities; (iii) participating individuals and organisations; (iv) external experts; and (v) other stakeholders. In addition, the findings

presented under each evaluation criterion indicate the extent to which they are based on opinions, facts or other types of evidence.

Moreover, the administrative and monitoring data collected by the Initiative served as an important source for a sound analysis of the performance and cost-effectiveness of the Initiative.

Taken together, both the triangulation of data from a highly diverse set of methods applied by the evaluation and the high number/diversity of responses to the consultation activities (public consultation, interviews and targeted surveys) provide reliable evaluation evidence and robust results.

2. The EUAV Initiative: the first EU programme focused on supporting humanitarian-aid volunteering

2.1 Origins, structure, objectives and priorities

When entering in force in 2009, Article 214(5) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU provided for the creation of the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps (EVHAC), the objective of which was to set up a ‘framework for joint contributions from young Europeans to the Humanitarian Aid operations of the Union’.

Following the 2010 Commission Communication *How to express EU citizen’s solidarity through volunteering: First reflections on a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps*, a preparatory action towards the design of the EVHAC was launched in 2011. The preparatory action included various rounds of consultations with stakeholders, a series of assessment studies, and a pilot phase covering the period 2011-2013. In 2014, the EUAV Initiative was created by Regulation (EU) No 375/2014⁴. The Regulation stipulated the objectives and actions of the EUAV Initiative and included provisions for its financing. The subsequent Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No (1244/2014) laid down the rules for the operation of the EUAV Initiative, while a Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1398/2014⁵ set out: (i) the standards for the recruitment and training of EU Aid Volunteers; and (ii) standards governing partnerships between sending and hosting organisations.

The overall objective of the Initiative was to help strengthen the EU’s capacity to provide needs-based humanitarian aid aimed at: (i) preserving life; (ii) preventing and alleviating human suffering; (iii) maintaining human dignity; and (iv) strengthening the capacity and resilience of vulnerable or disaster-affected communities in non-EU countries, particularly by means of disaster preparedness, disaster-risk reduction and increasing the link between disaster-relief, rehabilitation and development.

Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 375/2014 required the actions of the EUAV Initiative to be guided by both the humanitarian-aid principles (i.e. humanity, neutrality, impartiality and

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32014R0375>.

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32014R1398&qid=1727596204208>.

independence) and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid⁶. The Regulation also said that the actions of the Initiative should aim to: (i) respond to the needs of local communities and the requirements of the hosting organisations; (ii) ensure the safety and security of candidate volunteers; (iii) promote transnational partnerships; and (iv) contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of the humanitarian sector.

Moreover, the Regulation stated that the EUAV Initiative should work in a coherent and complementary manner with the EU's policies and instruments, particularly the EU's humanitarian-aid policy, the EU's development cooperation policy, and the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (Regulation EU (No) 375/2014, Article 6).

In addition to the overarching objective of 'contributing to strengthening the Union's capacity to provide needs-based humanitarian aid [...] and strengthening the capacity and resilience of vulnerable or disaster-affected communities in third countries' (Regulation EU (No) 375/2014, Article 4), the EUAV Initiative pursued the following five operational objectives (Regulation EU (No) 375/2014, Article 7):

- to help increase and improve the capacity of the EU to provide humanitarian aid;
- to improve the skills and knowledge of volunteers in the field of humanitarian aid and the terms and conditions of their engagement;
- to build the capacity of hosting organisations and foster volunteering in non-EU countries;
- to communicate the EU's humanitarian-aid principles agreed in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid;
- to make volunteering more coherent and consistent across Member States in order to improve opportunities for EU citizens to participate in humanitarian-aid activities and operations.

The EUAV Initiative brought together volunteers and organisations from different countries⁷, and aimed to incentivise and foster: (i) collaboration; (ii) the exchange of knowledge and good practices; and (iii) the building of partnerships between organisations in the field of humanitarian aid.

Organisations that participated in the capacity-building projects formed consortia composed of a minimum of two EU-based organisations and two organisations based in non-EU countries. Technical assistance projects required the participation of three organisations based in the EU. Furthermore, the Initiative put in place dedicated training centres for selected volunteers to prepare them for deployment, creating a strong 'esprit de corps' among European volunteers

⁶ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/who/european-consensus_en : Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission

⁷ The participating countries include: (i) the 27 EU Member States, acceding countries, candidate countries, potential candidates and partner countries of the European Neighbourhood Policy according to the general principles and general terms and conditions for the participation of those countries in the EU's programmes laid down in the respective Framework Agreements and Association Council Decisions, or similar arrangements; and (ii) European Free Trade Association countries which are members of the European Economic Area (EEA), in accordance with the conditions laid down in the EEA Agreement.

from different countries training together in groups. The goal of this on-site training was to then boost learning and professionalisation in the sector by creating a network of former and current EU Aid Volunteers.

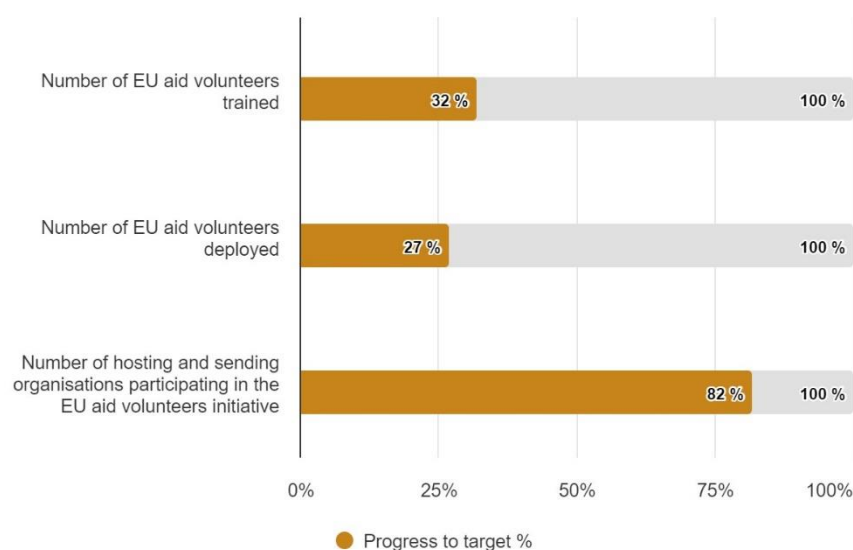
Although the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) was responsible for the practical implementation (i.e. calls for proposals, contract management, budget appropriation, etc.), the Initiative itself was managed until 2020 by the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO). And for the legacy projects that continued in 2021 and 2022, the EUAV Initiative was managed by the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC). The Initiative was phased out at the end of 2020 (although the implementation of ongoing projects continued until 2022) and was integrated into the European Solidarity Corps.

2.2 Expectations vs outcomes: a comparative analysis

Following the launch of the Initiative, participation fell short of expectations. During the 2014-2020 period, the EUAV Initiative set out to: (i) support the training of 4 400 volunteers and the deployment of 4 000 volunteers; (ii) provide technical assistance and capacity building for participating organisations; and (iii) carry out communication and support activities. However, by the end of 2022, only 1 192 deployments had been financed (representing 29% of the original target), and 788 deployments had been completed.

The Initiative introduced a rigorous certification mechanism that required sending and hosting organisations to demonstrate they had the necessary procedures and policies in place to meet the Initiative's high standards for volunteering. The certification mechanism involved ambitious targets for certified organisations and volunteers being trained and deployed. However, the mechanism was not in place during the pilot phase and the targets were not fully met.

Graph : Performance assessment



Source : Performance statement 2014-2020 EU Aid Volunteers⁸

2.3 How has the situation evolved over the evaluation period?

In response to these challenges, a new humanitarian-aid strand was created within the European Solidarity Corps under the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework. This new strand aimed to increase consistency and synergy between various volunteering actions, building on the legacy of the EUAV Initiative. By expanding the European Solidarity Corps to include humanitarian aid in non-EU countries, the European Solidarity Corps has solidified its role as a unique gateway for young people to engage in volunteering and other solidarity activities. This expansion has also increased the visibility and impact of the Corps – both within the EU and beyond.

At the implementation level, lessons learned from the Initiative have resulted in significantly simplified access to volunteering for interested young people and organisations, including improved measures to involve people with fewer opportunities. The Initiative's quality and support mechanisms were also strengthened, with additional training and support options available to volunteers before, during, and after their engagement.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 reduced the deployment of EU Aid Volunteers to non-EU countries. Travel restrictions and social-distancing measures disrupted many ongoing and planned activities. Some volunteers were unable to travel or return home, while others stayed in their host countries to continue working. In certain cases, organisations arranged repatriation, while other organisations agreed with volunteers that they could stay and carry out their duties when safe and feasible.

⁸ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/european-solidarity-corps-performance_en#mff-2014-2020--eu-aid-volunteers

In order to allow the completion of projects that had been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of the Initiative was extended until the end of 2022.

2.4 Key findings

2.4.1 Assessing the success of the EUAV Initiative: extent and challenges

Effectiveness

Main findings:

- **The Initiative faced substantial challenges in achieving the targeted number of deployments.** Although some of these challenges were subsequently addressed, the Initiative was hit severely by the travel restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the number of people who travelled outside the EU with the Initiative fell by 90% in 2020 as compared to numbers in 2019.
- **Individual EUAV Initiative volunteers benefited from improved skills and professional development,** particularly in high-demand areas such as project management and security training before deployment. These participants also got to practice and develop various transversal skills in the development context.
- Organisations gained increased capacity in disaster-risk reduction and disaster resilience, increasing their visibility, credibility, and operational and communication capacity.
- **The Initiative had positive effects on the supported communities,** especially those communities that are vulnerable to natural hazards and large migration flows. The Initiative also provided critically important help to build the disaster-resilience and disaster-management capabilities of populations in disaster-prone areas.
- The Initiative increased the use of innovative approaches during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as online volunteering, to ensure ongoing community engagement and support.

Outputs

The EUAV Initiative fell short of meeting its original target of increasing opportunities for members of the EU public to participate in humanitarian-aid actions. Following initial challenges in setting up the programme, the Initiative gained implementation speed between 2018 and 2019 but was slowed down by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, during which time few volunteers were trained and deployed. The calls for proposals published in April 2020 were cancelled entirely as a result of the pandemic. The Initiative had planned to deploy 4 175 volunteers, but only 1 192 volunteers were deployed during the 2014-2022 period.

Organisations that aimed to participate in the Initiative and deploy or host volunteers had to be certified as either sending or hosting organisations. An open call was published in 2015

allowing organisations to apply until 30 September 2020. By the end of 2020, 74 sending and 296 hosting organisations had been certified. The Initiative also provided technical assistance and capacity building to strengthen the abilities of sending organisations and ensure that they complied with the standards and procedures set under the Initiative. In total, 439 organisations were selected during the period 2014-2019.

Results

Improving the skills and knowledge of volunteers in the field of humanitarian aid

According to the first "*ex post*" evaluation study, the EUAV Initiative increased the skills and knowledge of the volunteers in humanitarian assistance. Volunteers acknowledged the high quality of their pre-deployment training, while both sending and hosting organisations unanimously commended the qualifications of the volunteers. The centralised pre-deployment training played a key role in fostering a strong sense of community among volunteers. However, despite its strengths, that training did not adequately address the practical realities of volunteer service. In particular, it did not adequately address the soft skills and cultural awareness that were essential for volunteers to be effective in the diverse environments they would encounter⁹.

The second evaluation study of 2024 has arrived at similar results. Volunteers in the EUAV Initiative received high-quality training, with a clear majority confirming the effectiveness of this training (73%). The Initiative was also successful in enriching volunteers' insights into the realities of the field, with more than 8 out of 10 confirming this outcome (84%). Almost two thirds of volunteers (67%) indicated that the central training provided by the EACEA was satisfactory. However, volunteers were less positive about the pre-deployment and in-country training provided by the sending and hosting organisations than they were about the general pre-deployment training provided by the Initiative itself, with 62% of volunteers expressing satisfaction with the pre-deployment training provided by the organisations and less than half expressing satisfaction with the in-country training provided by the organisations (47%). Experiences of mentoring support also varied, with roughly equal proportions of volunteers expressing satisfaction regardless of whether the support came from the sending organisation (45% expressed satisfaction) or the receiving organisation (42% expressed satisfaction). Post-deployment debriefing by the sending organisation was rated positively by just over half of the volunteers (51%).

According to 75% of surveyed volunteers in the EUAV Initiative, deployments with a strong focus on professional development offered volunteers the opportunity to hone specific skills relevant to their role and the wider humanitarian sector. In addition, 81% of respondents agreed that the Initiative developed their skills to deliver humanitarian aid or development cooperation, and a similar proportion (86%) acknowledged that their deployment overseas with the Initiative led to an increase in their knowledge of humanitarian principles. Furthermore, the experience was instrumental in building valuable personal relationships within the

⁹ ADE (2021). *Ex post* evaluation of the EUAV Initiative, 2014-2020.

humanitarian and development sectors, with a significant number of volunteers acknowledging this benefit (79%).

Building the capacity of hosting organisations and fostering volunteering in non-EU countries

The first "*ex post*" evaluation study concluded that the EUAV Initiative increased the capacity of the participating organisations. However, the matching of volunteers' skills and profiles to the needs of host organisations was criticised due to: (i) delays in the deployment process; and (ii) mismatched expectations between volunteers and smaller host organisations. The current evaluation confirms that the EUAV Initiative has strengthened the capacity of both sending and receiving organisations, creating a group of trained volunteers who became more familiar with the practicalities of humanitarian assistance.

Almost 9 out of 10 hosting organisations (89% of the total) acknowledged that the Initiative had improved their capacity to deliver humanitarian aid to the local community, and 93% of these hosting organisations also acknowledged that the Initiative had helped them to improve their ability to host and manage volunteers. The Initiative was also credited by 79% of organisations for improving project-management skills within organisations. And 63% of organisations that participated in the Initiative expressed a desire for more opportunities for training or capacity-building activities for their organisations. This suggests there remained strong demand for the strengthening of organisational skills.

For instance, host organisations in Uganda¹⁰ said that the key benefit from participating in the Initiative was for staff at the host institutions, who improved their skills in disaster-risk reduction. This in turn led to effective actions that reduced and prevented disasters in vulnerable communities. Other benefits mentioned by host organisations included increased visibility and transparency, and the opportunity to foster collaboration with the EU and international agencies such as UN Women, the UNHCR, the Red Cross, and the UNDP. For these organisations, participation in the EUAV Initiative served as proof of the host organisation's maturity in humanitarian-aid grant applications. Host organisations also said that the Initiative increased staff skills in drafting emergency-preparedness and emergency-response plans and integrating disaster-risk reduction into their programmes.

Communicating EU humanitarian-aid principles

The first "*ex post*" evaluation study concluded that the EUAV Initiative effectively communicated the EU's humanitarian principles to both volunteers and the staff of organisations. Despite these successful efforts in communicating humanitarian principles

¹⁰ Country case study on Uganda.

through the Initiative, the dissemination of EU humanitarian principles to wider audiences has been somewhat limited.

This evaluation supports the finding that the Initiative ensured that EU humanitarian-aid principles were communicated to the volunteers and to the staff of participating organisations (both host organisations and sending organisations). Almost 9 out of 10 volunteers (87%) confirmed that the EUAV Initiative increased their knowledge of humanitarian aid or development-cooperation practices. Participating organisations also reported a large increase in their awareness and understanding of EU humanitarian principles.

Participating organisations generally agreed that the Initiative has played an effective role in: (i) raising stakeholders' awareness of EU humanitarian principles (87% of organisations agreed); and (ii) raising awareness of EU humanitarian principles among community members (85% of organisations agreed). Moreover, these organisations noted that the Initiative increased the visibility of EU humanitarian action, with 84% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. Furthermore, the organisations recognised the Initiative for creating opportunities to communicate the EU's humanitarian principles, with 90% of volunteers acknowledging this impact.

On the less positive side, volunteers were less eager than organisations to confirm the Initiative's effectiveness in raising awareness of the EU humanitarian-aid principles. However, the same volunteers agreed that the EUAV Initiative positively represented the EU within affected communities (66%). The case study on Uganda revealed that t-shirts with EU logos were printed and distributed among different stakeholders to make EU support more visible. This printing of t-shirts with EU logos to be worn by volunteers was the most common activity promoting the EU carried out by the host organisations in Uganda. And in Colombia, one of the organisations supported by the EUAV Initiative successfully presented a case to the country's Special Jurisdiction for Peace, supporting 102 women who had been victims of sexual violence during the armed conflict¹¹.

