



# DG ECHO Thematic Policy Document Humanitarian Logistics Policy

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# Contents

<b>Glossary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Abbreviations and acronyms</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. Objectives</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3. Logistics in Humanitarian Actions</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>4. Existing policy framework</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>5. Challenges for logistics within the humanitarian aid sector</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>6. Progress on logistics in the humanitarian aid sector</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>7. From Policy to Practice</b>	<b>23</b>
7.1. Framework for operations and future guidance for DG ECHO partners	23
7.2. Training, capacity building and guidance for all humanitarian actors	24
7.3. Humanitarian advocacy and collaboration with other donors	25
<b>Annex 1: Framework for Operations</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Annex 2: Existing Policy Framework</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Annex 3: References</b>	<b>33</b>

# Glossary

- Common (Logistical) Services** This is a series of logistics services along the supply chain that can be provided by one specialised organisation (e.g. procurement, transport, warehousing, delivery) rather than done by each organisation. An example of this would be an NGO providing transport for all humanitarian actors in one area of intervention, rather than each organisation doing this individually.
- Core Humanitarian Standard** The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability sets out Nine Commitments that organisations and individuals involved in humanitarian response can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. It is a voluntary charter to which humanitarian organisations may adhere to align internal procedures.
- Economies of scale** When increasing the scale of an operation creates efficiency and cost advantages, as costs are spread over a greater number of goods.
- Nexus** A shared vision, which puts into effect the synergies between members of the humanitarian, development, and peace community. This approach ensures that humanitarians can focus on acute needs and those in development can focus on long term resilience, promoting peaceful and robust communities.
- Pooling of resources** A collaborative approach between organisations involving the grouping together of resources (e.g. means of transport and storage, equipment, personnel, knowledge) for the purposes of maximising advantages and minimising risks for all.
- Procurement** Procurement is the process of finding and agreeing to terms for the acquisition of goods, services or works from an external source, often via a tendering or competitive bidding process.
- Shared services** Shared Services is the process of consolidating and centralising administrative functions used by multiple departments of an organisation or multiple organisations, to create a dedicated unit that is a central point of service for those functions. Thus funding and resourcing for the service is shared.
- Sphere Standards** Internationally recognised sets of common principles and universal minimum standards in humanitarian response.
- Sphere Humanitarian Charter** The Charter was drafted to make humanitarian aid accountable to affected populations. It contains a series of rights and obligations aimed at ensuring the welfare of crisis-affected populations. As well as outlining shared principles, which guide the response to disaster or conflict.
- Stock prepositioning** Strategic stockpiling of vital humanitarian goods in areas prone to disaster with the aim of being able to respond and provide aid faster.
- Supply chain** All activities that an organisation must undertake in order to acquire and deliver goods and services to beneficiaries in the required timeframe and location.
- Team Europe** The European Union and EU Member States working together, pooling resources and coordinating, to ensure a more sustainable, collective impact.

# Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>ACF</b>	Action Contre La Faim
<b>CBA</b>	Cash-based assistance
<b>CDCS</b>	Crisis and Support Centre, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (French Government)
<b>CHS</b>	Core Humanitarian Standard
<b>DG ECHO</b>	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
<b>EHRC</b>	European Humanitarian Response Capacity
<b>ESUPS</b>	Emergency Supply Pre-positioning Strategy
<b>ERC</b>	Enhanced Response Capacity
<b>EHF</b>	European Humanitarian Forum
<b>FCDO</b>	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK Government)
<b>GHSC</b>	Global Health Supply Chain Program
<b>GLC</b>	Global Logistics Cluster
<b>HPC</b>	Humanitarian Procurement Centres
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>IASC</b>	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
<b>IDRL</b>	International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance
<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
<b>IHL</b>	International Humanitarian Law
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration (UN)
<b>LCA</b>	Logistics Capacity Assessment
<b>LOG</b>	Logistics Operational Guide
<b>NFI</b>	Non-Food Item(s)
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
<b>RLH</b>	Réseau Logistique Humanitaire
<b>RoI</b>	Return on Investment
<b>SCE</b>	European Cooperative Society
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SEAH</b>	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
<b>SI</b>	Solidarités International
<b>UCPM</b>	Union Civil Protection Mechanism
<b>ULS</b>	Universal Logistics Standards
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development (US Government)
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme (UN)

# Executive Summary

All humanitarian operations depend on logistics, and logistics should be treated as a key priority in all humanitarian projects. The humanitarian community has long recognised the need to update its approach to logistics to support a more efficient and effective delivery of aid, and to reduce the carbon footprint and environmental damage of aid delivery, in line with the Do No Harm principle.

In this policy document, DG ECHO sets out its vision for a paradigm change in humanitarian logistics, to help all humanitarian actors meet the objective of a more efficient, effective, and greener delivery of humanitarian aid.

DG ECHO's overarching aims in this logistics policy are:

- to support a more efficient and effective humanitarian response;
- to support the greening of humanitarian aid; and
- to raise the profile of humanitarian logistics.

The document also includes sub-objectives, which focus on harnessing the capacity of logistics to support other humanitarian aspects such as access, preparedness, protection and safeguarding. The policy sets out that DG ECHO will work to raise the profile of logistics and support the paradigm shift in complementarity with all partners, particularly the Global Logistics Cluster. Complementarity with other DG ECHO tools and instruments such as the Union Civil Protection Mechanism and the European Humanitarian Response Capacity is also highlighted.

In this policy document, DG ECHO sets out its vision for a paradigm change in humanitarian logistics

This policy sets out a vision for how all actors in the humanitarian community can develop their approach to logistics in humanitarian aid. While this policy will be supplemented by guidance on how this approach could be operationalised, it



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already sets out a vision under which DG ECHO and other humanitarian actors can start or continue to update their approach to logistics, to help fulfil our shared aim of making sure humanitarian aid reaches those most in need.

As outlined in the document, it is proposed that all humanitarian actors should:

- prioritise logistics, and consider logistics throughout the entire project cycle, including at project inception;
- allocate sufficient, qualified staff to logistics functions;
- cooperate with other humanitarian actors by sharing information and pooling resources; and
- test new technologies, including digital technologies, to support delivery of aid and share information about supply chains.