Impacts

The EUAV Initiative demonstrated sustainable impact. According to the first evaluation study of 2021, the Initiative had several types of lasting effects. The vast majority of the surveyed volunteers stated that, following their experience with the EUAV Initiative, they were now working, intended to work, or were now volunteering in the area of humanitarian aid. The Initiative also marginally increased the capacity of the EU to provide humanitarian aid by reaching new organisations and promoting new partnerships between organisations. At the same time, the first evaluation study from 2021 reported on gaps in the Initiative, such as the lack of a contingency plan and an inflexible design during the COVID-19 pandemic. The result was a confused and delayed response to the pandemic.

The latest evaluation study (i.e. the second study from 2023 and 2024) also concluded that continued to engage in similar volunteering activities after their involvement with Initiative

¹¹ Case study on Colombia.

finished, indicating a lasting impact beyond the initial involvement in the Initiative. The EUAV Initiative was also effective in increasing volunteers' interest in pursuing a career in humanitarian aid or development cooperation (according to 86% of volunteers). This interest was evident in the fact that 42% of former EU Aid Volunteers were currently working in the field of humanitarian aid, while a further 39% expressed their intention to do so in the future. Similarly, 53% of former volunteers have continued their work in the field of development cooperation, and 31% said they intended to start working in this field in the future.

The EUAV Initiative also strengthened the EU's capacity to deliver humanitarian aid. In addition, a large majority of organisations confirmed that the Initiative had stimulated the creation of lasting partnerships with other organisations (77% of organisations) and expanded their international networks (72% of organisations).

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic differed among organisations. Organisations recognised the EACEA's flexibility in accommodating necessary project changes caused by the pandemic (68% of organisations). Half of these organisations were positive about the support and adaptations provided by the EACEA because of COVID-19, including issuing clear guidelines to ensure the safety of volunteers. For example, the thematic focus of the project activities was changed for about a quarter of volunteers due to the pandemic. However, most organisations (58%) reported that the pandemic meant that not all participating organisations could take part in their project as intended and that their projects were therefore postponed.

2.4.2 Efficiency

Budget execution and programme management were efficient given the context within which the Initiative was implemented, with improvements to be made in the measuring of outputs and outcomes.

- **Funding** was sufficient as the budget spent was only around 76% of all available funds. This underspend was due in large part to the delays in starting up the EUAV Initiative and delays towards the end of the outbreak of COVID-19.
 - **Implementation:** The actual expenditures for the EU Aid Volunteers Initiative were consistent with the share of the budget allocation specified in Regulation EU (No) 375/2014. However, the rationale behind the budget allocation in relation to expected activities and outcomes was unclear. Delays in starting up the Initiative and COVID-19 both contributed to a low programme implementation rate of only 29% of the initial goal in terms of volunteers deployed.¹²

¹² This indicates that the Initiative allocated 76% of its budget towards achieving 29% of its objectives.

The budget utilisation rate of 76% reflects the financial expenditure in relation to the total funds available. This includes costs such as administrative expenses, training programmes, operational readiness and other preparatory activities that were incurred even if the deployment activities were delayed or reduced in scope.

Implementation rate: The implementation rate of 29% refers specifically to the number of participants deployed in relation to the initial target set by the EUAV initiative. This rate measures the achievement of a key output - the actual deployment of volunteers - which was significantly affected by delays in the programme's start-up and additional disruptions caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

The apparent discrepancy between the high budget utilisation rate (76%) and the low implementation rate (29%) can be attributed to the following factors:

- Fixed costs: A large proportion of the budget was allocated to fixed costs (e.g. programme set-up, infrastructure, staff salaries, training and preparatory activities) which were incurred regardless of the lower than expected number of participants deployed.
 - Delayed deployment : Delays in deployment due to initial challenges in setting up the programme and restrictions imposed on its implementation during COVID-19 pandemic further hindered the full realisation of the intended outcomes, despite ongoing expenditure.
 - Unused allocations: Some of the remaining funds (24%) were not spent due to the inability to scale up interventions as planned.
- **Performance management:** The actual costs per organisation engaged in interventions were 10% lower than anticipated in the budget, which indicates some degree of cost-effectiveness.

Funding

Funding for the EUAV Initiative was sufficient overall. Even though budgets were made accessible well into 2021 and 2022 to compensate for disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, 24% of the budget remained unused at the end of 2022 when the Initiative was terminated. Compared to the follow-up European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps within the current European Solidarity Corps, the EUAV Initiative had a proportionately larger budget (218% of the current European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps), but also a larger target number of deployments (214% larger), with 4 175 deployments targeted against only 1 955 deployments targeted by the current European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps, so this larger budget seems appropriate.

However, the Initiative failed to meet both its spending targets and its target for the number of participating volunteers. By the end of 2022, funding was secured for 1 192 deployments, equating to 29% of the initial goal of 4 175. Thus, there are doubts that the available funding would have been realistic for the Initiative to achieve all its goals. This indicates that the Initiative allocated 76% of its budget towards achieving 29% of its objectives. Extrapolating this, fulfilling 100% of the target for the number of volunteers deployed would have likely necessitated a much higher budget.

Volunteers gave marginally positive feedback on the financial compensation they received for their participation in the EUAV Initiative. Of these volunteers, 56% agreed or strongly agreed that the financial support received was sufficient to cover their participation costs. This is largely in line with previous evaluation findings¹³. Although most volunteers felt the financial support was sufficient and that the benefits of their deployment outweighed the costs, there

¹³ ADE (2021), *Ex post* evaluation of the EUAV Initiative, 2014-2020, retrieved from: https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/euav_ex_post_evaluation_study_ade_final_report_-_volume_1_-_report.pdf.

remains a significant proportion who may have had different experiences. Approximately 32% of surveyed volunteers stated that the financial support they received was not enough for them to sustain themselves during their deployment overseas. This seemed to be especially the case in countries and urban areas with higher costs of living. Some volunteers even dropped out of their deployment due to insufficient financing. However, 62% of volunteers agreed that the benefits they gained from their involvement in the Initiative outweighed the costs (e.g. resources expended, or commitment made).

The first evaluation study found that the actual average cost of deploying a volunteer for a month was EUR 3 180. This is slightly lower than the budgeted amount of EUR 3 279, making the budgeted amount appear sufficient. When compared to the costs of deploying a UN volunteer in 2019, the average *pro forma* costs were significantly higher at about EUR 4 360 for International UN volunteers and EUR 3 220 for International Youth UN volunteers. This comparison suggests that the EUAV Initiative's deployment costs were competitive, particularly when comparing them with the International Youth UN volunteers. However, one concern of the Initiative management was the volatility of project costs as the actual cost of deploying volunteers varied from around EUR 2 500 to EUR 4 100 a month depending on the projects. Several factors might explain differences in real costs per deployment not taken into account by unit costs:

- geographical locations and differences in purchasing power;
- the quality of the volunteering experience and/or level of outputs and outcomes achieved;
- seasonal variations in costs of living in specific areas such as tourism hotspots.

It was not possible to assess whether the allocation of expenditures for the EUAV Initiative was consistent with the allocation specified in Regulation EU (No) 375/2014 on the three thematic priorities beyond the assessment done by the first evaluation study in 2021 of the Initiative for 2014-2020¹⁴. However, there is little divergence between the overall budget spent between the publication of this first evaluation study and the latest overall budget data available. This indicates that there was limited scope for the initiative to deviate significantly from the percentage distribution of the budget allocated to each of the three thematic priorities, as major changes in the proportional allocation of funds would likely have been reflected in the overall budget data. Thus, it is assumed that the allocation of expenditures for the Initiative was consistent with the allocation specified in Regulation EU (No) 375/2014 on the three thematic priorities.

The EUAV Initiative did not introduce results-based budgeting, nor did it tailor the budget to the three operational objectives under thematic priorities in the final year of its running. **Consequently, the share of the total budget to be apportioned was also not linked with expected outcomes (which were not constantly monitored during the programme's duration) or activity levels.**

¹⁴ ADE (2021), *Ex post* evaluation of the EUAV Initiative, 2014-2020, retrieved from: https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/euav_ex_post_evaluation_study_ade_final_report_-_volume_1_-_report.pdf

The rationale for allocating budget to expected activities and outcomes was imprecise. Annual work programmes (2014-2020) lacked activity-level specific expected outcomes for the Initiative. The seven annual work programmes outlined expected results but without giving any detail, primarily as outputs such as the number of volunteers trained or deployed (tracked manually once a year in ad-hoc exercises), not broader outcomes (e.g., the specific work volunteers carried out during their deployment or the lasting impact of their efforts on local communities), complicating any assessment as to whether the outcomes were aligned with the budget¹⁵.

Administrative burden

Participation in the EUAV Initiative was somewhat burdensome for volunteers and organisations alike. Although a large minority of surveyed volunteers (43%) claimed that their involvement in the Initiative generated little paperwork from their side, 34% of surveyed volunteers disagreed (34%).

Although a slight majority (52%) of surveyed volunteers found the time lag between application and deployment reasonable, 33% of volunteers disagreed. The frustration expressed by volunteers likely stemmed from security-driven restrictions on volunteer deployment, which led to a relatively long gap between the planning and deployment of volunteers, and further limited volunteers' involvement in humanitarian interventions¹⁶. The length of time between organisations submitting a request for volunteers and the actual deployment of those volunteers often meant that the needs of organisations had changed in the meantime, and the volunteers therefore had to fill a role that had not been originally planned. This suggests that the process could have been streamlined – or made more transparent – to reduce frustration, in part by: (i) improving communication about these restrictions and their impact on the deployment timeline; and (ii) providing more realistic estimations or more frequent updates on the status and reasons for delay.

Despite these problems, the Initiative was generally well-received, with most participating organisations expressing satisfaction. Despite encountering issues with applications and deployment, 60% of the participating organisations reported satisfaction with the support they received. This indicates that the Initiative's support system was effective for a significant portion of the participating organisations.

Efficiency in implementation of the Initiative

The EUAV Initiative has been cost-effective compared with similar programmes, but not compared with the European Solidarity Corps humanitarian-aid strand. When considering the cost-effectiveness of the Initiative it is important to note that many aspects of the Initiative,

¹⁵ EUAV Initiative annual work programmes (2014-2020).

¹⁶ ADE (2021), *Ex post* evaluation of the EUAV Initiative, 2014-2020, retrieved from: https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/euav_ex_post_evaluation_study_ade_final_report_-_volume_1_-_report.pdf.

such as deployments to other continents, were much more costly – by design – than similar deployments by the European Solidarity Corps’ humanitarian-aid strand. This is because the EUAV Initiative – with its higher training requirements and longer, more distant deployments – naturally incurred higher costs, resulting in a cost of EUR 49 168.47 per individual volunteer. Similarly, the cost-effectiveness per organisation participating in the Initiative was EUR 127 102.80. This figure represents the average cost to the EUAV Initiative for each organisation’s participation, covering expenses such as training, deployment and administrative support for volunteers. While this result does not include potential savings to participating organisations or a breakdown per volunteer, it is in itself a meaningful metric for comparing the efficiency of the Initiative with other programmes¹⁷.

The EUR 49 168.47 cost per individual volunteer in the EUAV Initiative is commensurate with those of comparable programmes. For instance, the International UN Youth Volunteers had a cost of approximately EUR 44 654 per individual volunteer in 2021. This indicates that the International UN Youth Volunteers were marginally more cost-effective on a per-participant basis¹⁸.

Additionally, and as mentioned in the section on funding, the Initiative’s cost per deployed individual volunteer varied greatly in practice. The large variations in costs highlight a potential weakness in the call-for-proposals process. The lack of an explicit linkage between the budget allocated to projects and the number, duration, outcomes and impacts of volunteers’ deployment could indeed have led to inefficiencies. Establishing a more direct connection between these factors would have potentially made the Initiative more cost-effective.

Performance measurement and monitoring (RACER criteria)

To evaluate the efficiency of performance measurement and monitoring, this study looks at three main indicators. Firstly, the study uses the RACER criteria (relevant, accepted, credible, easy to monitor, robust) to assess whether the Initiative was measuring the right things in the right way according to the European Commission’s ‘Better Regulation’ toolbox. Secondly, the efficiency of tools and methods for tracking progress is measured by checking that they provide accurate and timely information. Lastly, the study looks at what the EUAV Initiative was measuring, and checks that this aligns with what it was initially set out to measure in the monitoring and evaluation framework. This ensures that the Initiative was on the right track and made the most efficient use of its resources.

Turning to the RACER criteria that make up the first indicator, the indicators used by the Commission for monitoring **relevance** were deemed only partially relevant and not comprehensive. Monitoring data available through the report on the results of the multiannual financial framework were more compliance-focused, assessing the EUAV Initiative’s budget at an action level rather than at any type of outcome level (with the exception of 2015 when

¹⁷ For example, if another programme achieved a lower cost per organisation but supported more participants, this difference would highlight a trade-off or an area for improvement.

¹⁸ UN (2021), 2021 Proforma cost table, retrieved from: <https://www.unv.org/sites/default/files/2021%20Proforma%20Costs%20for%20international%20and%20national%20UN%20Volunteers.pdf>.

outcomes were indeed assessed). Performance therefore cannot clearly be linked to the five stated objectives of the Initiative.

On **credibility**, the performance management of the Initiative faced serious issues due to the absence of automated data-collection processes. Manual data entry is prone to human error, which can lead to inaccurate data. This resulted in superficial annual monitoring reports, with gaps in terms of indicators and a lack of consistency in reporting. On the more positive side, the indicators used by the Commission for performance management were few and therefore **easy to monitor** as they were tied to directly measurable outputs.

Lastly, the absence of exhaustive data at the finalisation stage had a negative impact on the **robustness** of performance management. Reliable data are crucial for identifying areas for improvement for the successor programme. Despite recommendations in the first evaluation study of the Initiative in 2021 to include outcome-related indicators, the overall lack of regular monitoring of outcome and impact-related indicators cannot provide a comprehensive picture of the performance of the EUAV Initiative. Outcome and impact indicators would have been essential to understand the long-term effects and the real impact of the Initiative's activities on the communities it served.

2.4.3 Coherence

Main findings:

- The Initiative **was complementary to other EU programmes** (including the European Solidarity Corps, the former European Voluntary Service, and Erasmus+) due to its wider geographical scope and specific types of activities.
- Although the Initiative's objectives were coherent and aligned with the EU's humanitarian agenda, there was limited evidence of synergies between the Initiative and other EU activities in the areas of humanitarian aid.
- The Initiative was perceived as coherent with national policies in host countries, and informal links established at the time with some volunteer networks within EU Member States were observed.
- Stakeholders highly valued the Initiative for strengthening local capacities, particularly through training.

The latest study found that the Initiative was complementary to other EU programmes offering volunteering activities. This is due to the Initiative's wider geographical scope and the specific types of activities it worked on. Like the European Solidarity Corps, the Initiative was concerned with solidarity but with a focus on humanitarian action in non-EU countries. Although the European Solidarity Corps and Erasmus+ also offered multilateral mobility opportunities within the EU and partner countries, the EUAV Initiative offered mobility in only one direction, from the EU to non-EU countries and only to EU citizens or long-term residents.

Although the Initiative's objectives were coherent and aligned with the EU's humanitarian agenda, there was limited evidence of synergies between the Initiative's activities and other EU activities in the areas of humanitarian aid. A major challenge, as noted in the initial evaluation study, is that security concerns prevented volunteers from being deployed to regions where EU humanitarian-aid efforts were underway during disasters. The extent to which the Initiative was aligned with other humanitarian actions was limited by: (i) the fact that volunteers could not be deployed to conflict zones¹⁹; (ii) internal concerns about deploying young volunteers to emergency situations²⁰; and (iii) lengthy recruitment and deployment procedures. In addition, and as found by the first "*ex post*" evaluation study of 2021, DG ECHO field offices or other EU delegations did not have enough information about the Initiative's activities and therefore had limited interactions with these activities²¹. However, the fact that the Initiative was very small compared with overall EU humanitarian aid – with only EUR 141 million allocated to it for the period 2014-2020 (EU Regulation 375/2014) compared with the European Commission's humanitarian-aid budget of EUR 13.5 billion for the same period²² – also limits the potential observation of wider synergies.

A greater degree of coherence was achieved between the Initiative and the organisations sending or hosting volunteers. The Initiative supported this by professionalising volunteer management and providing access to a well-trained pool of volunteers. Host organisations valued the capacity building provided by the Initiative in areas like security, gender awareness, and communication, all of which strengthened their internal processes. Hosting organisations also noted that the Initiative increased their visibility and capacity, fostering better collaboration. Interviews with host organisations and government officials indicated that the Initiative aligned well with national policies, particularly in development, disaster management, and disaster-resilience programmes.

The first "*ex post*" evaluation study of 2021 found informal links between the Initiative and some volunteer networks within EU Member States. In addition, the current survey of EU Aid Volunteers shows that 65% had previous volunteering experience in the EU before applying to the Initiative. On the more negative side, both the previous and the latest evaluation studies did not find evidence of high-level coordination between the Initiative and major international volunteer networks, including United Nations Volunteers. And although interviewees saw the EUAV Initiative as complementary and adding value compared with other international volunteering programmes offered by humanitarian organisations such as the United Nations, the Red Cross or Rotary, these interviewees did not identify any direct synergies between the Initiative and these other international volunteering programmes.

¹⁹ EUAV regulation 375/2014, Article 14(3).

²⁰ ADE (2021). *Ex post* evaluation of the EUAV Initiative, 2014-2020.

²¹ Ibid.

²² DG ECHO Annual Activity Reports 2014-2020.

2.5 Evaluating the impact of the Initiative: who benefited and what challenges arose?

2.5.1 EU-added value

Main findings:

- The Initiative helped to set **common standards for humanitarian aid volunteering** across the EU Member States.
- The Initiative helped to improve participating organisations' capacity to train and host international volunteers.
- The Initiative **increased the deployment of volunteers** by taking advantage of the EU's global presence.
- The involvement of **well-trained volunteers** was a distinct EU-added value that also increased the operational capacities of the organisations involved in humanitarian assistance.
- The Initiative enabled local organisations to scale up their operations and improve their effectiveness in humanitarian-aid delivery by increasing local capacities, volunteer management, and the ability to undertake larger projects.
- The EUAV Initiative played a significant role in **developing international collaboration and networks**.

Scope and volume effects

The first evaluation study in 2021 of the EUAV Initiative 2014-2020 concluded that the Initiative had demonstrated EU-added value by helping to centralise and standardise systems and processes. A significant majority (87% of respondents) agreed or strongly agreed that the EUAV Initiative effectively introduced common standards for humanitarian-aid volunteering across the EU. This indicates a strong consensus that the Initiative was successful in establishing consistent and recognised benchmarks in this field, which is essential for the quality and efficiency of EU humanitarian-aid volunteering.

Additionally, there was a strong agreement (with 82% of respondents agreeing) that the EUAV Initiative had **made the most of the EU's global presence to facilitate the deployment of volunteers**. This high level of agreement suggests that the Initiative was perceived as successfully using the EU's extensive humanitarian and logistical network to increase volunteer deployment in humanitarian-aid actions, something that could not be matched by the efforts of individual Member States alone.

Additionally, the first evaluation study of 2021 concluded that **the Initiative's emphasis on capacity building in organisations was an EU-added value compared with other schemes** that exclusively focused on deployments. Our findings for 2021-2022 confirm this conclusion.

A substantial majority (89% of the respondents) agreed or strongly agreed that the Initiative had **improved their organisation's capacity to provide humanitarian aid**. And 93% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the Initiative improved their **capacity to host and manage volunteers**. Additionally, 74% of respondents believed that the EUAV Initiative had increased their **capacity to undertake larger projects, with 80% agreeing that the Initiative had helped to improve project-management skills. This underlines the capacity-building effect of the EUAV Initiative for the participating organisations. This enabled these organisations to scale up their operations and improve their effectiveness in humanitarian-aid delivery by improving local aid capacities, volunteer management, and the ability to undertake larger projects.** This added value was important for increasing the impact of EU humanitarian-aid volunteering.

Moreover, **the communities engaged with by the Initiative also experienced improvements**. 85% of organisations and 56% of volunteers surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that their work benefited the local communities and societal groups. Based on the results of **the country-level case studies in Uganda and Colombia**, the communities in those countries experienced improvements in several areas due to the Initiative such as: (i) improved skills in fund mobilisation and volunteer-programme management; (ii) greater success in acquiring grants for promoting income generation in disaster-affected areas; and (iii) greater development and use of strengthened disaster-management capabilities.

Process and innovation

The first evaluation study of the EUAV Initiative for the period 2014-2020 concluded in 2021 that the quality and standards of the volunteer training provided by the Initiative, facilitated by the Commission's centralised approach and existing expertise, were widely regarded as providing added value compared with other volunteering schemes. For instance, 75% of volunteers viewed the high-quality training provided by the Initiative as a key added value. Moreover, beyond their general appreciation for the training they received, a significant number of volunteers felt that their practical skills in humanitarian aid improved through their participation in the Initiative, with 80% agreeing or strongly agreeing that it improved their ability to deliver humanitarian aid or contribute to development cooperation.

The findings on EU-added value highlight not only individual benefits but also organisational impacts. The participation of trained volunteers has strengthened the operational capacities of organisations involved in humanitarian aid. In fact, 85% of surveyed organisations agreed or strongly agreed that their ability to provide humanitarian assistance improved by hosting EU Aid Volunteers. The data indicate that the Initiative was well-received and successful in achieving its objectives related to training quality, skills development, and increasing organisational capacity in humanitarian and development work.

Network effects

The first "ex post" evaluation study of the EUAV Initiative for the period 2014-2020 concluded in 2021 that the Initiative had demonstrated significant EU-added value by encouraging transnational partnerships the application of which had extended beyond the EUAV Initiative's network. The findings of this evaluation are in keeping with the previous conclusion indicating that the EUAV Initiative facilitated the creation and strengthening of local and international networks. A significant 77% of surveyed organisations agreed that the Initiative helped establish new partnerships that extended beyond individual projects. Case studies from Uganda and Colombia further show that local organisations were able to secure both international partnerships and funding by making the most of skills and knowledge gained through the Initiative.

Additionally, 65% of respondent organisations (24 of the 34 organisations surveyed) agreed that the Initiative improved coordination in international multi-stakeholder projects, reflecting the Initiative's positive impact on collaboration. Furthermore, 72% of respondent organisations agreed that their international network expanded due to the Initiative, underscoring the Initiative's role in improving global connections and partnerships.

2.5.2 Relevance

Main findings:

- The EUAV Initiative **addressed the need to promote capacity building in hosting organisations**, as it provided timely and necessary support and expertise to partner organisations.
- The Initiative was also **well-aligned with the need to improve EU volunteering within the humanitarian aid field** by employing a comprehensive approach. Most organisations agreed or strongly agreed that the Initiative addressed persisting needs within the less-developed countries.
- The Initiative: (i) **addressed the central needs and concerns of participating volunteers and host organisations**; (ii) improved the transversal skills of these volunteers and host organisations; (iii) built an understanding of the needs and challenges of the less-developed countries; and (iv) addressed the need to prepare for careers in international development.

Individuals

The first evaluation study of 2021 found that the EUAV Initiative responded to the needs of the volunteers participating in the Initiative, thereby promoting the Initiative's objective of

‘improving the skills, knowledge and competence of volunteers in the field of humanitarian aid and the conditions of their engagement’.

Volunteers indicated that the main reason they applied for the Initiative was to participate in training for humanitarian-aid activities and to develop skills in this field. The survey for this evaluation shows that most individuals applied to gain work experience (78%) and to improve their employability (42%). The interviews also suggest that the Initiative helped individuals to develop their skills, as the activities required of volunteers engaged them in the field. As a result of this, many organisations noted that their volunteers started careers in development cooperation and civil society organisations soon after their volunteering period ended²³. Public consultations with 23 organisations involved in the Initiative showed that participating organisations mostly believed that the Initiative improved opportunities for EU citizens to participate in humanitarian-aid activities and operations.

The results support the conclusion of the first evaluation study in 2021 that the EUAV Initiative increased the skills and knowledge of volunteers in the field of humanitarian aid. The survey conducted in 2024 showed that 93% of organisations felt that volunteers’ skills had improved, and 81% of participating volunteers agreed. Volunteers’ belief that the specific value of Initiative activities lay in providing high-quality training and professionalism was also evident from the survey results. Although the first evaluation study of 2021 observed that volunteers found some of the training they received to be irrelevant, there was only little evidence of this in the latest survey of individual volunteers, as 67% said they were satisfied with the central training. In contrast, fewer volunteers were satisfied with mentoring support provided by either the hosting organisation (42% of volunteers were satisfied) or the sending organisation (45% were satisfied).

Both the evaluation study of 2021 and the latest survey results indicate that the connection between improvements in hosting organisations’ capacity building on the one hand and greater resilience among local communities on the other was clearer to organisations than volunteers. Many volunteers (32%) were unsure whether their work benefited the community. However, the involvement of volunteers in more administrative or clerical work – or even language barriers between the volunteers and the community – could have influenced their limited perceptions in this regard. Finally, the interviews identified some potential areas of individual dissatisfaction with the level of volunteer compensation and housing. In some cases, as highlighted in the country case study on Uganda, volunteers’ dissatisfaction with compensation led them to suspend their activities or seek other employment.

Participating organisations

The conclusions in 2021 of the first evaluation study of the Initiative for 2014-2020 on the relevance of the Initiative stated that the Initiative addressed the need to both improve EU capacity to provide humanitarian aid and build the capacity of hosting organisations.

²³ European Commission. Civil Society – Neighbourhood and Enlargement (https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/policy-highlights/civil-society_en).

The EUAV Initiative significantly helped to build the capacity of hosting organisations and promote volunteering in non-EU countries. According to surveys, 77% of organisations agreed that the Initiative successfully addressed persistent issues in the humanitarian sector, such as limited resources and visibility. And public consultations showed that 83% of participating organisations believed their capacities had increased thanks to the Initiative, helping them respond to disasters more effectively. Many organisations felt their work benefited local communities by addressing humanitarian needs such as by empowering marginalised groups and supporting victims of violence. Organisations that participated in the Initiative generally appreciated volunteers' contributions, especially the mix of senior and junior volunteers it provided, although some organisations reported mismatches in skills or language proficiency. There were also concerns about sustainability, with some organisations noting unmet capacity needs after volunteers left.

The Initiative's flexibility during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, was recognised. However, organisations also criticised the Initiative for lacking contingency planning and being too rigid in adapting to changing circumstances. While 68% of organisations said they found the Initiative to be adaptable during the pandemic, only 39% felt the support and guidance provided were sufficient. Opinions on the effectiveness of online volunteering were mixed, with only 39% of organisations finding it useful. However, those organisations that engaged in online volunteering appreciated volunteers' support in technical areas like translation and graphic design.

International and national stakeholders

The first evaluation study of the EUAV Initiative of 2021 found the Initiative to be relevant for both organisations and individuals but identified areas for improvement, particularly for third parties and the promotion of EU humanitarian principles beyond direct beneficiaries. The latest evaluation study also found the Initiative to be aligned with local governments' disaster-management needs and domestic initiatives. Surveys revealed that the Initiative's main objectives were generally aligned with societal needs, although volunteers questioned whether the projects effectively increased community resilience or raised awareness of EU humanitarian principles. While 85% of organisations agreed the Initiative directly benefited local communities, and 83% believed it boosted the capacity of host organisations, organisations expressed uncertainty as to whether the Initiative promoted the EU's broader principles.

Both evaluations lacked field research, making it hard to assess how well EU humanitarian-aid principles reached communities beyond the target beneficiaries. However, interviews indicated that most organisations had effective visibility strategies from the start. Public consultation showed that 70% of organisations agreed that the Initiative had created opportunities to promote these principles, although two organisations disagreed. Additionally, the Initiative integrated gender sensitivity into its operations, contributing to the EU's humanitarian-aid policy in this area.

3. What are the conclusions and lessons learned?

3.1 Conclusions on the relevance of the Initiative

The EUAV Initiative responded to the need to support both the capacity building of host organisations and the promotion of volunteering in non-EU countries. By providing timely support and expertise to partner organisations, the Initiative demonstrated its relevance and responsiveness to organisational needs. This focus of the Initiative also extended to improving EU volunteering in the humanitarian-aid field, which was underlined by positive feedback from organisations on the holistic approach of the Initiative. The evaluation found that while participating organisations appreciated the flexibility offered by the Initiative during the COVID-19 pandemic, more support and guidance could have been provided.

The Initiative was: (i) responsive to the needs of the volunteers participating in the Initiative; (ii) aligned with the objective of improving the skills and knowledge of volunteers in the field of humanitarian aid; and (iii) committed to the objective of improving the volunteers' conditions of engagement. The Initiative improved the transversal skills of volunteers, built a solid understanding of the needs and challenges in non-EU countries, and effectively prepared volunteers for careers in international development.

With regard to the Initiative's objective to help strengthen the gender perspective in EU humanitarian-aid policy, the evaluation concludes that the Initiative had integrated a gender perspective into all its humanitarian-aid operations, in line with the EU's wider commitment to gender-sensitive interventions. On working with women's groups and networks, engagement by the Initiative took place primarily at the level of organisations already working with women's organisations. However, the Initiative also encouraged further engagement by supporting projects with a specific focus on women's leadership and participation.

3.2 Conclusions on the coherence of the Initiative

The EUAV Initiative was aligned with the strategic priorities of the European Union, particularly in the field of humanitarian aid. It effectively complemented other EU programmes, including the European Solidarity Corps, the former European Voluntary Service and Erasmus+ through its wider geographical scope and the specific types of activities it promoted. However, while the Initiative's objectives were coherent and well aligned with the EU's humanitarian agenda, there was limited evidence of synergies between the Initiative's activities and other EU humanitarian activities. The fact that the Initiative was very small compared to overall EU humanitarian aid limited the potential for wider synergies.

A greater degree of coherence was found in organisations sending or hosting volunteers, as the Initiative professionalised their volunteer management and increased their access to a well-trained volunteer pool. Stakeholders highly appreciated the role of the Initiative in strengthening local capacities, in particular through targeted training programmes. This focus on capacity building both addressed immediate needs, and also contributed to the long-term development of hosting organisations and communities. The Initiative was perceived to be

coherent with national policies in host countries and established informal links with some volunteer networks within EU Member States.

3.3 Conclusions on the effectiveness of the Initiative

The EUAV Initiative fell short of meeting its objective of increasing opportunities for EU citizens to participate in humanitarian-aid operations. In this context, a key challenge for the implementation of the Initiative was the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely affected the targeted number of deployments, with a 90% decrease in deployments 2019 in 2020 due to travel restrictions.

The Initiative effectively supported the skills and professional development of volunteers. In particular, it improved their skills in areas such as project management. In addition, volunteers were able to practice and develop cross-cutting skills in the development context, which contributed to their overall professional growth and readiness for future humanitarian work.

The Initiative also: (i) strengthened the capacity of participating organisations, particularly in the area of disaster-risk reduction and resilience; (ii) and contributed to increased visibility and credibility for organisations; and (iii) boosted the operational and communication skills of volunteers and organisations. At the community level, the Initiative had a positive impact, particularly in areas vulnerable to natural hazards and uncontrolled waves of migration, where it provided support for building resilience and local disaster-management capacities.

3.4 Conclusions on the efficiency of the Initiative

The EUAV Initiative overall demonstrated efficiency in its operations. The budget execution and overall programme management were efficient, considering the context within which they were implemented.

Funding for the Initiative was sufficient, with around 76% of available funds spent. This underutilisation of funds was largely due to delays in starting up the Initiative and further delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite sufficient funding, a large minority of volunteers expressed dissatisfaction with the level of funding they received.

The actual expenditures for the Initiative were consistent with the budget allocation specified in Regulation EU (No) 375/2014. However, the rationale behind the budget allocation for certain expected activities and certain expected outcomes was unclear. Delays in the Initiative's startup and the impact of COVID-19 contributed to a low implementation rate of only 37%.