They should also consider the key logistics parameters during all phases of a humanitarian intervention, as set out in Annex 1. To guide its partners in this endeavour, DG ECHO will produce relevant guidance integrating the proposed enhanced approach to logistics and supporting the development of the humanitarian sector's approach to logistics, including by encouraging joint approaches, testing of new (digital) technologies, and using its advocacy capacities where relevant.

# 1. Introduction

Delivering humanitarian aid is a complex endeavour, especially in today's world. The number of crises is growing, and these crises are lasting longer. Humanitarian needs are increasing at a faster rate than humanitarian funding allocations, resulting in an increasing number of vulnerable peoples' needs being left unmet. Therefore, the need to reach people in need and deliver aid in a timely way while reducing costs has never been more pressing.

Many challenges in humanitarian aid are linked, one way or another, to logistics. The humanitarian community has recognised the need to update its approach to logistics for a number of years. The climate and environmental crises call on humanitarian actors to reduce their carbon footprint and the environmental impact of humanitarian action, while respecting the necessity of providing live-saving assistance. The COVID-19 crisis, which

overwhelmed global supply chains, underlined the vital nature of logistics and durable supply chains. The broader context also supports a renewed approach to humanitarian logistics.

The time is ripe for all actors, including DG ECHO, to put these solutions into practice and make the paradigm shift that is needed. The potential benefits of action are huge, and timely. **A more efficient approach to humanitarian logistics can result in greater access to vulnerable people, cost savings, a more efficient response including in emergencies, and a significantly greener delivery of humanitarian aid.**

In this policy document, DG ECHO will set out:

Many challenges in humanitarian aid are linked, one way or another, to logistics.



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- DG ECHO's vision for how the humanitarian sector can renew its approach to logistics;
- DG ECHO's own commitments to action on humanitarian logistics;
- Opportunities to pool and work together with other actors on humanitarian logistics; and
- Initial ideas for DG ECHO's humanitarian partners on actions they should take on logistics, which will be complemented by future technical guidance.

**DG ECHO will advocate** for an increased focus on logistics in the humanitarian community, and for all donors to fund projects that increase the sector's capacity to improve its logistics approach to reach more vulnerable people. DG ECHO will develop guidance for its partners on the integration of an enhanced approach to logistics in DG ECHO funded projects.

**DG ECHO will work with all relevant actors** to raise the profile of logistics in the humanitarian aid sector. It will aim for a coordinated approach to logistics, by supporting efforts to develop and share common best practice and standards, and promoting sector efforts to develop new approaches that encourage joint working. DG ECHO will work with other donors to aim for a common approach to donors' expectations of partners regarding logistics.

**DG ECHO will support actors in the humanitarian sector** to improve their own logistics systems, and to implement and monitor sound logistics management throughout their supply chain, while integrating greener options where possible. This applies to our humanitarian partners and other actors, including both international and local actors.

DG ECHO will carry out this work in complementarity with the work undertaken by relevant actors across the humanitarian community, including the Global Logistics Cluster. DG ECHO will also ensure complementarity between its approach to logistics in humanitarian aid and its approach in civil protection, while respecting the mandates and principles of both areas.

## Definition

The Humanitarian Logistics Policy will use the same definition for logistics that was formulated in the *Evaluation of Humanitarian Logistics within EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Action, 2013-2017*:<sup>1</sup> "Humanitarian logistics refers to the processes and systems involved in mobilising people, resources, skills and knowledge to help vulnerable people affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies". Therefore, the term logistics should be understood in this policy to cover the entire supply chain, including procurement, transport, tracking and tracing, customs clearance, local transportation, warehousing and last mile delivery.

DG ECHO is launching this logistics policy at the same time as it is developing the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC), as proposed in the 2021 Communication on the EU's Humanitarian Action of 10 March 2021.<sup>2</sup> These two initiatives are complementary actions that DG ECHO is taking to help speed up humanitarian and emergency response. To achieve this aim, the logistics policy aims to support actors across the whole sector to optimise their approach to logistics. Meanwhile, the EHRC focuses on DG ECHO's own response in times of crisis, and aims to fill gaps in the humanitarian response, in complementarity with other actors, in particular the EU Member States as part of a Team Europe approach. The Commission will launch the European Humanitarian Response Capacity in 2022.

<sup>1</sup> - European Commission, DG ECHO and Landell Mills International, *Evaluation of Humanitarian Logistics within EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Action, 2013-2017, 2019*

<sup>2</sup> - European Commission, *Communication on Humanitarian Aid, 2021*

## 2. Objectives

In line with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, the principal objective of the DG ECHO humanitarian logistics policy is to save and preserve life by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian operations.

DG ECHO is committed to working together with partners to drive forward approaches that help address logistics barriers to access an increased number of beneficiaries. DG ECHO will support efforts that help partners enhance their capacity to consider logistics at an early stage – even before a disaster or a crisis strikes – and throughout the project cycle, and to anticipate and address barriers and bottlenecks.

In line with the European Green Deal and DG ECHO's approach to reducing the environmental footprint of humanitarian aid, the greening of logistics is also a primary objective of this policy. DG ECHO will promote long-term, sustainable and green improvements in the humanitarian sector's approach to logistics, using all means available, including its funding instruments, coordination, and advocacy.

DG ECHO also commits to raise the profile of humanitarian logistics within the humanitarian community, and to promote best practices and support efforts with the aim to have a multiplying effect. The intention is to trigger a paradigm shift to improve the sector in the long term.

Logistics is a cross-cutting sector that affects all aspects of humanitarian operations. Therefore, the objective of increasing the effectiveness of humanitarian aid has the potential to contribute to the improvement of a number of areas, including disaster preparedness, localisation, digital policy, access, and protection. The logistics policy will also support commitments under the Grand Bargain and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In a broader framework, the policy supports DG ECHO's zero tolerance approach against any form

of misconduct, in particular fraud, sexual exploitation and abuse, and harassment (SEAH), in operations and activities receiving EU

funds. Beneficiaries of EU funds should have internal control systems in place to prevent, detect and respond to any allegations of fraud and SEAH. The beneficiary should inform the Commission of these allegations and their follow up. DG ECHO encourages partners to take into account risks of fraud, SEAH and to promote best practices on gender, equality, diversity and inclusion when planning logistics operations.

**Logistics is a cross-cutting sector that affects all aspects of humanitarian operations.**



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DG ECHO recognises that no actor can deliver these objectives alone, and that efforts are already underway at all levels within the sector that have the same or similar objectives. Significant innovative actions and efforts are taking place around the globe, pushed by international organisations, NGOs, local authorities and donors. DG ECHO will work together with other humanitarian actors to pursue these objectives, drawing



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on the strengths and expertise of all to promote the importance of humanitarian logistics.

DG ECHO is publishing this policy document as a first step to set out its vision on humanitarian logistics, and provide information for humanitarian actors on elements of a good approach to logistics.

The ambition is that, in the short term, this will help humanitarian actors to place their strategic approaches to logistics as a central priority, being the backbone of every project's design across all sectors and a key element of the success of their operations, and to start to consider areas where they may wish to build their capacity or strengthen their approach.

This policy will act as a basis for the development of DG ECHO's operational expectations of actors regarding logistics, and to support partners to better integrate logistics in all EU-funded humanitarian projects.

DG ECHO will sustain its commitment to promote humanitarian logistics beyond this policy and the subsequent guidance, including by continuing to support sector-wide efforts, to use its own advocacy tools and funding instruments, and to promote long-term, sustainable and green improvements in the humanitarian sector's approach to logistics.

### 3. Logistics in Humanitarian Actions



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The need for evolution in the humanitarian sector's approach to logistics is pressing and widely recognised. Humanitarian actors, including DG ECHO, have undertaken numerous studies that demonstrate the importance of logistics as a key driver for the timely delivery of humanitarian aid and for humanitarian access, as well as a major driver of costs.

#### Efficiency

Logistics arrangements in humanitarian actions continue to be approached to a large extent

duplicating efforts. The EU commissioned *Evaluation of Humanitarian Logistics within EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Action, 2013-2017*<sup>3</sup> concluded that “there is significant scope for cost savings in logistics”, reporting that DG ECHO's top five partners used at least EUR two billion of EU humanitarian aid funding over four years to support logistics, when taking into account the entire supply chain.

Several studies show that some 60 – 80% of humanitarian project funding is spent on logistics<sup>4</sup>, and according to the *Réseau Logistique*

<sup>3</sup> - European Commission, DG ECHO and Landell Mills International, *Evaluation of Humanitarian Logistics within EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Action, 2013-2017*, 2019

<sup>4</sup> - Various studies, including: Van Wassenhove, L. N. (2006). *Blackett Memorial Lecture, Humanitarian Aid Logistics: Supply Chain Management in a High Gear. The Journal of the Operational Research Society*, 57(5), 475–489; and Action Contre la Faim – ACF France, *Supply Chain Expenditure & Preparedness Investment Opportunities in the Humanitarian Context*, 2017

*Humanitaire*, a grouping of nine NGOs (all DG ECHO partners), “the optimisation of humanitarian logistics would enable savings of between 1.1 and 1.5 billion dollars. This amount is equivalent to the expected outcome of the implementation of the Grand Bargain.”<sup>5</sup>

## Financial benefits of a stronger approach to logistics

In *A cooperative study by HELP Logistics AG, Kühne Logistics University and Action Contre La Faim France (ACF) – November 2017*<sup>6</sup> HELP Logistics and KLU developed and applied a return on investment (RoI) model to investigate the saving potential of supply chain preparedness investments. The model showed that by investing in key elements such as personnel, IT/processes, supplier engagement, prepositioning as well as local actors/community, significant time and cost savings are possible.

The analysis of the Haiti and Nepal emergency responses of ACF shows that a 1:7 return on investment (and even more) can be achieved. The RoI ratio highly depends on the scale of the emergency operation and the impact of the investments made. For example, in the case of Nepal, the 1:7 was reached already after 71 days with relatively little investment whereas in the large scale operation in Haiti, the 1:7 was only reached after 439 days of preparation and with much more investment. However, clear benefits are achieved in case of early investments (this independently of the scale of the operation), as the trends demonstrate that the earlier the investment, the bigger the RoI.

### Effectiveness

Optimisation of humanitarian logistics can also lead to more effective solutions, making sure assistance arrives faster and reaches further.

More effective logistics can lead to an improvement in humanitarian access and the timeliness of delivery of aid. It can help actors reach beneficiaries that otherwise would not be reached, or accelerate access following a sudden-onset disaster or escalation in a humanitarian situation.

In addition, logistics lies at the nexus<sup>7</sup> of many DG ECHO and Commission priorities. As such, mainstreaming logistics would enable DG ECHO to fully exploit the potential for positive impact on areas such as: synergies between humanitarian aid and civil protection, including the Disaster Preparedness Strategy; contributing to improving collaboration between partners and Member States and facilitating a Team Europe approach<sup>8</sup>; localisation; and the greening of humanitarian aid. Development actors may also be included in a nexus approach when considerations include infrastructure such as bridges and roads.

Certain humanitarian emergency and disaster situations may require logistics capabilities available only from the military community. Military and humanitarian planning processes differ substantially in nature and timeframe. The civil-military interaction should always be assessed against the specific background and context to be applied (i.e. natural, man-made or complex emergency). While humanitarian organisations should always plan for the projected timeframe of the relief operations independently of military support, further dialogue with military authorities on logistics planning is of mutual interest. Ensuring effective coordination with relevant humanitarian partners, primarily UN OCHA and WFP, on the exceptional use of the military logistics contribution is key<sup>9</sup>.

5 - Réseau Logistique Humanitaire, *Strength in Numbers, Towards a More Efficient Humanitarian Aid: Pooling Logistics Resources*, 2019, p. 5

6 - HELP Logistics AG, Kühne Logistics University and Action Contre la Faim – ACF France, *Supply Chain Expenditure and Preparedness Investment Opportunities*, 2017

7 - European Commission, DG ECHO, *Factsheet on Resilience and Humanitarian-Development-Peace*, 2021

8 - European Commission, *Capacity4dev, Guidance on Working Better Together as Team Europe: Through joint programming and joint implementation*, 2021

9 - In line with EU's Concept on Effective CIVMIL Coordination in Support of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

## 4. Existing policy framework (see also annex 2)

This policy builds on an existing framework of policies and documents of the European Commission and other actors. In sum, they highlight the importance of taking a strategic approach to logistics, and breaking down silos through

increased transparency, pooling resources, and cooperating with other actors.