Performance management within the Initiative showed some degree of cost-effectiveness, with actual costs per organisation engaged in interventions 10% lower than anticipated. However, the limited information provided by the organisations on the outputs and outcomes of activities makes it challenging to draw definitive conclusions about overall cost-effectiveness.

3.5 Conclusions on the EU-added value of the Initiative

The EUAV Initiative provided EU-added value by contributing to common standards for humanitarian-aid volunteering across EU Member States. The Initiative leveraged the EU's global presence to improve the deployment of volunteers, providing a platform for people to engage in meaningful humanitarian-aid activities in non-EU countries.

Participating organisations benefited from greater capacity in their ability to train and host international volunteers. This improved capacity not only benefited the volunteers but also strengthened the operational capabilities of the organisations involved, enabling them to undertake larger and more complex projects. The involvement of well-trained volunteers helped to improve the operational capacities of the organisations engaged in humanitarian assistance. The Initiative also fostered local and international collaboration and the development of networks, which facilitated knowledge sharing, collaborative initiatives, and long-term partnerships.

4. Annex I. Procedural information

Lead Directorate-General: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, DG EAC.

Agenda planning reference: PLAN/2022/489.

Organisation: The main preparatory steps taken in 2022 and 2023 for the second evaluation study included: (i) the set-up of an inter-service-group to accompany and steer the evaluation; (ii) publication of a call for evidence; and (iii) preparation of technical specifications for a supporting an external evaluation assignment (service contract EAC-2023-0337). The service contract was awarded under the DG EAC framework contract for evaluations and impact assessments to a consortium led by PPMI Group, UAB and started in June 2023.

This second and final external *ex post* evaluation assignment included a public consultation and multiple targeted consultations and provided the main evidence base for the staff working document. The full final report of the service contractor has been published here: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/5736339>.

The factual summary on the public consultation and call for evidence has been published and is available here: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13507/public-consultation>. The synopsis report on all the consultation activities in the evaluation is annexed to the Staff Working Document.

Timing (general chronology of the second and final *ex post* evaluation study):

DESCRIPTION	TIMING
Call for evidence on ‘Have your Say’ portal	18 October 2022 - 15 November 2022
Signature of contract for external evaluation assignment	16 June 2023
First Inter-Service-Group meeting	29 June 2023
Inception report	5 September 2023
Second Inter-Service-Group meeting	11 September 2023
Public consultation on ‘Have your Say’ portal	13 November 2023 - 5 February 2024
First Interim report	20 November 2023
Third Inter-Service Group meeting	29 November 2023
2nd Interim Report	9 April 2024
Fourth Inter-Service Group meeting	18 April 2024
Draft final report submitted by contractor	27 May 2024
Fifth Inter-Service Group meeting	3 July 2024
Final report submitted by the contractor	31 August 2024
Final version of final report by external contractor approved	October 2024

Inter-Service-Consultation on Draft Commission Report and SWD	26 November 2024 to 16 December 2024
Publication of Commission Report and SWD	March 2025

DGs participated in the inter-service steering group (ISSG). This ISSG of relevant Commission DGs oversaw the evaluation and met regularly throughout the evaluation process. In addition to DG EAC, the ISSG was composed of representatives of 13 Commission DGs. In line with the ‘Better Regulation’ guidelines, the ISSG was involved in all the key steps of the evaluation work, including the evaluation mandate; the call for evidence; the evaluation questions; the technical specifications for selecting the external contractor; the public consultation questionnaire and survey questionnaires; the monitoring progress; steering the evaluation; and providing comments to (and ensuring the quality and objectivity of) evaluation reports.

In connection with the meetings of the ISSG and key deliverables, consultations were carried out in a dedicated Teams channel. The feedback periods and the deadlines/arrangements for managing comments and approving deliverables were agreed in the meetings.

Work/studies carried out by the external contractors: The Commission’s *ex post* evaluation was supported by two independent external *ex post* evaluation assignments. In line with the ‘Better Regulation’ guidelines, the contractors analysed the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, added value and relevance of the EUAV Initiative. A mix of different methods was used during the evaluation process, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches. These methodological approaches were treated as complementary; for instance, the results of quantitative methods were used to improve our understanding of qualitative results and vice versa. This was done to ensure a well-evidenced approach and triangulation of evidence.

The first external *ex post* evaluation assignment was carried out between August 2020 and July 2021. A total of 104 individuals were interviewed, including among EU staff and Members of the European Parliament (DEVE Committee) and from participating agencies, peer volunteering organisations, former volunteers and organisations with a presumed interest in the initiative. Four targeted surveys were published on the EU Survey Platform that were addressed to volunteers, sending organisations, hosting organisations, and EU Member State representatives on the Council Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA). The Commission also launched during October 2020 an online Public Consultation as part of this evaluation study.

The second and final external *ex post* evaluation assignment was carried out between June 2023 and October 2024, and included public consultation and multiple targeted consultations. The consultation strategy for the evaluation was based on a mapping of stakeholders, and quantitative and qualitative data were mainly gathered through the consultation activities set out in the following five bullet points.

- A call for evidence was published on the Commission’s ‘Have Your Say’ portal from 18 October to 15 November 2022.
- A public consultation ran on the ‘Have Your Say’ portal from 13 November 2023 to 5 February 2024.
- Two targeted surveys were conducted across different stakeholder groups, including individual volunteers and organisations involved in the EUAV Initiative. Surveys were

designed based on evaluation questions and feedback, translated into multiple languages, and implemented online.

- The external consultant conducted 121 interviews with a diverse range of stakeholders from various backgrounds and regions to gain in-depth insights and expand the understanding of the impact made by the Initiative's programmes.
- Case studies were carried out including two country-level case studies and a horizontal case study on gender mainstreaming. Data were collected through desk research, selected survey questions, and interviews.

5. Annex II. Methodology and analytical models used during the second and final *ex post* evaluation study

This section outlines the methodological approach, principles and data that guided and informed the second and final *ex post* evaluation study of 2024. The evaluation of the 2014-2020 EUAV Initiative was based on the triangulation of data collected through desk research, stakeholder-consultation activities (public consultation, the targeted surveys and interviews), case studies, and a cost-effectiveness assessment.

Desk research

Desk research for this evaluation comprised:

1. a **review of relevant literature and documents**;
2. an **analysis of administrative and monitoring data** collected by the Initiative.

Documentary review and analysis of administrative and monitoring data served several purposes:

- to provide key sources of evidence to answer several evaluation questions;
- to inform the preparation of case studies;
- to prepare other research methods, including interview and targeted surveys, the public consultation and associated questionnaires, and the cost-effectiveness assessment.

The evaluation team consulted a wide range of documents and sources, including:

- a. **policy documents**, which provided the legal and operational framework for the Initiative (including the Initiative's establishing Regulation (EU) No 375/2014, Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1398/2014 and Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1244/2014);
- b. **studies, evaluations and assessments** analysing implementation of the Initiative (including the Initiative's first *ex post* evaluation (2021) and interim evaluation (2017);
- c. **relevant technical and operational documents**, which provided both valuable contextual evidence and statistical and monitoring data (these documents include: annual work programmes, annual implementation reports, DG ECHO annual activity reports, EACEA annual activity reports, implementation guidelines and monitoring frameworks).

The main limitation in analysing **administrative and monitoring data** was that the EUAV Initiative lacked complete budgetary data or reports.

Stakeholder consultations

The consultation strategy for the evaluation was based on an exercise to identify stakeholders. It comprised the consultation activities set out in the bullet points below to involve a broad range of EUAV stakeholders, individual volunteers and the public.

- A **public consultation** was carried out covering both the European Solidarity Corps and the EUAV Initiative. The public consultation was open to volunteers and organisations who had participated in the Initiative, other relevant stakeholders such as management and implementation bodies, international organisations and networks, and the general public. It was hosted on the European Commission's 'Have Your Say' portal in all official EU languages (from 13 November 2023 to 5 February 2024). In total, **215 responses** were received.
- Two **targeted surveys** were carried out addressing:
 - o **organisations** that participated in the Initiative during the 2020-2022 period (from 25 January 2024 to 12 February 2024). In total, **73 responses** were received.
 - o **individuals** who participated in the Initiative during the 2020-2022 period (from 25 January 2024 to 12 February 2024). In total, **112 responses** were received.
- **Interviews** were conducted with: (i) volunteers and organisations who had participated in the Initiative; (ii) management and implementation bodies; (iii) policy makers; (iv) international organisations and networks; and (v) external experts/evaluators (from August 2023 to April 2024). In total, **31 interviewees** were consulted.

The factual summary report on the results of the public consultation is set out as Annex 7

These different types of stakeholder consultation were complementary. Surveys of participating organisations and individual volunteers provided robust evidence of the Initiative's effectiveness and efficiency, while interviews with participating organisations and individual volunteers, managing and implementing bodies, and external experts and organisations also helped to evaluate the EUAV Initiative's relevance and coherence. The public consultation covered all evaluation criteria, allowing participating organisations and individual volunteers and other relevant stakeholders and the general public to share their views on the Initiative.

Case studies

The evaluation team conducted three case studies to examine key aspects and achievements of the Initiative in-depth. Data for the case studies was collected through desk research, selected survey questions and interviews. Key insights and examples from the case studies were integrated in the evaluation's final report. Details of the case studies are set out in the two bullet points below.

- **Two country-level case studies** helped to comprehensively evaluate the Initiative by examining country-level results in Colombia and Uganda.
- **One cross-cutting case study** on gender mainstreaming in the EUAV Initiative was conducted. The case study evaluated how successful the Initiative had been in helping to strengthen the gender perspective in the EU's humanitarian-aid policy. The case study brought together key findings across different evaluation criteria.

Cost-effectiveness assessment

The evaluation included a cost-effectiveness assessment of the EUAV Initiative. The assessment estimated the costs of the Initiative in euros and in current prices, while qualifying and – where possible – quantifying the benefits. The assessment findings are incorporated into the final evaluation report under the criteria of efficiency. However, due to a lack of budgetary data or reports, the evaluation had to rely on data reported in previous evaluations or under the Commission's long-term budget-performance results.

Limitations and constraints

The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the **European Commission's 'Better Regulation' guidelines**. It provides reliable evidence covering the five evaluation criteria against which the Initiative's implementation was assessed: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU-added value. Overall, the evaluation of the Initiative **provides robust findings based on the triangulation of high-quality data collected through a variety of methods**: desk research, a cost-effectiveness assessment, stakeholder-consultation activities (public consultation, the targeted surveys and interviews), and case-study analysis.

Each evaluation question was assigned indicators and assessment parameters, as well as information sources and methods. These were used by the study to collect and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data. This made data triangulation possible and provided an appropriate mix of evidence for the evaluation questions at hand.

Most of the **key limitations and constraints** were identified at the beginning of the study. These are described below, together with the **mitigation measures** taken by the team to ensure the robustness of the evidence base.

- The study team made significant communication efforts in conducting the **surveys**, including: (i) a user-friendly, thoroughly tested survey design; (ii) an extended survey deadline; and (iii) additional reminders to encourage respondents to complete their survey. Although a satisfactory response rate was achieved (23.8% for organisations and 19.4% for individual volunteers), the number of individual volunteers (100) and organisations (66) from the former EUAV Initiative that responded to the survey was relatively low due to the small size of the Initiative and the limited scope of this second evaluation study (focusing only on the final years of the Initiative). However, the

number of responses collected for all target groups was sufficient in absolute terms to carry out statistical analyses.

- By their very nature (particularly in relation to the coherence criteria), **some of the answers to the evaluation questions relied heavily on desk research and interview data**. To mitigate this issue, the study team carried out an extensive programme of interviews with: (i) representatives of management and implementation bodies; (ii) National authorities; (iii) participating individuals and organisations; (iv) external experts; and (v) other stakeholders. The evaluation also took into account secondary sources of information, in particular the Initiative's previous evaluations. In addition, the findings presented under each evaluation criterion clearly indicate the extent to which the findings are based on opinions, facts or other types of evidence.
- In addition, **the administrative and monitoring data** collected by the Initiative served as an important source for a sound analysis of performance and cost-effectiveness. However, the evaluation faced obstacles in the form of gaps and limitations in the available data. As a result, the evaluation had to rely on data reported in previous evaluations or under the Commission's long-term budget-performance results.

Taken together, both the triangulation of data from a **highly diverse set of methods** applied by the evaluation and the **high number/ diversity of responses** to the consultation activities (public consultation, interviews and targeted surveys) provide **reliable evaluation evidence and robust results**.

6. Annex III. Stakeholder consultation – synopsis report

6.1 Introduction

This annex presents an overview of – and conclusions on – the work carried out during the final evaluation of the 2014-2020 EUAV Initiative. It covers three types of stakeholder consultation activities: public consultation, surveys, and interviews. In line with the requirements of the Commission’s ‘Better Regulation’ guidelines and toolbox²⁴ it: (i) provides an overview of the consultation strategy; (ii) explains how each consultation activity undertaken was implemented and how each of these consultation activities fitted in with the initial consultation strategy; and (iii) summarises and compares the results of the consultation activities.

The purpose of this annex is to inform the policymaking process and report back to stakeholders on how their input has been taken into account.

6.2 Outline of the consultation strategy

Stakeholder consultation is a formal process by which the Commission and its contractors gather information and views from stakeholders on Commission policies. The consultation strategy should clearly delineate the scope of the consultation and identify which stakeholders are to be reached through which consultation tool and for what purpose.

In designing and implementing our consultation strategy, we followed the relevant principles and steps for stakeholder consultation set out in the Commission’s ‘Better Regulation’ guidelines. The main steps in our stakeholder consultation included:

- designing the consultation strategy;
- conducting the consultation work;
- informing policymaking through the preparation of our reports.

The purpose of the stakeholder consultation carried out as part of this study was to gather the views of key stakeholders and the data needed to answer the evaluation questions. The following sections set out the categories of stakeholders consulted, the detailed approach to each method and the results. The study team triangulated the results of the various consultations with the results of other data collection and analysis activities.

The study team carried out two surveys: one for individual volunteers and one for participating organisations.

²⁴ European Commission, ‘Better regulation’ toolbox – July 2023 edition, p. 364
https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/9c8d2189-8abd-4f29-84e9-abc843cc68e0_en?filename=BR%20toolbox%20-%20Jul%202023%20-%20FINAL.pdf

The initial survey questionnaires were developed based on the evaluation questions and previous relevant surveys. The evaluation team then finalised the survey questionnaires based on a pilot with selected stakeholders.

The surveys were launched in January and February 2024 and closed at the end of February 2024. In addition to English, the surveys were available in French, German, Italian and Spanish. The table below provides an overview of the target population and the response rates achieved.

For some target groups, in particular EUAV Initiative organisations, the numbers of people targeted and the responses received were lower than other groups. This was due to the small size of the EUAV Initiative and the limited period of activity (2020-2022) under the scope of the latest evaluation. In areas where the study team considered the survey results not wholly conclusive due to their limited number of responses, additional interviews were carried out to clarify the findings and fill gaps in understanding.

TABLE 1. CONSULTATION OF TARGET GROUPS

CONSULTATION ACTIVITY	PROGRAMME	TARGET GROUPS	DATE
Public consultation	EUAV Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating organisations and individual volunteers • Other relevant stakeholders such as management and implementation bodies, national authorities, international organisations and networks • General public 	13 November 2023 – 5 February 2024
Interviews	EUAV Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating organisations and individual volunteers • European Commission DGs • EACEA • EU bodies • International organisations and NGOs 	August 2023 – April 2024

Source: prepared by the evaluation contractor

These different types of stakeholder consultation were complementary. Large-scale surveys of both participating organisations and individual volunteers provided robust evidence to make possible an assessment of the Initiative’s effectiveness and efficiency. And interviews with participating organisations and individual volunteers, managing bodies, implementing bodies, external experts and organisations also helped to evaluate the EUAV Initiative’s relevance and coherence. The public consultation covered all evaluation criteria, allowing participating organisations and individual volunteers, other relevant stakeholders and the general public to share their views on the Initiative.