A compilation of these policies is set out in annex 2.



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## 5. Challenges for logistics within the humanitarian aid sector



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Access and efficient aid delivery can be impeded when insufficient consideration is given to logistics, or by blockages and shocks to supply chains at global or local level. Sudden onset crises present particular challenges.

Humanitarian actors have identified a range of logistics challenges in the humanitarian sector, and are already considering ways to address them.

As well as the specific barriers set out below, it should be remembered that humanitarian logistics takes place within a framework of challenges along the supply chain. Issues such as market fluctuations, prices that increase with competition between humanitarian partners, and limited availability of some humanitarian items, particularly medium- and high-quality items, already present challenges to the implementation of humanitarian projects.

### Humanitarian access

Humanitarian access concerns actors' ability to reach populations affected by crisis, as well as an affected population's ability to access humanitarian assistance and services. Access is

therefore a fundamental pre-requisite to effective humanitarian action.

Effective use of logistics can lead to better access, including access to beneficiaries that otherwise would not be reached, or accelerated access following a sudden-onset disaster or escalation in a humanitarian situation. Access can be hindered by numerous factors such as impediments to entry into a country (customs issues at the border, complex registration process for organisations); restrictions of movement within the country; interference with humanitarian activities; violence against personnel, facilities and assets; denial of humanitarian needs; restrictions of access to services and assistance; ongoing security issues; or presence of mines and unexploded ordnance.



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Actors can work together to address some of these access issues, for example through conducting broad reviews of the transport situation and solutions in an area of response, possibilities to improve

**Effective use of logistics can lead to better access, including access to beneficiaries that otherwise would not be reached**

road access, or anticipatory reviews of customs procedures in vulnerable areas, to gain time if there are sudden needs. Careful analysis of the security situation is a key consideration when assessing the most effective and secure routes and supply chains.

Blockages to humanitarian aid at the border are a major driver of access issues. These can include issues such as customs controls, lack of knowledge of necessary products by customs authorities, lack of recognition of qualifications (e.g. of medical workers), or lack of prioritisation of transports containing urgent humanitarian aid. Incorrect equipment or lack of equipment to unload humanitarian cargo can also be a barrier on arrival.

### Barriers to working together and transparency

There is growing agreement in the humanitarian sector that a fundamental shift should take place, in terms of transparency, pooling and sharing of resources and information between humanitarian actors. In response to humanitarian needs, individual actors may find themselves on the ground duplicating the same logistics efforts that other actors are undertaking.

Therefore, humanitarian organisations should work together by pooling logistics resources, such as sharing warehouses, transport, or information such as on stocks or the local market, in order to take advantage of economies of scale.<sup>10</sup>

For example, if organisations share lorries to transport goods, it reduces the costs of transport, reduces the number of lorries on the road (reducing both emissions and the impact on local infrastructure), it reduces potential security set-up, and it allows more flexibility through promoting common procedures and more frequent

transports. The governance model needed for pooling can vary from informal arrangements, to bilateral agreements, to the creation of new structures or associations.<sup>11</sup>

Similar but distinct to sharing of services is common services. Through common services, multiple humanitarian actors can outsource logistics to an experienced, specialised provider, leading to a more efficient management of resources. In a simulation of a humanitarian response scenario conducted by the WHU-Otto Beisheim School of Management (at the initiative of Atlas Logistique, an operational unit of Humanity & Inclusion)<sup>12</sup>, the use of common transport services was conservatively estimated to yield 22% savings. Moreover, the same simulation estimated a 6% reduction of delivery times.

### Shared Logistics Platform in Bangui, Central African Republic

Since 2013, the logistics platform developed by *Première Urgence Internationale* has been offering shared storage services to 21 NGOs in Bangui<sup>13</sup>. This platform was created in response to the lack of accessible and secure storage facilities in Bangui and is available to all humanitarian organisations operating in Central African Republic.

The platform offers a number of services including warehousing, handling, packaging and repackaging, monitoring and diagnosis. Moreover, the platform offers regular training courses for staff from other NGOs to boost their capacities in stock and warehouse management<sup>14</sup>. The platform, which was initially funded by DG ECHO transitioned to a partial cost-recovery system in 2016. It is currently run on a partial cost-recovery system, with support from OCHA and USAID, to enable access for all humanitarian actors and the creation of a second platform specialised in the storage of medicines.

10 - European Commission, DG ECHO and Landell Mills International, *Evaluation of Humanitarian Logistics within EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Action, 2013-2017, 2019, Executive summary, page vii*

11 - Réseau Logistique Humanitaire, *Strength in Numbers, Towards a More Efficient Humanitarian Aid: Pooling Logistics Resources, 2019, p. 23*

12 - *Evaluating Common Transportation Services in In-Country Humanitarian Logistics Using Agent-Based Simulation*, E. Codjia, D. Egreteau S. Spinler, May 2020

13 - Réseau Logistique Humanitaire, *Strength in Numbers, Towards a More Efficient Humanitarian Aid: Pooling Logistics Resources, 2019, p16*

14 - *Première Urgence Internationale, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) Service d'entreposage RCA, May 2020*





Photo credit: ©European Union, 2017 (photographer: Peter Biro)

## Common services in Mali

Since 2019, Humanity & Inclusion (Atlas Logistique) has been supporting the humanitarian community through a platform of shared logistic services. They provide shared transport and storage solutions to 25 other humanitarian organisations in order to optimise the transport of humanitarian material to affected areas. This reduces costs, increases the speed of intervention, and helps the humanitarian community reach hard to access areas. Moreover, training and support for transporters and drivers contributes to building local capacities, increasing acceptance and access management, and supporting long-term development.

A lack of access to digital tools optimised to humanitarian logistics can prevent organisations sharing data to support working together.

In particular, organisations can face difficulties securing logistics information systems for data management and data analysis. An important element for data sharing is a trusted and secure environment and its governance.

Some humanitarian partners are already collaborating at small scale to implement new initiatives to help actors cooperate.

There is opportunity to test and expand these approaches across the humanitarian sector. DG ECHO is committed to support partners' innovative solutions in the area of logistics (see for example the project "Enhancing and strengthening collaborative approach and resources pooling of humanitarian supply chain and operational logistics" referred to in the relevant text box).