6.3 Summarised results of the public consultation

The public consultation aimed to collect information, expertise and views from participating organisations and individual volunteers in the Initiative, relevant stakeholders, and the general public. The evaluation contractor developed an integrated questionnaire covering the EUAV Initiative. The public consultation was available on the European Commission's 'Have your say' portal in all official EU languages and ran from 13 November 2023 until 5 February 2024. It was further disseminated through social media channels and news items by the European Commission. A total of **215 responses** were received.

As the EUAV Initiative was discontinued at the end of 2022, the public consultation focused exclusively on assessing the dimensions of effectiveness and efficiency in the Initiative's final years. Forward-looking dimensions were excluded in line with the retrospective nature of the evaluation.

The questionnaire was designed around several **response paths** to provide representatives of organisations and individual respondents with different sets of questions according to their **participation in the Initiative and level of familiarity with it**. Respondents representing organisations that did not participate in the programmes but that indicated at least some degree of familiarity with them received additional questions (unrelated to participation). In total, 28 organisations and 9 individuals participated in the EUAV Initiative questionnaire.

Responses to closed questions on the two evaluation criteria formed the basis of this analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to assess the frequency of responses and the prevalence of particular views for each question. In addition, responses to open-ended questions were summarised and analysed qualitatively to complement the quantitative analysis.

Effectiveness: Individuals and respondents representing organisations were very positive about the impact of the Initiative on different stakeholder groups. Of the 208 respondents, 98 agreed or strongly agreed that the Initiative had a positive impact on the lives and values of the communities and social groups concerned (95 respondents chose 'Don't know / No opinion'). Out of 8 former participants who had participated as individual volunteers and responded to this question, 6 reported that their experience with the Initiative had a positive impact on their lives. For organisations, 25 of the 28 respondents that had participated said that the Initiative had had some, a great or a very great positive impact on their organisation, while 22 said that it had increased their organisation's capacity to manage volunteers and/or deliver humanitarian aid.

Overall, the organisations felt that the Initiative had succeeded in achieving its objectives, including: (i) creating opportunities to communicate the EU's humanitarian principles (95 out of 199 agreed; 92 selected 'Don't know / No opinion'); (ii) increasing opportunities for EU citizens to participate in humanitarian activities (91 out of 199 agreed; 96 selected 'Don't know / No opinion'); and (iii) increasing the consistency of volunteering across EU Member States (82 out of 197 agreed; 106 selected 'Don't know / No opinion').

Efficiency: Respondents gave a modest assessment of the costs and benefits they experienced due to their participation. While 17 out of 28 organisations considered that the benefits from their participation in the Initiative outweighed the costs, 20 organisations and 3 out of 6 individuals felt that their participation required a lot of effort from them. Information about the Initiative was found to be comprehensive by 20 organisations and 3 individuals, while

19 organisations and 3 individuals considered this information easy to find. Among organisations, 19 out of 28 found the grant-application process to be user-friendly, 17 found the certification application process to be user-friendly, and 19 found the guidance and support tools to be user-friendly.

Regarding recent challenges that had affected the Initiative, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the participation of 12 out of 18 organisations and 1 out of 8 individuals. Meanwhile, 7 of the 28 organisations reported challenges in participating in the Initiative as a result of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. In addition, 5 out of 36 respondents representing organisations reported that unforeseen events or crises in the host countries had affected their participation in the Initiative.

6.4 Summarised results of the survey

TABLE 2. MAIN STATISTICS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SURVEYS

TARGET GROUP	SURVEY LAUNCH DATE	SURVEY CLOSURE DATE	NUMBER OF INVITATIONS SENT OUT	NUMBER OF RESPONSES RECEIVED	RESPONSE RATE*	NUMBER OF RESPONSES INCLUDED IN THE ANALYSIS AFTER CLEANING
EUAV organisations	25 January 2024	12 February 2024	253	Partial 12	23.8%	Partial: 5
				Complete: 61		Complete: 61
				Total: 73		Total: 66
EUAV individuals			465	Partial: 21	19.4%	Partial: 9
				Complete: 91		Complete: 91
				Total: 112		Total: 100

*Based on completed responses only. Response rates were calculated using the formula:

$$\text{Response rate} = \frac{\text{No. of invitations received}}{\text{No. of responses sent out}} \times 100\%$$

Source: prepared by the evaluation team.

The data collected from the two surveys were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. As most of the survey questions were closed-ended and therefore led to structured responses, the study team primarily used MS Excel and R to perform descriptive statistics, such as cross-tabulations of key variables to identify patterns between/among different groups of respondents.

Survey data were used to inform all evaluation questions, particularly for those aspects where participants' opinions were very important. All findings from the surveys were included in the final report of the evaluation. The following sections summarise the findings from the survey data collected from EUAV Initiative participants (individuals and organisations).

Relevance: Most organisations and individuals **felt that the Initiative was relevant to the communities involved**, as it addressed ongoing humanitarian needs (30 out of 39 organisations and 63 out of 90 individuals agreed with this). The Initiative was also considered by **individual volunteers as relevant to their needs**, providing them with an entry point into the fields of humanitarian aid and development. Most volunteers applied to the Initiative to gain work experience (78% or 78 out of 100) and to improve their employability (42% or 42 out of 100).

After participating in the Initiative, 59% of individual volunteers (59 out of 100) found work in humanitarian aid or development²⁵.

Individual volunteers considered the Initiative's cross-cutting priorities as relevant to the needs and expectations of society. Of these individual volunteers, 38% (or 33 out of 86 respondents) thought that 'Building the capacity of hosting organisations and fostering volunteering in third countries' was relevant to a large extent. 'Social inclusion of people with fewer opportunities' (28%; 25 out of 88) and 'Communicating the EU's humanitarian aid principles' (28%; 25 out of 88), were also seen as relevant by these individual volunteers, while 'Integration and diversity, including asylum seekers and migrants' was seen as least relevant (18% or 16 out of 87 respondents considered it relevant).

Organisations and individual volunteers appreciated the flexible and timely support they received during the COVID-19 pandemic. Individual volunteers felt that the support provided by the Initiative was sufficient overall (24 out of 34), while 21 out of 31 organisations felt that the EACEA had shown flexibility in accommodating necessary project changes. Organisations were more modest in their assessment of the provision of clear guidelines to ensure the safety of volunteers (17 out of 33 considered the guidelines sufficient) and the overall support and guidance provided by the Agency (13 out of 33 were satisfied). Meanwhile, 9 out of 23 organisations agreed that online volunteering assignments had provided effective support to their activities (with 9 neither agreeing nor disagreeing).

Effectiveness: Both individual volunteers and organisations assessed the impact of the Initiative on different stakeholder groups very positively. Deployments with a strong focus on professional development offered volunteers the opportunity to hone specific skills relevant to their role and the wider humanitarian sector, according to 75% of former volunteers or 83 out of 93. Most individual volunteer respondents (81%, or 74 out of 92) agreed that the Initiative developed their skills to deliver humanitarian aid or development cooperation, while 86% (or 79 respondents) reported an increase in their knowledge of humanitarian principles. Furthermore, 79% (or 73 out of 93 respondents) found the experience instrumental in building valuable personal relationships within the humanitarian and development sectors.

The majority of organisations (89%, or 24 out of 27) acknowledged that the EUAV Initiative had improved their ability to deliver humanitarian aid to the local community, while 93% (or 25 organisations) also recognised improvements in their ability to host and manage volunteers. The Initiative was credited with improving project-management skills within organisations by 79%, or 31 out of 39 responding organisations, and having led to new partnerships, according to 77%, or 30 respondents.

Regarding the Initiative's impact at local level, 57% of volunteers (or 52 out of 92) and 85% or organisations (or 23 out of 27) largely felt that their work benefited the local community and social groups. Organisations generally agreed that the Initiative was effective in raising

²⁵ As respondents could contribute to all or some of the questions, the total number of responses received varies between questions.

awareness of EU humanitarian principles among stakeholders (87% – or 34 out of 39) and among community members (85% – or 23 out of 27). They also noted that the Initiative increased the visibility of EU humanitarian action (84% – or 32 out of 38) and created opportunities to communicate EU humanitarian principles (90% – or 35 out of 39). Volunteers also felt that the Initiative positively represented the European Union in the communities involved (66% – or 61 out of 92).

Efficiency: Volunteers gave slightly positive feedback on the financial compensation they received for their participation in the EUAV Initiative. A slight majority (56%, or 51 out of 91) agreed or strongly agreed that the financial support received was sufficient to cover the costs of their participation. And 62% (57 out of 91) of individual volunteers agreed that the benefits they received from their participation in the Initiative outweighed the costs (such as resources used or commitment made).

Participation in the Initiative was somewhat burdensome for both volunteers and organisations. Although a large minority of individual volunteers (43%, or 39 out of 91) claimed that their involvement in the Initiative required little paperwork on their part, one in three (34%, or 31 out of 91) disagreed. And although a slight majority (52%, or 47 out of 91 individual volunteers) found the time lag between their application and deployment reasonable, one in three (37%, or 34) disagreed. Of the organisations, 69% (27 out of 39) said that their participation had required significant effort, while 72% (28 out of 39) agreed that the benefits gained outweighed the costs.

Volunteers received two types of training before their deployment. The first was a centralised training course given by the EACEA and attended by all volunteers. The second training course was a pre-deployment training, which was more tailored to the specific circumstances of the deployment that the volunteer would be sent on. Volunteers were **satisfied with the central training provided by the EACEA** (79%; 62 out of 79), but were less satisfied with the **pre-deployment training** (68%, or 57 out of 84 volunteers were satisfied) and **in-country training** (56%, or 43 out of 77) provided by the sending and hosting organisations. **Post-deployment debriefing** by the sending organisation was rated positively by 59% of individual volunteers (47 out of 80).

EU-added value: The EUAV Initiative has **demonstrated EU-added value by helping to centralise and standardise systems and processes**, which is more difficult for individual EU Member States to achieve. Organisations largely agreed with this statement (87%, or 33 out of 38). Organisations also felt that the Initiative had **used the EU's global presence to facilitate the deployment of volunteers** (82%, or 31 organisations agreed). In addition, 74% (28 out of 38) of the organisations felt that the Initiative had **increased their capacity to undertake larger projects**, while 65% (24 out of 38) of the organisations believed the Initiative had **helped improve coordination of international multi-stakeholder projects**.

The provision of high-quality training for volunteers was seen as a distinct added value of the Initiative compared with other volunteering initiatives: 75% of volunteers (67 out of 89) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. A high level of professionalism instilled by

the Initiative was seen as an added value by 71%, or 61 out of 87 volunteers. They also saw added value in the opportunity to gain field experience (84%, or 74 out of 88) and the experience of working with local NGOs (72% or 63). In addition, 29% of former volunteers (26 out of 90) stated that they would not have undertaken a similar activity without the Initiative.

6.5 Comparison of the results of consultation activities

The table below presents the key results per consultation activity, organised by evaluation criteria, as well as by the level of consistency, complementarity and contradiction of results across consultation activities. Overall, as summarised in the table below, there was high convergence in the results of different consultation activities.

EVALUATION CRITERION	PUBLIC CONSULTATION	SURVEY	INTERVIEW PROGRAMME	CONSISTENCY OF RESULTS ACROSS CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES	COMPLEMENTARITY OF RESULTS ACROSS CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES	CONTRADICTION OF RESULTS ACROSS CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES
Relevance	As the EUAV Initiative was discontinued, the public consultation focused exclusively on assessing the dimensions of effectiveness and efficiency in the Initiative's final years, in line with the retrospective nature of the evaluation	Most organisations and individual volunteers felt that the Initiative was relevant to both the communities involved and the needs of individual volunteers. Individual volunteers largely considered the Initiative's cross-cutting priorities as relevant to the needs and expectations of society. Individuals positively assessed the support they received during the COVID-19 pandemic. Organisations assessed the flexibility of the Initiative positively but were less positive about the guidance and support provided.	Interviewed organisations believed that the work of volunteers was relevant to the life of local communities. Individual volunteers noted that the Initiative was relevant for developing their professional skills. Organisations reported negative impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Organisations appreciated the response of the Initiative in allowing them to adapt initial project proposals.	High	High	Low
Coherence	As the EUAV Initiative was discontinued, the public consultation focused exclusively on assessing the dimensions of effectiveness and efficiency in the Initiative's final years, in line with the retrospective nature of the evaluation		Hosting organisations interviewed indicated that the Initiative indirectly contributed to better alignment and cooperation among host organisations by increasing their visibility and capacity	High	High	Low
Effectiveness	Individuals and respondents representing organisations shared largely positive views	Individuals and organisations assessed the impact of the	Interviewed organisations highlighted that the Initiative had: (i) increased the knowledge and	High	High	Low

EVALUATION CRITERION	PUBLIC CONSULTATION	SURVEY	INTERVIEW PROGRAMME	CONSISTENCY OF RESULTS ACROSS CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES	COMPLEMENTARITY OF RESULTS ACROSS CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES	CONTRADICTION OF RESULTS ACROSS CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES
	about the impact of the Initiative on different stakeholder groups. Respondents representing organisations felt overall that the Initiative had succeeded in achieving its objectives.	programme on themselves very positively. Organisations believed that the EUAV Initiative had improved their ability to deliver humanitarian aid to the local community and felt that their work benefited the local community and social groups.	skills of staff; (ii) increased visibility and transparency; and (iii) improved local and international networks. Organisations also considered the following as important benefits: (i) additional funding support; (ii) activities resulting from the host organisations' new and improved local and international networks; and (iii) improved fundraising skills. Organisations overall appreciated the diverse background of volunteers, although some noted an occasional misalignment of expectations. Commission officials that were interviewed noted that some of the Initiative's provisions were unrealistic given its small scope and scale, which limited its wider impact.			
Efficiency	Respondents gave a modest assessment of the costs and benefits they experienced due to their participation	Volunteers provided mixed views of the financial compensation they received for their participation in the EUAV Initiative. Participation in the Initiative was seen as somewhat burdensome for both volunteers and organisations.	Organisations and volunteers provided mixed assessments of the budget, with multiple interviewees indicating that the funding amounts set aside did not reflect the real costs that were subsequently incurred. Organisations generally found the Initiative to be consistently	High	High	Low

EVALUATION CRITERION	PUBLIC CONSULTATION	SURVEY	INTERVIEW PROGRAMME	CONSISTENCY OF RESULTS ACROSS CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES	COMPLEMENTARITY OF RESULTS ACROSS CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES	CONTRADICTION OF RESULTS ACROSS CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES
		Volunteers were largely satisfied with the central training provided by the EACEA, but were less satisfied with the pre-deployment training and in-country training provided by the organisations.	efficient and responsive, although some experienced administrative challenges. Several organisations highlighted that the structure and requirements of the Initiative were challenging, particularly for smaller organisations.			
EU-added value	As the EUAV Initiative was discontinued, the public consultation focused exclusively on assessing the dimensions of effectiveness and efficiency in the Initiative's final years, in line with the retrospective nature of the evaluation	Organisations noted the Initiative's added value in contributing to: (i) improving systems and processes; (ii) increasing their capacity to undertake larger projects and international cooperation; and (iii) facilitating the deployment of volunteers. Individuals saw the provision of high-quality training for volunteers and a high level of professionalism as a distinct added value of the Initiative compared with other volunteering initiatives.	Organisations were able to use the skills and knowledge gained through the EUAV Initiative to secure international partnerships and funding, and reported increased visibility within the donor community, such as the EU, UN, World Bank and others.	High	High	Low

7. Annex IV. Evaluation matrix and, where relevant, details on answers to the evaluation questions (by criterion)

2014-2020 EUAV Initiative: Complete list of evaluation questions, assessment parameters and methods

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the EUAV Initiative was analysed by assessing how successful the Initiative was in achieving or progressing towards its objectives. This analysis examined whether the expected outputs, results, and impacts were delivered. While various data-collection and analysis methods contributed to the effectiveness assessment, surveys and case studies were particularly important in determining the impact of the Initiative.

Summary of evaluation findings

The EUAV Initiative faced significant challenges in achieving its targeted number of deployments, particularly due to travel restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the number of people who travelled outside the EU with the Initiative fell by 90% between 2019 and 2020. Despite these setbacks, individual volunteers benefited from improved skills and professional development, particularly in areas like project management and security training, while also developing various transversal skills in a development context. Participating organisations experienced increased capacity in disaster-risk reduction and disaster resilience, improving their visibility, credibility, and operational capabilities. The Initiative benefited supported communities, especially those vulnerable to natural disasters and migration, by providing support for resilience building and local disaster management. The Initiative also used more innovative approaches, such as online volunteering during the pandemic, to maintain community engagement and support.

Evaluation questions

EFFECTIVENESS	1.1. To what extent has the programme delivered the expected outputs, results and impacts?
EQ01	1.2. What negative and positive factors seem to be influencing outputs, results and impacts?

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- 1.1.1 To what extent has the programme delivered **outputs** specified in the intervention logic?
- 1.1.2 To what extent has the programme delivered **results** specified in the intervention logic?
- 1.1.3 To what extent has the programme delivered **impacts** specified in the intervention logic?
- 1.2.1 What **negative and positive factors** influenced the delivery of outputs, results and impacts?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

- Expected outputs (short-term results), results and impacts (medium-to-long-term results) have been achieved
- Description of negative and positive factors influencing outputs, results and impacts and explanation of their influence

EUAV INDICATORS

1.1.1. Outputs (short-term)

- Number and proportion of outputs produced
- Proportion of stakeholders satisfied with the outputs

1.2.1: Negative and positive factors influencing outputs, results and impacts

- List and description of positive and negative factors mentioned by:
 - stakeholders and policymakers
 - respondents to surveys and online public consultation
- Evidence from focus-group discussions
- Evidence from reports and internal documents
- Demonstration of the impact of the indicated factors during case-study analysis

1.1.2. – 1.1.3. Results and impacts (medium-to-long-term results)

Improve skills and knowledge of volunteers in the field of humanitarian aid and the terms and conditions of their engagement

- Proportion of participants who consider that their skills and employability have improved as a result of participation in the EUAV Initiative
- Proportion of participants that consider they have benefited from their participation in EUAV training
- Evidence that participating in the EUAV Initiative improved participants' skills and knowledge

Build the capacity of hosting organisations and foster volunteering in non-EU countries

- Number of hosting organisations that took part in the EUAV Initiative
- Evidence of changes in hosting organisations' standard operating procedures stemming from participating in the EUAV Initiative
- Proportion of organisations and institutions that have developed or improved their procedures as a result of their participation in the EUAV Initiative (e.g. dedicated roles/people responsible for mentoring of volunteers)

Make volunteering more coherent and consistent across Member States in order to improve opportunities for EU citizens to participate in humanitarian-aid activities and operations

- Number of certified sending organisations
- Number of certified hosting organisations
- Estimated number of organisations/institutions that continue to follow the EUAV Initiative's common standards, systems, processes and/or procedures for volunteer management outside EUAV projects
- The extent to which the Initiative was able to target its support to both:
(i) the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in the recipient/beneficiary local communities who are most in need; and (ii) the more specific development or resilience-building needs of local communities
- Evidence of contribution of common standards, systems, processes and/or procedures to increasing opportunities for EU citizens to participate in humanitarian-aid activities and operations

Contribute to increasing and improving the EU's capacity to provide humanitarian aid

- Proportion of stakeholders who think that the EUAV Initiative has helped to increase and improve the EU's humanitarian-aid capacities
- The extent to which the EU was able to fine-tune its support in delivering humanitarian aid that met the specific needs of different groups of people under the EUAV Initiative (both in terms of the initial flexibility to plan a more fine-tuned support adapted to a specific context, and in terms of actual success in delivering this fine-tuned support)
- Estimated number of people impacted by support in delivering humanitarian aid provided by the Initiative (population of the deployment communities)
- Number and quality of partnerships of participant organisations

Communicate the EU's humanitarian-aid principles agreed in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid

- The existence of the communication strategy itself, and evidence that this strategy reached its target audiences
- Perceptions of stakeholders and partners of the EU's commitment to humanitarian values
- Quantitative analysis of social-media activities (frequency, engagement score, etc.)

Improve capacity and resilience of vulnerable or disaster-affected communities in non-EU countries

- The extent to which vulnerable or disaster-affected communities were actively involved in the Initiative
- The extent to which local leaders were engaged in efforts to improve the capacity and resilience of their communities
- The extent to which community members improved the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters thanks to training and resources from the EUAV Initiative
- The extent to which vulnerable or disaster-affected communities have been empowered by the EUAV Initiative to take action to improve their own capacity and resilience

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Desk research including:
 - previous evaluations, reports and assessments of the Initiative;
 - cross-cutting/transnational studies on volunteering and solidarity;
 - research data and findings from position papers and recommendations produced by both: (i) relevant networks; and (ii) stakeholders;
 - monitoring data and examples of best practice from: (i) project databases; (ii) management tools (both public and internal); and (iii) Eurobarometer surveys.
- All remaining data collection and analysis methods (as this question covers the entirety of the intervention logic of the Initiative)

EFFECTIVENESS EQ02 *2.1 Has the programme achieved its purpose of promoting solidarity as a value and building communities of individuals committed to increasing solidarity across Europe and beyond?*

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

2.1.1. What is the share of EUAV Initiative participants who share the same understanding of ‘solidarity’ as a combination of empathy, active citizenship, human rights and inclusion?

2.1.2. What is the share of EUAV Initiative participants who engaged in other solidarity activities after taking part in the EUAV Initiative?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

- Participation level and participants’ attitudes
- Impact of the programmes on individuals and communities
- Collaboration of different operators

INDICATORS

Participation and participants' attitudes

- The number, gender, nationality and regional diversity of young people who participated in the programme
- The extent to which programme participants felt engaged and committed to promoting solidarity

Impact of the programme

- The extent to which the programmes had a measurable and positive impact on improving solidarity within communities

Collaboration

- The extent to which participating organisations and individuals have been able to organise collaboration and partnerships among different operators to promote solidarity at different levels and in different contexts

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Desk research including:
 - previous evaluations, reports and assessments of the Initiative;
 - cross-cutting/transnational studies on volunteering and solidarity;
 - research data and findings from position papers and recommendations produced by both: (i) relevant networks and (ii) stakeholders;
 - monitoring data and examples of best practice from: (i) project databases; (ii) management tools (both public and internal) and (iii) Eurobarometer surveys.
- All remaining data collection and analysis methods (as this question covers the entirety of the intervention logic of the programme for the two periods).

EFFECTIVENESS 3.1 With regard to the inclusion priority, what are the main real-life impacts of the 2014-2020 EUAV Initiative actions on young
EQ03 participants with fewer opportunities?

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

3.1.1. What is the share of participants with fewer opportunities in the Initiative?

3.1.2. How has participating in the EUAV Initiative impacted young people with fewer opportunities?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

- Identifying efforts to promote the inclusion of hard-to-reach groups, people with fewer opportunities and disadvantaged groups, and evidence of the results of these efforts
- Disaggregating results and impacts by group wherever possible and identifying the difference in the composition and volume of benefits obtained per average group member

INDICATORS

- Proportion of beneficiaries that have introduced measures to promote the participation of hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups aligned with the framework of inclusion measures and the inclusion and diversity strategy
- Disaggregating results and impacts (EQ1) in terms of hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups (especially participants with disabilities or health problems or participants facing barriers to education and training), and by gender
- Efforts to promote inclusion in hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups and the results of those efforts, identified by reviewing monitoring data, literature and project outputs
- Proportion of hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups in total participants

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Desk research including:
 - previous evaluations, reports and assessments of the Initiative;
 - cross-cutting/transnational studies on volunteering and solidarity;
 - research data and findings from position papers and recommendations produced by both: (i) relevant networks; and (ii) stakeholders
 - monitoring data and examples of best practice from: (i) project databases; and (ii) management tools (both public and internal).metanalysis of all findings related to disadvantaged groups;
 - analysis of existing monitoring and other data;
 - surveys of learners and practitioners;
 - interviews;
 - case studies;
 - online public consultation;
 - literature review;
 - review of project outputs.

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- 4.1.1. Has the EUAV Initiative had any unintended effects?
- 4.1.2. What unintended effects have affected the 2014-2020 EUAV Initiative?
- 4.1.3. How significant was/were the unintended effect(s)?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

- Identification and scope of unintended effects on participants
- Identification and scope of unintended effects in local communities and specific organisations

INDICATORS

- Feedback from participating young people and organisations on the unanticipated effects of the programmes
- Unintended reactions to social-media communication
- Estimation of the number of individuals and communities affected by the unintended consequences

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

These questions were evaluated using

- interviews, analysis of unstructured monitoring information (e.g. project reports), case studies, online public consultation.
- Desk research including literature review of:
 - annual programme activity/implementation reports from DG EAC, DG ECHO, and the EACEA;
 - previous evaluations, reports and assessments of the programmes;
 - cross-cutting/transnational studies on volunteering and solidarity;
 - research data and findings from position papers and recommendations produced by both: (i) relevant networks; and (ii) stakeholders;
 - monitoring data from: (i) project databases; and (ii) management tools (both public and internal);
 - case studies.

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

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- 5.1.1. Which impacts continued after the projects had ended (without EU support)?
- 5.1.2. How likely are the new impacts to continue after the end of the projects (without EU support)?
- 5.1.3. How do stakeholders perceive the duration of the effects?
- 5.1.4. How likely are the impacts to be achieved also in the new/ongoing programme?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

- Evidence of: (i) the pathways followed by participating individuals and organisations; and (ii) the role of the EUAV Initiative in developing skills and expanding the horizons of participating young people
- The extent to which the EUAV Initiative activities have built sustainable structures and systems in local communities or host organisations that can continue to function and have an impact after the intervention has ended
- The extent to which the activities have fostered a sense of ownership among local communities, by: (i) involving them in designing and implementing the intervention; and (ii) encouraging their continued engagement and commitment
- The extent to which the activities have had a multiplier effect, by inspiring other young people and organisations to engage in similar solidarity activities, and contributing to a broader culture of solidarity and social responsibility
- Evidence of EUAV Initiative projects contributing to organisational change and partnerships
- Evidence of EUAV projects contributing to systemic and policy change and partnerships at community level
- The extent to which the activities, by developing the skills, knowledge, and resources of local communities and host organisations, have increased their capacity to continue to address the issues targeted by the intervention after it has ended
- The extent to which the activities have had a lasting impact on the participants, by increasing their awareness, skills, and knowledge, and encouraging their continued engagement in solidarity activities

INDICATORS

- Evidence of: (i) spillover effects within and beyond participating organisations; (ii) new and innovative approaches being adopted and institutionalised; and (iii) new capacities and partnerships being built and maintained
- Proportion of participants who perceive and have evidence of positive changes as a result of the EUAV Initiative
- Proportion of participants and host organisations who continued to engage in solidarity activities after participating in the EUAV Initiative
- Evidence of: (i) new policy approaches, guidelines and tools being adopted; (ii) innovative approaches being institutionalised via changes in legislation; and (iii) new capacities and partnerships being built and maintained

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Desk research including:
 - research data and findings from position papers and recommendations produced by both: (i) relevant networks; and (ii) stakeholders;
 - monitoring data and examples of best practice from project databases and management tools (both public and internal);
 - data and documents on national results, initiatives and developments.
- A survey was also conducted of individual volunteers of the EUAV Initiative and organisations that participated in the Initiative.
- Interviews were conducted with individuals (participants), participating organisations, national authorities and external experts.

EFFECTIVENESS
EQ06 *6.1 To what extent are the programme's results adequately disseminated and exploited? How successful have the programmes been in attracting and reaching target audiences and groups at individual and organisational level? How well is the EUAV Initiative known to volunteering communities?*

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

6.1.1. How good was the reach of the programme's primary dissemination activities? How active were the participating organisations in spreading information about the programme through their networks and communication tools?

6.1.2. What was the level of awareness about the EUAV Initiative among programme applicants, participants (before and after participation) and stakeholders?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

The programme results are being adequately disseminated and exploited if:

- there is evidence that awareness of the EUAV Initiative increased in the 2014-2020 period;
- plans and a strategy for dissemination of the results of the EUAV Initiative at EU level existed;
- the Initiative achieved its key communication performance indicators

INDICATORS

At European level

- The existence – and characteristics – of the social media communication strategy itself, including: (i) frequency and distribution of content; and (ii) types of media chosen to deliver the programme’s messages
- The social-media communication strategy met its key performance indicators
- Number of communication and dissemination outputs, including those specifically targeting young people with fewer opportunities
- Evidence on available communication channels for applicants
- The number of people actively engaged with the information disseminated via the Initiative’s homepage
- Demographic and geographic characteristics of the individuals following and interacting with the Initiative, as well as the potential reach, filtered by country, gender and age group

At beneficiary/project level

- Participating organisations use different channels to disseminate the message about the Initiative
- Proportion of participating organisations that shared the outputs and results of the projects they hosted or supported
- Proportion of potential beneficiaries that identify a lack of information about the Initiative as an obstacle to participation
- Proportion of participants who shared information about the programmes

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Desk research including:
 - EUAV Initiative annual work programmes;
 - previous evaluations, reports and assessments of the programmes;
 - cross-cutting/transnational studies on volunteering and solidarity;
 - research data and findings from the position papers and recommendations produced by both: (i) relevant networks; and (ii) stakeholders.
- A survey was also conducted of individual volunteers of the EUAV Initiative and organisations that participated in the Initiative.
- Interviews were conducted with individuals (participants), participating organisations, supervisory bodies, national authorities and external experts.

Efficiency

Efficiency was analysed by examining how effectively the EUAV Initiative used resources to achieve its intended objectives. This analysis evaluated whether the outputs, results, and impacts were achieved with a reasonable amount of financial and other resources, and determined

whether the resources allocated were necessary, adequate and sufficient. It also scrutinised the efficiency of the management processes at all levels of the Initiative.

Summary of evaluation findings

The EUAV Initiative demonstrated overall efficiency in budget execution and programme management, despite some areas needing improvement in measuring outputs and outcomes. The available funding was sufficient, with only around 76% of the funds being spent, mainly due to delays in starting up the Initiative and the impact of COVID-19. However, a significant number of volunteers provided negative feedback on the level of funding. The expenditures were consistent with the budget allocation as per Regulation (EU) No 375/2014, but the rationale behind these allocations was unclear, and delays led to a low programme implementation rate of 37% in terms of participants deployed²⁶. Performance management showed that actual costs per organisation were 10% lower than anticipated, indicating some cost-effectiveness, although limited data on outputs and outcomes made it difficult to fully assess overall efficiency.

Evaluation questions

EFFICIENCY
EQ07

7.1 How cost-effective were the various operational actions of the 2014-2020 EUAV Initiative?

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

7.1.1. How costly were the operational actions? How did the costs change over time?

7.1.2. Did they achieve the intended objectives?

²⁶ This indicates that the Initiative allocated 76% of its budget towards achieving 29% of its objectives.

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

- Costs are the minimum necessary to achieve the intended effects
- Unit costs are comparable across actions and between programmes (NB: taking account of differences in activities, such as duration and nature of activities undertaken)
- Necessity and proportionality of EU funding
- EU- added value of EU funding (i.e. funding is necessary to achieve the intended effects)
- No obvious inefficiencies or wasted resources in activities and in programme management
- Unit costs and other costs are comparable across interventions and with other EU programmes (NB: taking account of differences in the programmes)

INDICATORS

Cost-effectiveness of various actions and comparisons of the relative costs and effects of the interventions

- Average unit costs (by categories of eligible costs) in actions supported under the EUAV Initiative
- Comparing/benchmarking with similar programmes (e.g. UN Youth volunteers, European Solidarity Corps) in terms of the average unit costs in similar cost categories
- Percentage change in the average unit costs (by categories of eligible costs) in actions supported by the programmes (or compared to the simplified cost options)
- Qualitative descriptions of changes in capabilities/capacities alongside associated unit costs
- Participants' and other stakeholders' perceptions of value for money
- Proportion of participants who view the terms of conditions of their engagement in the EUAV Initiative positively

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Cost-effectiveness analysis, benchmarking analysis, organisational, operational and managerial assessments.
- Analysis of administrative and monitoring data, survey of organisations, survey of individual volunteers, stakeholder consultations, statistical analysis, interviews and case studies
- Desk research including:
 - annual programme activity/implementation reports on the Initiative from DG EAC, DG ECHO, and the EACEA;
 - checks on cumulative programme performance overviews;
 - checks of up-to-date internal financial data;
 - previous evaluations, reports and assessments of the programmes.