## ‘Enhancing and strengthening collaborative approach and resources pooling of humanitarian supply chain and operational logistics’

This ongoing project is a collective effort to overcome persistent challenges in humanitarian logistics, and increase efficiencies within the sector and its overall impact. Co-funded by DG ECHO and the French Crisis and Support Centre (CDCS), this initiative is led by *Solidarités International* (SI) and *Action Contre La Faim* (ACF), with the support of seven other members of *Réseau Logistique Humanitaire*. The project enhances and strengthens collaborative approaches and resource pooling within the humanitarian supply chain and operational logistics through three innovative strands of action, which are collectively projected to generate a minimum of 2% savings (primarily through joint procurement), which, given that supply chain costs make up a high proportion of humanitarian aid expenditure, has the potential to result in significant savings. The three strands are:

1. A European Cooperative Society (SCE) that will function as a legal entity to host collaborative logistics, as well as build confidence and trust amongst actors.
2. A digital platform to create a common product and services catalogue, promote shared services and allow faster and more reliable data collection when an emergency occurs.
3. A dedicated team of humanitarian supply chain experts, to promote, support and coordinate joint logistics and supply chain projects.

## Funding and funding models

The gap between humanitarian funding and humanitarian needs is a challenge for humanitarian actors affecting all sectors. Notably, logistics is sometimes not prioritised either by the donor or the partner. Donors including DG ECHO, as well as partners, should consider ways

to prioritise logistics as an area to receive targeted funding. Donors should also consider ways to reduce the logistics burden on partners to help them to reduce costs, investigating areas such as agreeing common rules or principles, or mutual recognition of suppliers between donors.

To some extent, the current model of funding humanitarian projects could also be considered a challenge to cooperation between partners. Funding is based on individual proposals from partners, which could be said to discourage collaboration e.g. on the use of common services.

## Sudden onset crisis response challenges



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Rapid response activities come with their own set of particular challenges. For example, on stock prepositioning it can be complicated to have a good balance between stocks stored locally and the ones stored regionally, or the quick assessment of what is available in country to scale the call on international stocks. This analysis could be done beforehand such as in the case of the Emergency Supply Pre-positioning Strategy (ESUPS) project, financed by USAID (see the relevant text box)<sup>15</sup>.

## ESUPS' Analysis of Pre-positioned Relief Items in Nepal<sup>16</sup>

ESUPS was created with the objective of defining more efficient and effective stock prepositioning strategies at national and regional level. The aim of such strategies is to reduce duplication and gaps as well as reducing the costs and time needed for a response, thus improving the efficiency of the response.

In 2019, ESUPS selected Nepal as a country for implementation. Data on stock levels of all the actors already present in Nepal was collected, including those belonging to national authorities. ESUPS also collected other logistics information to analyse the location and quantities of current stocks, with a view to creating a national pre-positioning strategy for Nepal, to be managed by the Nepalese authorities.

As a result of this work, the Nepalese authorities have a global overview of stocks in their country. ESUPS was able to define the average capacity covered by current stock without international assistance and the sufficient quantities required at national level to support 85% of disasters across the country. It was also able to prioritise the items needed to make a significant time and cost impact following a disaster, as well as defining which warehouses in the country contained optimal or sub-optimal quantities of specific items. Overall, if this strategy is implemented, the projected savings in terms of cost are 18% while the savings in response time are 12%.

Another challenge is the turnover of prepositioned stock. For best results, prepositioning should aim for continuous replenishment, and consideration should be given to the shelf-life of items to prevent wastage from unused expired items.

The necessary resources should be available to update regularly the local capacity assessments for specific countries. Local market capacities, critical roads and infrastructures mapping, warehousing capacities, fuel availability and supply, telecoms, internet access, and transport market information are key in any type of response.

## Environmental challenges



Photo credit: ©European Union, 2019 (photographer: Christian Jepsen)

The European Commission is committed to reducing the EU's environmental footprint in all policy areas. The humanitarian community has a particular interest in reducing its impact on the environment, as the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation are among the key drivers of humanitarian needs.

When considering greening logistics, it is important to take into account the entire supply chain. The Groupe URD study *Environmental Footprint of Humanitarian Assistance - Scoping Review* sets out the range of challenges for greening along the supply chain.<sup>17</sup>

One key challenge is the disposal of waste, including packaging, toxic waste e.g. batteries, and the use of materials such as plastics. Through its approach to greening humanitarian aid, DG ECHO is working towards requiring partners to manage the waste produced as part of humanitarian operations, for example through favouring reusable packaging alternatives, requiring disposal plans of suppliers when purchasing items, consulting waste research conducted by

**When considering greening logistics, it is important to take into account the entire supply chain**

<sup>16</sup> - ESUPS, Nepal, Country-Wide Analysis of Pre-Positioned Relief Items. November 2020 (updated June 2021)

<sup>17</sup> - Groupe URD (INSPIRE consortium). Environmental Footprint of Humanitarian Assistance - Scoping Review. May 2020

WFP or others, or supporting the Global Shelter Cluster's ban on single use plastic. Partners have also raised the need to reduce single use plastic and other polluting materials, or when not possible, to consider reverse logistics as part of a broader effort to promote circular approaches in line with the EU's ambition for a transition to a circular economy.<sup>18</sup>

Other donors are also working on this issue and DG ECHO will seek to cooperate with them. For example, USAID has launched the Joint Initiative for Sustainable Humanitarian Packaging Waste Management<sup>19</sup>, which aims to minimise the damage caused by packaging to people and the environment while respecting the life-saving imperative of humanitarian assistance.

Humanitarian actors could also consider hiring local contractors or incentivising workers from an affected community (e.g. through cash for work) to manage waste disposal in a sustainable way<sup>20</sup>, developing items with multiple uses, or encouraging local small-scale initiatives.

Another issue is the lifecycle of commonly used relief items to reduce waste. Organisations and donors can review the lifecycle of items, and aim to improve it.

Use of suboptimal transport routes can also increase greenhouse gas emissions. By mapping emissions and using shorter routes, and looking for alternative forms of transport to air transport, organisations can reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and save funds.

Mapping and understanding transport routes is a key part of this work. For example, IFRC "has mapped the greenhouse gas emissions of its main relief items along our supply chain... [and]

designed a roadmap to measure and to reduce our overall emissions".<sup>21</sup> By mapping emissions and other environmental impacts, actors can plan their supply chain and transport based on key evidence, and data can be shared between organisations.