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- 9.1.1. What was the size of the programme's budgets?
- 9.1.2. What funding models supported the programme?
- 9.1.3. Was the funding sufficient to reach the programme's goals and fulfil its objectives?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

- The Initiative achieved its goals and the organisation, operations, management modes and tools are/were implemented at minimum costs
- The results of the Initiative were commensurate with the earmarked budget
- The level of unsatisfied demand was comparable with other programmes and in line with stakeholder expectations
- Degree to which objectives were fulfilled and intended effects were achieved relative to baseline

INDICATORS

Appropriateness of the budget to the planned achievements

- The extent to which the Initiative's targets were achieved
- The extent to which the demand for funding was satisfied (success rates)
- Correlation between funding allocations and achievement of the overall targets
- The extent to which the boundary conditions (primarily financial arrangements) of different actions affected their capacity to contribute to the achievement of the overall targets
- Opinions of EU policymakers and stakeholders regarding the Initiative's progress towards its targets using available funds
- The extent to which the interventions' objectives are achievable given the historical evidence on the cost-effectiveness of the EUAV Initiative
- The extent to which the funding allocation for different actions of the Initiative is likely to be sufficient to achieve the specific programme objectives
- Opinions of programme beneficiaries on the sufficiency of funding
- The extent to which organisations' beneficiaries confirm that participation in the Initiative had a structuring effect on their entities

Appropriateness of the distribution of funds across the different actions

- Proportion of the overall programme budgets that were allocated to quality-support measures
- Evidence that the distribution of the programme budget was informed by evidence on the cost-effectiveness of actions supported under the successor programmes in similar fields
- Quantitative assessment of the extent to which the Initiative's highly cost-effective actions accounted for the largest share of the overall budget

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Analysis of administrative and monitoring data
- Survey of organisations
- Statistical analysis
- Interviews
- Case studies
- Online public consultation
- Benchmarks
- Desk research including:
 - annual programme activity/implementation reports on the Initiative from DG EAC, DG ECHO, and the EACEA;
 - cumulative programme-performance overviews;
 - checks of up-to-date internal financial data;
 - previous evaluations, reports and assessments of the Initiative;
 - research data and findings from the position papers and recommendations of relevant networks and stakeholders.

EFFICIENCY *10.1 What were the financial absorption levels?*

EQ10 *10.2 Has the target number of participants been achieved?*

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

10.1.1. What were the financial absorption levels?

10.2.1. What were the target numbers of participants?

10.2.2. Have these targets been achieved?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

The programme is considered successful if:

- budget consumption is high (<90%) in line with planned budget;
- budget consumption is evenly distributed over time;
- the number of repeat participant organisations and new participant organisations is in line with or above the set targets (or impact assessment);
- the number of participants is in line with set targets.

INDICATORS

- | | |
|---|--|
| ▪ The percentage of budget spent vs planned | ▪ Number of repeat participant organisations |
| ▪ Stakeholder feedback on the reasons for achieving or falling short of set absorption rates or targets | ▪ Number of new participant organisations |
| | ▪ Number of participants |

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Administrative and monitoring data,
- Consultations (interviews and surveys)
- Desk research including:
- annual programme activity/implementation reports on the Initiative from DG EAC, DG ECHO, and the EACEA;
 - cumulative programme-performance overviews;
 - up-to-date internal financial data;
 - previous evaluations, reports and assessments of the programmes.

EFFICIENCY *11.1 How efficient is cooperation between the different management bodies (Commission – Executive Agency), and to what extent did*
EQ11 *the Commission fulfil its guiding role in the process?*

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- 11.2.1. What were the achievements of cooperation between the different management bodies?
- 11.2.2. What do stakeholders think about the Commission's guiding role in the process?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

- Programme management costs as a share of the programme budget are similar to comparable EU programmes
- Occurrence of problems or delays in decision-making
- Occurrence of problems in coordination
- Views on the usefulness of management tools
- Views on opportunities for improvements

INDICATORS

Appropriateness, efficiency and functioning of the overall institutional structure of programme management

- The extent to which programme-management and programme-implementation roles are well-defined, detailed enough and clearly attributed to the involved management bodies
- The extent to which the distribution of such roles is perceived to be efficient by the stakeholders
- Absence of (perceived or actual) overlap in management and implementation roles across the management bodies concerned

Efficiency of cooperation between the different management bodies

- Clarity and sufficiency of the formal rules setting out cooperation links and practices between the different management bodies covering the whole programme-management cycle
- Presence of non-formal cooperation links and practices between the different management bodies
- Sufficiency and adequacy of the information flow and collaboration between the relevant management bodies throughout the programme-management cycle (i.e. whether this information flow and collaboration meets the needs and expectations of the bodies concerned)

Extent to which the Commission fulfils its guiding role in the programme-management process

- The Commission provides clear *ex ante* formulation and explanation of rules and their explanation
- The Commission provides ongoing guidance and support
- Stability and consistency of guidance issued

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Analysis of administrative and monitoring data
- Survey of organisations
- Survey of individual volunteers
- Statistical analysis
- Interviews

- Case studies
- Online public consultation
- Desk research including:
 - legal and policy documents, including EU regulations, communication policies and relevant memoranda of understanding and working arrangements;
 - annual programme activity/implementation reports on the Initiative from DG EAC, DG ECHO and the EACEA;
 - checks of up-to-date internal financial data.

EFFICIENCY EQ12

To what extent were the monitoring mechanisms applied by the Commission and the Executive Agency efficient/cost effective?

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

12.1.1. To what extent have the monitoring mechanisms met their objectives?

12.1.2. What were the costs of the monitoring mechanisms?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Level of financial and human resources devoted to monitoring as a proportion of the Initiative budget compared with other EU programmes ▪ Instances of simplification in monitoring between the two periods of the Initiative | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Occurrence of problems or delays in monitoring ▪ Identification of errors, etc. by auditors ▪ Grant recipients' satisfaction with monitoring activities |
|--|---|

INDICATORS

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proportion of programme budgets allocated to monitoring ▪ Categorisation of scope and scale of simplifications identified in programme documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quality of monitoring reports ▪ Number and proportion of errors, etc. identified by auditors ▪ Recipients' level of satisfaction with monitoring ▪ Type of decisions enabled by monitoring activities |
|---|--|

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Analysis of administrative and monitoring data
- Survey of organisations

-
- Stakeholder consultations
 - Analysis of documentation relating to monitoring and decision-making at programme level
 - Statistical analysis
 - Desk research comprising:
 - legal and policy documents, including EU regulations, monitoring frameworks and relevant memoranda of understanding and working arrangements;
 - programme guidelines;
 - annual programme activity/implementation reports on the Initiative from DG EAC, DG ECHO, and the EACEA;
 - annual audit reports;
 - up-to-date internal financial and monitoring data.

EFFICIENCY EQ13 *To what extent do the indicators identified for the programme in the legal basis correspond to the purposes of the monitoring and evaluation framework? How could the overall management and monitoring system be improved?*

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

13.1.1. What is the monitoring and evaluation framework?

13.1.2. What are the indicators identified for the programme in the legal basis?

13.1.3. What are the differences between the indicators and the monitoring and evaluation framework?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

The programme is considered largely successful if:

- there is a clear framework showing how chosen indicators relate to programme objectives;
- indicators are SMART and relate to all main activities within each action;
- baseline values are identified for all indicators;
- target values for indicators demonstrate an appropriate level of ambition;
- monitoring data for indicators are available in the legal basis;
- the data collected matches the definition of the indicator;
- the Commission DGs and the Executive Agency are satisfied with:
 - the correspondence of the indicators identified in the Initiative's legal basis to the purposes of the monitoring and evaluation framework;
 - the usefulness of the indicators;
 - the fitness for purpose of the indicators;
 - the ease of collecting necessary data;
- grant recipients are satisfied with monitoring indicators;
- the indicators are aligned with indicators monitored in comparable EU programmes.

INDICATORS

Extent to which indicators identified for the programme in the legal basis correspond to the monitoring purposes

- Evidence of sufficiency of available monitoring data to inform programme management and policy-making processes at EU level
- The extent to which the monitoring indicators measure the programmes' aims and objectives and provide relevant monitoring information for decision-making
- Number and properties of indicators which enable the EACEA to effectively follow up and monitor the financial and non-financial progress of the ongoing projects
- Extent to which the applied monitoring mechanisms (including IT tools) correspond to the needs of the Commission and the EACEA
- Extent to which these instruments (including IT tools) are efficient/cost-effective in terms of their administrative costs (relative to their benefits)

Areas for improvement in the overall management and monitoring system

- Areas where monitoring mechanisms applied are inadequate and/or disproportionate
- Areas where relevant indicators have not been identified and put in place
- Areas where indicators set out in the legislation are not sufficient
- Areas where indicators set out in the legislation are redundant

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Analysis of administrative and monitoring data

- Survey of organisations
- Interviews
- Desk research comprising:
 - legal and policy documents, including EU regulations, monitoring frameworks and relevant memoranda of understanding and working arrangements;
 - programme guidelines;
 - annual programme activity/implementation reports on the Initiative from DG EAC, DG ECHO, and the EACEA;
 - up-to-date internal financial and monitoring data.

EFFICIENCY

EQ14

To what extent were the management-support tools adequate and sufficient to support sound management of the programme?

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- 21.1.1. What was the role of the management-support tools in programme management?
- 21.1.2. What added value did these tools generate?
- 21.1.3. Were these tools user-friendly and operational? How often did problems with tool operations occur?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The purpose, nature and scope of the information processed by the tools can be traced back to the legal basis ▪ The functionalities of the suite of tools were consistent with one another, addressed a specific user base, and prevented instances where the user was asked to enter the same information on several different occasions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Occurrence of problems or delays related to inadequacy or insufficiency of management-support tools ▪ Tools enabled best management practices to be implemented across the programme |
|--|---|

INDICATORS

- Type of best management practices enabled by the tools
- Number and types of documented problems or delays due to inadequacy or insufficiency of management tools

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Analysis of administrative and monitoring data
- Analysis of documentation relating to programme management

- Desk research comprising:
 - documentation of – and guidelines for – tools
 - administrative and monitoring data on the tools from the Commission.

EFFICIENCY
EQ15

To what extent did the anti-fraud measures prevent and detect fraud in good time?

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

15.1.1. Which anti-fraud measures did the programmes use? Did they function as expected?

15.1.2. How has the level of fraud changed over time?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

- | | |
|---|--|
| ▪ Level of fraud relative to comparable EU programmes | ▪ Views of Commission DGs and the Executive Agency on the effectiveness of anti-fraud measures |
| ▪ Level of fraud under different management models is consistent | |
| ▪ Internal controls make possible the swift detection of fraud and the implementation of anti-fraud measures (such as the Early Detection and Exclusion System) | ▪ Auditor reports confirm the effectiveness of anti-fraud measures |

INDICATORS

- | | |
|--|--|
| ▪ Number of cases of fraud reported | ▪ Confidence in anti-fraud measures expressed by audit reports at EU or national level |
| ▪ Type of anti-fraud measures implemented | |
| ▪ Estimation of the number of cases of fraud avoided (and the value of fraud avoided) through the application of anti-fraud measures | ▪ Variations in the level of fraud across interventions |
| ▪ Confidence of Commission DGs and the Executive Agency in anti-fraud measures | |

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Analysis of administrative and monitoring data
- Interviews
- Analysis of documentation relating to programme management and auditing
- Desk research comprising:
 - annual programme activity/implementation reports of the Initiative from DG EAC, DG ECHO, and the EACEA;

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- annual audit reports;
 - administrative and monitoring data on fraud from the Commission;
 - documentation and guidelines related to anti-fraud measures.

Relevance

Relevance was analysed by examining how the EUAV Initiative's objectives aligned with wider EU policy goals and priorities. This examination determined whether the Initiative reflected current and future needs. The analysis assessed whether the Initiative's activities still addressed the most important issues for volunteers, organisations, and other stakeholders within the context of overall EU and national strategic priorities.

Summary of evaluation findings

The EUAV Initiative was highly relevant in: (i) addressing hosting organisations' need to build capacity; and (ii) providing timely support and expertise to partner organisations. It addressed well the broader need to improve and increase EU capacity to provide humanitarian aid, adopting a comprehensive approach that most participating organisations acknowledged as effectively addressing persistent needs in less-developed countries. The Initiative also addressed the key needs of participating volunteers and host organisations, improving their transversal skills, building an understanding of the challenges facing less-developed countries, and preparing volunteers for careers in international development.

Evaluation questions

RELEVANCE
EQ16

To what extent were European social needs addressed and reflected in the 2014-2020 EUAV Initiative?

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

16.1.1. Which European social needs did the EUAV Initiative address and reflect?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

- Objectives and priorities were in line with European strategic policy documents
- The EUAV Initiative's commitment to addressing key challenges and needs at European level is confirmed by key European and national policymakers and stakeholders
- Measures could be adjusted in line with the (emerging) needs and challenges of participants and host organisations

INDICATORS

Extent to which the Initiative reflected and addressed key socio-economic needs and challenges

- Strength of logical links between: (i) the objectives, priorities and actions/activities of the EUAV Initiative; and (ii) the needs (both policy needs and socio-economic needs) in the areas of volunteering, solidarity and humanitarian aid identified in European strategic policy documents
- The extent to which key European and national policymakers and stakeholders confirm that the EUAV Initiative was pertinent to addressing key challenges and needs at European level
- Links between the EUAV Initiative and national goals and activities
- The extent to which the programmes satisfy the needs of participants in solidarity and humanitarian-aid projects

Relevance of the EUAV Initiative's design and intervention logic

- Strength of logical links between: (i) the current Initiative's design/project selection criteria; and (ii) key European priorities in both the relevant fields (volunteering, solidarity and humanitarian aid) and socio-economic development
- The extent to which key European and national policymakers confirm that the preferences for certain actions, priorities or geographical areas under the EUAV Initiative were pertinent to the key strategic objectives of the European Union
- Proportion of EUAV Initiative participants who indicated that no other funding was available at national or international level to support the type of activities they were engaged in

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Desk research comprising:
 - EUAV Initiative annual work programmes;
 - legal and policy documents, including EU regulations and relevant strategic policy documents;
 - previous evaluations, reports and assessments of the programmes;
 - cross-cutting/transnational studies on volunteering and solidarity;
 - research data and findings from position papers and recommendations produced by both: (i) relevant networks; and (ii) stakeholders;
 - data and documents on national results, initiatives and developments.
- Survey of individual EUAV Initiative volunteers and organisations that participated in the EUAV Initiative.
- Interviews with individuals (participants), participating organisations, supervisory bodies (DG EAC), national authorities, EU bodies and policymakers and external experts.

RELEVANCE

EQ17

Did the programme priorities reflect social expectations?

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

17.1.1. What perceptions did key stakeholders have of solidarity, humanitarian aid and youth engagement?

17.1.2. What were stakeholders' opinions on the programme priorities?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

- Stakeholders perceived programme priorities as meeting their needs and expectations

INDICATORS

- Share of participants in online public consultation who agreed that their expectations were met
- Share of survey respondents who agreed that programme priorities met social expectations
- Interview data providing evidence that programme priorities met social expectations

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Desk research comprising:
 - EUAV Initiative annual work programmes;
 - legal and policy documents (including EU regulations);
 - previous evaluations, reports and assessments of the programmes;
 - cross-cutting/transnational studies on volunteering and solidarity;
 - data and documents on national results, initiatives and developments;
 - Eurobarometer surveys;
 - research data and findings from position papers and recommendations produced by both: (i) relevant networks; and (ii) stakeholders;
 - Ab online public consultation.
- Interviews with different stakeholders
- Surveys of individual volunteers and organisations.

Coherence

The EUAV Initiative's coherence was analysed by assessing how well the Initiative aligned with other EU programmes and overarching EU strategies in related fields.

Summary of evaluation findings

The EUAV Initiative demonstrated coherence with other EU programmes, including the European Solidarity Corps, the former European Voluntary Service, and Erasmus+, due to its broader geographical scope and specific activities. Its objectives also aligned well with the EU's humanitarian agenda, although there was limited evidence of synergies between the EUAV Initiative and other EU activities in the field of humanitarian aid. The Initiative was also perceived as coherent with national policies in host countries, and informal links were established with volunteer networks in EU Member States. Stakeholders particularly valued the Initiative for its role in strengthening local capacities, especially through training.