Actors should also consider use of appropriate vehicles for each type of use. As an example, lighter vehicles can be used where possible rather than heavy, diesel engine 4WD vehicles.

Reducing the general use of fossil energy sources, including for warehouses and field offices is also important.

### Engaging with the local market

Engaging with the local market can help humanitarian actors save costs and reduce carbon emissions and the use of packaging on long transport routes. Engaging with the local market in a country where an organisation is not based can be difficult, particularly if an emergency means items need to be procured quickly. Organisations can help this work by monitoring the local market, and these efforts could be further strengthened by pooled, coordinated, work if actors share information on local markets. Efforts should be made to ensure the effect on the local market is positive and sustainable, for example by avoiding distorting the local market.

Humanitarian actors can also increase efforts to boost the capacity of local suppliers (or actors) in the market, by increasing capacities of local services, or by working with local suppliers to inform them of upcoming needs. Such efforts could be supported in a nexus approach with development actors.

18 - Rogers and Tibben-Lembke, cited in Peretti, Tatham et al, "Reverse logistics in humanitarian operations: challenges and opportunities" (August 2015)

19 - USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), Fact Sheet: Joint Initiative on Sustainable Humanitarian Packaging Waste Management, 2020

20 - Peretti, Tatham et al, "Reverse logistics in humanitarian operations: challenges and opportunities" (August 2015)

21 - Red Cross EU Office, Shifting to a greener response, 2019

## Hurricane Matthew in Haiti

Haiti suffers from recurrent and regular natural disasters which often disrupt an already complex logistics environment, and thus perpetuate the vulnerability of the population. The road network is often badly disrupted following these disasters; in order to overcome this, Humanity & Inclusion (Atlas Logistique) has implemented an innovative solution, using local fishermen and fleets to provide a transport solution.

In 2016, in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew, a marine aid bridge was created to provide coastal villages with 52 tons in humanitarian aid, benefiting more than 20,000 vulnerable persons. Moreover, by employing hundreds of local actors they were able to reinject \$40,000 into the local economy<sup>22</sup>.

More recently in 2021, following the earthquake, 12 fishing boats shipped 473 metric tons of humanitarian aid supporting 33 other NGOs. This not only offered a means of bypassing the difficult and unsecure road network for the whole humanitarian community, thus widening the scope of beneficiaries, but it also strengthened local capacities. Working with a local partner AQUADEV, crew members were trained on safety and security, navigation skills, the functioning of a logistics platform and humanitarian principles. In addition, the project contributed to quality upgrades in the sector by enforcing technical checks, administrative registration and the presence of safety equipment on contracted vessels<sup>23</sup>.

## Common standards and approaches

DG ECHO is firmly convinced of the need for all the humanitarian community to share common standards and guidance to the extent that this is possible. For example the Commission funded a project with the Inspire Consortium to develop Universal Logistics Standards (ULS). The ULS has been developed in line with the Sphere Standards, which support organisations to plan, implement, and evaluate their humanitarian response.<sup>24</sup>

## Use of existing structures

DG ECHO encourages humanitarian actors to take advantage of common warehouses such as the Humanitarian Response Depots, the International Federation of the Red Cross Regional Response Hubs, and Humanitarian Procurement Centres (HPCs). DG ECHO has supported the establishment of these infrastructures. HPCs have already had lasting benefits for partners and their wider use would further improve humanitarian logistics by creating efficiencies of scale, with actors able to use common resources, and by ensuring a reliable, continued service, even in times of crisis.

## Humanitarian Procurement Centres

As part of the wider objective of supporting safer and more efficient procurement processes, DG ECHO has recognised a limited number of not-for-profit organisations as Humanitarian Procurement Centres (HPCs).<sup>25</sup> These organisations are specialised in the technical and commercial management of supplies and services necessary for the implementation of humanitarian actions. HPCs are available to supply their goods and services to all DG ECHO's partners. Benefits of the HPC system include the simplification of procurement procedures that are in line with the best value principle, as well as quality assurance that is monitored by DG ECHO.

## Staffing challenges

Humanitarian logistics is a technical area. In order to ensure sound consideration of logistics at the project conceptualisation phase and throughout the project cycle, it is vital for organisations to ensure they have access to qualified, expert staff. Staff recruitment, retention, and finding and/or developing expertise can be a challenge, particularly when working in complex environments.

<sup>22</sup> - Humanity & Inclusion (Atlas Logistique), Hurricane Matthew: logistics at the service of a humanitarian response involving NGOs and local populations

<sup>23</sup> - Humanity & Inclusion (Atlas Logistique), MERLUH: Cabotage, an innovative solution in Haiti

<sup>24</sup> - Sphere website on Humanitarian Standards, 2021

<sup>25</sup> - European Commission, DG ECHO Partners' Website, Humanitarian Procurement Centres, 2021

Efforts currently underway to professionalise humanitarian logistics including to develop academic curricula and professional qualifications, and the creation of competency frameworks for logistics specialists, could help in this area, as could efforts to foster skills transfer between the humanitarian and private sectors. Securing access to affordable logistics services could help those organisations that cannot secure qualified logistics practitioners on their payroll.

### **Risk management challenges**

When planning the logistics components of humanitarian operations a risk management approach should be taken to considering possible difficulties along the supply chain. One challenge can be considering the wide range of risks along a supply chain. As well as the risks to barriers in the supply chain, organisations should consider risks related to issues such as fraud, corruption, modern slavery, and issues such as safeguarding against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, which can be a higher risk at certain points in some supply chains.

## 6. Progress on logistics in the humanitarian aid sector



Photo credit: ©European Union, 2020

Progress on logistics is already advancing within the sector.

The Global Logistics Cluster (GLC), hosted by the World Food Programme, coordinates and liaises between humanitarian actors to support and inform operational decision-making processes, with the overarching aim of advancing the predictability, timeliness and efficiency of the humanitarian emergency response. More recently, the GLC has been advancing on the greening of logistics as well.<sup>26</sup>

### Global Logistics Cluster

The Global Logistics Cluster was set up as part of the cluster approach initiative endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in 2005. The World Food Programme (WFP) is the global lead of the Cluster, which functions as a shared platform for the humanitarian logistics community to convene, coordinate and benefit from shared competencies at both global and field level. The Logistics Cluster's work aims to ensure system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies.