Evaluation questions

COHERENCE
EQ18

To what extent was the 2014-2020 EUAV Initiative consistent with relevant EU programmes with similar objectives?

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

18.1.1. What are the objectives of relevant EU programmes?

18.2.1. How did the EUAV Initiative interact with and complement these programmes?

18.2.2. How did the EUAV Initiative support the implementation of cross-cutting priorities?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

Coherent if:

- the objectives were consistent with those of relevant EU programmes;
- the programme addressed cross-cutting priorities;
- there was effective coordination between applicable DGs to ensure consistency;
- stakeholders perceived different programmes as complementary.

INDICATORS

Extent to which the objectives were consistent with those of relevant EU programmes

- Evidence of shared funding for related activities
- Existing mechanisms for coordination among the DGs/units responsible for the EUAV Initiative and other relevant programmes
- Links between the formulation of EUAV Initiative objectives and the objectives of other relevant programmes

Extent to which effective coordination existed between DGs to ensure consistency

- Existing mechanisms for communication and interaction between the DGs/units responsible for the EUAV Initiative and other relevant programmes

Extent to which objectives, target groups and activities were consistent with EU programmes with similar objectives

- Share of survey respondents perceiving the different relevant programmes as complementary
- Evidence in interview data that different stakeholders perceive the programmes as complementary

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Desk research (annual work programmes, legal and policy documents, previous evaluations, reports and assessments of the programmes and cross-cutting/transnational studies on volunteering and solidarity)
- Analysis of existing monitoring and other data
- Interviews with different stakeholders
- Surveys of individual volunteers and participating organisations
- Case studies

COHERENCE EQ19 *To what extent did the design of the 2014-2020 EUAV Initiative provide appropriate links and support to EU policy agendas, in particular policy initiatives and political priorities?*

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- 19.1.1. Which European policy initiatives and political priorities were relevant to the field of solidarity and humanitarian aid?
- 19.1.2. Which elements of the EUAV Initiative were linked to the relevant European policy initiatives and political priorities?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

- The EUAV Initiative could be linked to specific EU-level policy initiatives and political priorities

INDICATORS

- Links between the EUAV Initiative and different EU-level policy agendas and priorities in the legal basis of the EUAV
- Links between EUAV Initiative needs and different EU-level strategies, action plans and working groups' agendas
- Links between EUAV Initiative objectives and different EU-level strategies, action plans and working groups' agendas
- Links between EUAV Initiative activities and different EU-level strategies, action plans and working groups' agendas
- Evidence of the EUAV Initiative's contribution to the implementation, monitoring and support of policymaking in various EU policy areas

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Desk research including:
 - regulations;
 - annual work programmes;
 - policy documents (including EU regulations and relevant strategic policy documents);
 - previous evaluations, reports and assessments of the programme;
 - cross-cutting/transnational studies on volunteering and solidarity.
- Analysis of existing monitoring and other data
- Interviews with EU bodies, EU policymakers and external experts.

COHERENCE
EQ20

To what extent was the 2014-2020 EUAV Initiative consistent with various interventions pursued at national and international level which have similar objectives? To what extent did the 2014-2020 EUAV Initiative complement other Member States' interventions/initiatives in the field of volunteering in support of humanitarian aid?

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

20.1.1. Which national and international policy initiatives and political priorities were/are relevant to the field of solidarity and humanitarian aid?

20.2.1. Which aspects of the EUAV Initiative were coherent with the relevant objectives of: (i) national policy initiatives; and (ii) international policy initiatives?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

- | | |
|--|--|
| ▪ The objectives were consistent with identified relevant interventions pursued at national and international level | ▪ The activities were consistent with identified interventions pursued at national and international level which have similar objectives |
| ▪ The target groups were consistent with identified relevant interventions pursued at national and international level which have similar objectives | ▪ Stakeholders and experts perceived different programmes as complementary |

INDICATORS

- Correspondence (in terms of objectives, target groups, and activities) between the EUAV Initiative and national, regional or international initiatives on volunteering in support of humanitarian aid in different Member States
- Existing mechanisms to allow for mutually reinforcing interventions and/or learning between the EUAV Initiative and initiatives pursued at national level which have similar objectives
- Evidence of overlaps and duplications between the EUAV Initiative activities and various initiatives in the fields of volunteering in support of humanitarian aid in different Member States
- Examples of specific (non-financial or financial) consistency created as a result of mutually reinforcing actions between the EUAV Initiative and other Member States' interventions/initiatives in the fields of volunteering in support of humanitarian aid in different Member States
- Share of survey respondents perceiving different programmes as complementary and opinions of interviewed respondents
- Share of public consultation participants perceiving different programmes as complementary

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Desk research including:
 - annual work programmes;
 - legal and policy documents, including EU regulations;
 - previous evaluations, reports and assessments of the programme;
 - cross-cutting/transnational studies on volunteering and solidarity;
 - data and documents on national results, initiatives and developments.
- Interviews with different stakeholder groups
- Surveys of individual volunteers and participating organisations
- Online public consultations.

EU-added value

EU-added value was analysed by assessing the extent to which the results and impacts of the EUAV Initiative materialised exclusively due to the EU's intervention and would not have occurred without it. This analysis evaluated four key effects: volume, scope, role and process. These effects were assessed by measuring: (i) the volume of actions achieved; (ii) the scope of engagement with target groups; (iii) the Initiative's role as a supporter of innovation and best practice; and (iv) the sustainability and learning impact of the Initiative's results.

Summary of evaluation findings

The EUAV Initiative provided EU-added value by contributing to common standards for humanitarian aid volunteering across EU Member States. It improved the capacity of participating organisations to train and host international volunteers and made the most of the EU's global presence to increase the deployment of volunteers. The involvement of well-trained volunteers not only added distinct EU value but also improved the operational capacities of organisations involved in humanitarian assistance. The Initiative enabled local organisations to scale up their operations, improve their effectiveness in humanitarian aid delivery and undertake larger projects by improving local capacities and volunteer management. Additionally, the Initiative contributed to developing international collaboration and networks.

Evaluation questions

EU-ADDED VALUE EQ21	<i>What additional value and benefit resulted from EU activities, compared to what could be achieved by Member States at national and/or regional level? What did the 2014-2020 EUAV Initiative offer over and above other education and training support or solidarity schemes available at both international and national levels?</i>
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OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

21.1.1. What were the national and regional solidarity and humanitarian-aid actions?

21.1.2. What were the differences between: (i) national/regional solidarity and humanitarian-aid initiatives; and (ii) the EUAV Initiative?

21.2.1. What were the differences between other European education and training support or solidarity schemes and the EUAV Initiative?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

Additional value is achieved if evidence shows that:

- a comparable scope and volume of projects would not have reached people in need without the EUAV Initiative;
- opportunities for complementarities with other relevant EU activities are successfully exploited;
- the EUAV Initiative provided better economic value compared with other available programmes;
- the EUAV Initiative contributed to the development of innovative common standards, systems and/or operating procedures for volunteering.

INDICATORS

A comparable scope and volume of projects would not have reached targeted communities without the EUAV Initiative

- Number of projects undertaken under the scope of the EUAV Initiative
- Number of individuals who participated under the scope of the EUAV Initiative
- Monetary value of project activities conducted under the scope of the EUAV Initiative
- Share of volunteers claiming that without the EUAV Initiative they would not have had a chance to volunteer abroad, and examples of their projects
- Number of deployment countries within the EUAV Initiative
- Examples of transnational mobility that would not have taken place without the EUAV Initiative
- Examples of the EUAV Initiative's ability to react to crises that other national, regional or international initiatives could not have done

Development of innovative common standards, systems, and/or operating procedures for volunteering

- Number of organisations that received a quality label under the EUAV Initiative
- Examples of standards, systems and operating procedures that were adopted by participating organisations as a result of EUAV Initiative programmes
- Share of organisations claiming that without the EUAV Initiative they would not have had a chance to undertake comparable activities
- The degree of satisfaction among participants and stakeholders with the adopted standards, systems, processes and/or procedures
- The quality and standard of volunteer training

Opportunities for complementarities with other relevant EU activities are successfully exploited

- *The objectives were consistent with relevant EU programmes*

The EUAV Initiative provided better economic value compared to other available programmes

- Cost-effectiveness of the EUAV Initiative compared with other available programmes

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Desk research including:
 - annual programme activity/implementation reports of the Initiative from DG EAC, DG ECHO, and the EACEA;
 - previous evaluations, reports and assessments of the programmes;
 - cross-cutting/transnational studies on volunteering and solidarity;

- data and documents on national results, initiatives and developments;
- monitoring data and examples of best practice from project databases and management tools (both public and internal).
- Interviews with different stakeholders
- Survey of organisations
- Stakeholder workshops/focus groups.

EU-ADDED
VALUE
EQ22

To what extent did the 2014-2020 EUAV Initiative promote cooperation between participating countries?

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- 22.1.1. How did the EUAV Initiative's cross-country arrangements work?
- 22.1.2 What was the scope of the EUAV Initiative's cross-country arrangements?
- 22.1.3. Would these arrangements have been possible without the EUAV Initiative?

JUDGEMENT CRITERIA

- The extent to which the EUAV Initiative promoted cooperation between Member States and non-EU countries
- The EUAV Initiative increased cooperation and mutual learning between organisations in EU Member States

INDICATORS

The EUAV Initiative increased cooperation and mutual learning between organisations in EU Member States

- Number of new partnerships and collaboration networks established between organisations, agencies and authorities thanks to their participation in the programme
- Evidence of continued partnerships between organisations in Member States and organisations in non-EU countries even after the projects have ended
- Evidence that without the EUAV Initiative schemes, the funded international cooperation projects might not have happened
- The extent to which cooperation projects could have taken place through programmes other than the EUAV Initiative
- Evidence of the established practices and procedures in the new partnerships and collaboration networks
- Evidence of learning outputs achieved in the partnerships

The extent to which the EUAV Initiative promoted cooperation between Member States and non-EU countries

- Number of new partnerships and collaboration networks established between organisations, agencies and authorities thanks to their participation in the programmes
- Evidence that without the EUAV Initiative, the funded international cooperation projects might not have happened
- Evidence of the established practices and procedures in the new partnerships and collaboration networks
- Evidence of continued partnerships between organisations in Member States and organisations in non-EU countries even after the projects have ended
- Evidence of learning outputs achieved through the partnerships
- The extent to which cooperation projects could have taken place through programmes other than the EUAV Initiative

LIST OF KEY DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

- Desk research including:
 - previous evaluations, reports and assessments of the programmes;
 - cross-cutting/transnational studies on volunteering and solidarity;
 - data and documents on national results, initiatives and developments;
 - research data and findings from position papers and recommendations produced by both: (i) relevant networks; and (ii) stakeholders;
 - analysis of existing monitoring and other data.
- Interviews with DG EAC, the EACEA and national authorities.

8. Annex IV: Overview of benefits and costs and, where relevant, table on simplification and burden reduction

2014-2020 EUAV Initiative

Action	Anticipated output	Anticipated results/impact	Costs	Benefits	Cost effectiveness assessment
Volunteering	Volunteers are deployed	<p><u>Individuals:</u> Improved volunteer skills and knowledge in the field of humanitarian aid</p> <p><u>Organisations:</u> Hosting organisations benefit from additional staff and knowledge-sharing</p> <p><u>Local communities:</u> Improved capacity and resilience of vulnerable or disaster-affected communities in non-EU countries</p>	<p>Planned budget: EUR 60 270 000</p> <p>Indicative cost per individual volunteer: EUR 49 168.47</p>	<p><u>Individual volunteers:</u> Planned: 4 175 Deployed: 1 192</p> <p>More than 80% (N=92) of surveyed individual volunteers reported that they increased their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge of humanitarian aid/development cooperation • development of skills to provide humanitarian aid/development cooperation • knowledge of humanitarian principles • knowledge about the reality in the field • desire to work in the field of humanitarian aid/development cooperation. <p><u>Organisations:</u> 89% (N=27) of hosting organisations agreed that the Initiative increased their capacity to provide humanitarian aid to the local community; 78% (N=27) agreed that their awareness of – and understanding of – EU humanitarian aid principles increased.</p> <p><u>Local communities:</u> 57% (N=92) of individual volunteers and 85% (N=27) of hosting organisations believed that the work of EU Aid Volunteers benefited local communities and social</p>	<p><u>Assessment:</u> Adequate (/)</p> <p>Rationale:</p> <p>The cost per individual volunteer in the EUAV Initiative was commensurate with those of comparable programmes (such as the International UN Youth Volunteers Programme). Effectiveness was described as very satisfactory by individual volunteers and organisations.</p>

Action	Anticipated output	Anticipated results/impact	Costs	Benefits	Cost effectiveness assessment
				groups by addressing important needs; 36% (N=91) of individuals believed that it increased the resilience of disaster-affected communities.	
Technical assistance (TA) and capacity-building (CB) for organisations	Organisations' staff receive training	Strengthened capacity of hosting and sending organisations	Planned budget for training, capacity building and certification: EUR 80.85 million The average cost per organisation participating in TA/CB activities was EUR 56 000 ²⁷ .	<u>Participating organisations</u> ²⁸ : Planned: 635 Actual: 439 83% (N=126) of surveyed hosting organisations agreed that CB increased their capacity to host and manage volunteers; 68% (N=126) saw improved project-management skills as a result. 65% (N=46) of surveyed sending organisations agreed that TA improved their organisation's capacity to manage international volunteers; 63% (N=46) saw long-lasting organisational results.	<u>Assessment</u> : Undetermined (~) Rationale: Cost-effectiveness cannot be reliably assessed based on existing evidence. Actual costs per organisation engaged in TA/CB interventions were lower than anticipated, which suggests that some attention was paid to efficiency considerations. Effectiveness was described as satisfactory by organisations.
Certification	Certified organisations	Improved coherence and consistency of volunteering; improved terms and conditions of volunteer engagement	Planned budget for training, capacity-building and certification: EUR 80 850 000 The average cost to certify an organisation was EUR 86 000 ²⁹ .	<u>Certified organisations</u> ³⁰ : Certified: 370 67% (N=46) of surveyed sending organisations and 77% (N=126) of hosting organisations considered that the Initiative led to an improvement in the terms and conditions of deployment for volunteers.	<u>Assessment</u> : Undetermined (~) Rationale: Cost-effectiveness cannot be reliably assessed based on existing evidence. However, evidence suggests that the EUAV Initiative's contribution to increasing coherence and consistency in volunteering across

²⁷ ADE (2021). *Ex post* evaluation of the EUAV Initiative, 2014-2020.

²⁸ EU (2023), 'MFF Performance Results Reports', retrieved from: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/4e8f26d1-6604-496f-87c4-0b9a886adf29_en?filename=Core%20performance%20indicators%20%28new%29.pdf.

²⁹ ADE (2021). *Ex post* evaluation of the EUAV Initiative, 2014-2020.

³⁰ 2020 Annual report on the implementation of the EUAV Initiative.

Action	Anticipated output	Anticipated results/impact	Costs	Benefits	Cost effectiveness assessment
					EU Member States is in line with its limited scale.
Centralised training for volunteers	Candidate volunteers are trained	Volunteers are prepared for the activity period; improved volunteer skills and knowledge in the field of humanitarian aid	EUR 8.75 million over the 2014-2019 period ³¹ . No data available for the 2020-2022 period.	<u>Individual volunteers</u> ³² : Planned: 4 300 Trained: 1 383 67% (N=92) of surveyed individual volunteers were satisfied with the training received.	<u>Assessment</u> : Undetermined (~) Rationale: Cost-effectiveness cannot be reliably assessed based on existing evidence. However, evidence suggests that overall, training was perceived as high-quality but could have better matched the needs of the volunteers in the field. Individual volunteers described the effectiveness as satisfactory.

³¹ ADE (2021). *Ex post* evaluation of the EUAV Initiative, 2014-2020.

³² EU (2023), 'MFF Performance Results Reports', retrieved from: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/4e8f26d1-6604-496f-87c4-0b9a886adf29_en?filename=Core%20performance%20indicators%20%28new%29.pdf.