The Global Logistics Cluster's work has advanced the sector on many fronts, including through the development of standardised technical tools for information sharing including the Logistics Capacity Assessment (LCA) online platform, which sets out baseline information on the logistics capacity of over 100 countries. The Cluster also conducts capacity building activities and provides critical operational support during emergency responses through the deployment of inter-agency logistics personnel to ensure the overall coherence of emergency responses.

NGOs and International Organisations are also increasingly active and mobilised. The IFRC is also actively involved in the reform of the logistics sector, for example through a number of greening initiatives<sup>27</sup>. Relevant efforts are also carried out by individual NGOs and through consortia such as the *Réseau Logistique Humanitaire*, which pools the collective resources of nine international NGOs to improve operational efficiencies and acts as a forum of best practice.

There are also examples of logisticians from different NGOs coming together to try and formalise cooperation between organisations. For example,

<sup>26</sup> - Global Logistics Cluster, *Technical Support Guide on Green Logistics*, 2021

<sup>27</sup> - IFRC, *Introduction: Green Response*, 2011

a cross-organisational working group was created in South Sudan between the logisticians of many INGOS including Polish Humanitarian Action and the local Logistics Cluster, with the aim of creating terms of reference for sharing and cooperation between NGOs in order to enhance preparedness and implementation. The advancement of this project was hindered by the COVID 19 pandemic but is illustrative of the sector-wide recognition of the need to collaborate in the field of logistics.

Donors are also active in supporting innovation and improvements in the sector. The Universal Logistics Standard project, funded by DG ECHO, issues guidance on best practice in humanitarian supply chain and logistics.<sup>28</sup> Other donors active include USAID, whose Global Health Supply Chain Program (GHSC) links together eight complementary projects under one integrated supply chain to consolidate purchasing and distribution power.<sup>29</sup>

Throughout this policy document, different text boxes highlight some of the many projects already under way in the humanitarian community to promote a paradigm change in the approach to humanitarian logistics.

## Digital solutions: Pharmaceutical Management Information System

One example of making the most of digital solutions is the use of “track and trace” technology in the management of the pharmaceutical supply chain, for example the Pharmaceutical Information Management System (PIMS)<sup>30</sup> developed by International Medical Corps. This software solution, and others like it, enable more efficient management of the whole pharmaceuticals supply chain from the central warehouse to the patient. It can give field teams the means to better manage pharmaceuticals, as it gives them access to real-time data on the supply chain, thus reducing the probability that they will be caught unaware by stock ruptures or delays. This in turn allows a more reliable provision of key medicines and empowers teams to integrate the supply chain into their projects from planning to distribution.

The net benefits of track and trace systems for the delivery of pharmaceuticals in a humanitarian context include more efficiency and efficiency, data sharing, protection from theft, improved planning and reduced chemical waste. This approach can also be applicable to delivery of other necessary items in a given humanitarian context.

<sup>28</sup> - Universal Logistics Standards (ULS) Project official website, 2021

<sup>29</sup> - USAID, Global Health Supply Chain Program, 2021

<sup>30</sup> - International Medical Corps webpage on Pharmaceutical Information Management System, 2021



## 7. From Policy to Practice

Implementation of this logistics policy should be considered throughout the whole humanitarian project cycle. This entails revising procedures and practices to ensure that the logistics dimension is systematically and coherently integrated in all steps of humanitarian programming, from needs assessment to strategies and evaluations. Equally, implementation of this policy approach should be ensured through adequate resource allocation, leadership commitment and monitoring of results. DG ECHO commits through this policy to work with all humanitarian actors to deliver the paradigm shift in humanitarian logistics needed to ensure a more efficient, effective and greener delivery of humanitarian aid. All humanitarian actors should take steps to ensure such an approach, so that we can better meet our core objective of ensuring aid reaches the most vulnerable people, including in emergencies.



Photo credit: ©European Union, 2020 (photographer: Lisa Hastert)

DG ECHO will disseminate the logistics policy approach, and further guidelines that stem from the policy, and make appropriate guidance and training opportunities available. These will contribute to a common understanding of the logistics dimension in humanitarian aid and will also promote the sharing of best practice. The aim is to trigger a multiplying effect that will help accelerate a new paradigm in logistics which will ultimately benefit all humanitarian sectors.

An implementation framework, with time-bound and measurable results and clearly attributed responsibilities, will be developed following discussions with stakeholders.

The abovementioned steps and tools for effective implementation of the logistics policy will ensure that DG ECHO moves towards a systematic approach to the integration of logistics consideration aimed at improving the quality, efficiency and cost effectiveness of humanitarian assistance.

### 7.1. Framework for operations and future guidance for DG ECHO partners (see also annex 1)

Logistics is a key priority and should be treated as such in all humanitarian projects, regardless of the sector in which the project is focused. An effective supply chain, where barriers are identified early and overcome quickly, is crucial for delivering aid quickly and efficiently. Logistics and the supply chain can impact all sectors of an operation.

In annex 1, DG ECHO has set out initial information on logistics elements that all actors should consider when implementing humanitarian operations. In particular, DG ECHO expects its humanitarian partners to take into account this annex when implementing humanitarian operations funded by the EU humanitarian budget.

Building on this initial basis, DG ECHO will develop operational guidance on its expectations of humanitarian partners concerning logistics for EU-funded humanitarian projects, which will supplement this policy, and also build on the existing questions on logistics in the eSingle Form, through which every partner applies to EU-funded humanitarian projects. DG ECHO will work with humanitarian partners and other humanitarian actors to develop such guidance.

In line with existing commitments under the Grand Bargain and in order to reduce the burden

**Building on this initial basis, DG ECHO will develop operational guidance on its expectations of humanitarian partners**

on partners, DG ECHO will work with other humanitarian donors to explore possibilities to harmonise expectations of partners on logistics where possible, including in the area of procurement.

## 7.2. Training, capacity building and guidance for all humanitarian actors

Upgrading logistics planning and capabilities will require actors to adapt their processes and to take new approaches. Capacity-building, training and guidance will be fundamental to achieving this outcome.

DG ECHO is therefore committed to strengthening the ability of those involved in humanitarian aid to assess, plan, deliver, monitor, evaluate and advocate for consideration of logistics in humanitarian operations in a coordinated way.

DG ECHO will support operations aimed at building capacity in humanitarian logistics, including through the Enhanced Response Capacity (ERC)<sup>31</sup>, financed by the EU budget. The ERC's objective is to contribute to strengthening and optimising global humanitarian preparedness and response capacity through strategic capacity building investments.



Photo credit: ©European Union, 2017 (photographer: Pierre Prakash)

<sup>31</sup> - European Commission, DG ECHO Guidelines, Strengthening Humanitarian Responses through 'Enhanced Response Capacity' Funding, 2010

DG ECHO will support:

- i. The development of methodologies to assess and select the most appropriate response options in any given context;
- ii. Sensitising and giving the necessary tools to managerial staff tasked with considering logistics issues in the design and implementation of humanitarian operations;
- iii. Supporting sectoral coordination and pooling efforts in the logistics sector;
- iv. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation capacities (including identification of outcome indicators and establishing baselines) to ensure that actors work collectively to measure, document and disseminate best practice, and integrate lessons learnt into humanitarian operations;
- v. Developing the capacities for cross-sectoral causality studies and assessments; and
- vi. The professionalisation of the humanitarian logistics sector.

Humanitarian actors and in particular DG ECHO partners should also make use of existing training resources and guidance available in the area of humanitarian logistics (e.g. the Logistics Operational Guide of the Global Logistics Cluster, and resources from other specialised entities).

## Logistics Operational Guide

Developed by the Global Logistics Cluster, the Logistics Operational Guide (LOG) is a living on-line knowledge platform that contains manuals, trainings and guidance from humanitarian organisations, academia and the private sector. The collaborative initiative covers the fundamentals of humanitarian logistics, offers specialised technical support guides (e.g. on green logistics), as well as detailed overviews of the humanitarian response architecture and cluster approach underpinning it.

As mentioned, DG ECHO will support initiatives that build common guidance, training and

standards, so that all humanitarian actors can access the knowledge they need.

Capacity building efforts should be sustainable beyond the funded action and coordinated among the relevant actors, at the local, national or global levels. They should also promote shared learning, through the dissemination of good practice. Competency frameworks that take into account logistics should be embedded in the HR guidelines of organisations.

DG ECHO has already funded the Universal Logistics Standards (ULS) project, which drew together best practice within the humanitarian supply chain and logistics sector to develop universal standards through a collaborative and consensus driven process conducted by the INSPIRE Consortium. The ULS, published in Handbook format in April 2021, aligned with existing humanitarian quality and accountability standards such as the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Protection Principles. Beyond providing guidance and recommendations covering the main supply chain and logistics components in humanitarian aid, the ULS incorporate both an environmental and gender lens, and reflect the shifting landscape of humanitarian aid toward increased cash-based assistance (CBA).<sup>32</sup>

## 7.3. Humanitarian advocacy and collaboration with other donors



Photo credit: ©European Union, 2015 (photographer: Pierre Prakash)

<sup>32</sup> - Universal Logistics Standards (ULS) Project official website, 2021

DG ECHO will raise the profile of logistics in humanitarian aid and, to that end, work with other humanitarian donors. DG ECHO will do this by continuing and strengthening our humanitarian advocacy efforts on logistics, in close collaboration with all other actors.

## European Humanitarian Forum

The European Humanitarian Forum (EHF), first convened in 2022, serves as a platform to promote high-level discussion on humanitarian policies, strategies and operations.<sup>33</sup> The emphasis of the EHF is on the identification of forward-looking solutions and concrete actions to challenges in the sector, whilst ensuring the preservation of the humanitarian space and respect for International Humanitarian Law. The EHF serves as an inclusive platform for debate between the EU's political decision-makers and the wider international humanitarian community, including UN agencies, signatories of the Humanitarian Call for Action, international non-governmental organisations, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, international financial institutions, academics, think tanks, local responders and people affected by humanitarian crises. At the event, a separate panel dedicated to the logistics policy will be organised to present the policy approach and exchange with stakeholders.

DG ECHO encourages all donors to support projects that can increase the capacity of the sector in logistics, or that support the sector to test innovative approaches to logistics that could be replicated by other actors. This should include testing the use of digital solutions and new technologies.

**DG ECHO encourages all donors to support projects that can increase the capacity of the sector in logistics**

DG ECHO sits on the Strategic Advisory Group of the Global Logistics Cluster, and is in regular dialogue with the Cluster to ensure a coordinated approach and that DG ECHO efforts complement

the work of the Cluster and other humanitarian actors.

DG ECHO already liaises on logistics with relevant logistics-focused consortia of NGOs, such as the *Réseau Logistique Humanitaire*, and with academic organisations, such as the Kühne Logistics University. DG ECHO also cooperates with other donors in the area of humanitarian logistics, including USAID, FCDO, and the EU Member States.

Through this regular dialogue, DG ECHO will play its part in building a coalition of support for logistics in the humanitarian sector. DG ECHO aims to align where possible its approaches and expectations on logistics with those of other donors, and to reduce burden on partners, in the spirit of the Grand Bargain commitment to harmonise reporting requirements.

## Core Pipeline and Common Services in South Sudan

In South Sudan, one of the most logistically challenging humanitarian environments, two different approaches co-financed by DG ECHO provide examples of how coordination in logistics can facilitate cooperation and lighten the load for all:

- i) The Logistics Cluster provides common services (via WFP) in order to fill gaps in the humanitarian supply chain and to support the response of the humanitarian community. Air transport and river transport are available to the humanitarian community on a free-to-user basis and mobile storage units for common storage are provided to facilitate cost efficient pre-positioning.
- ii) WASH and Shelter Clusters each provide (via IOM) Core Pipelines, which aim to provide a reliable stream of critical items for partners to use in their programmes. In addition, the pipeline transports and stores pre-positioned materials in strategic locations across the country in order to ensure continuous access to, and to facilitate the rapid deployment of, lifesaving items.

<sup>33</sup> - *European Humanitarian Forum 2022 official website*

DG ECHO will also continue to use targeted advocacy efforts to address individual issues such as securing access for humanitarian items at the border. The Commission will use all its available tools, working with the EU Delegations and in a Team Europe approach with EU Member States, to advocate towards other stakeholders such as third country governments, in order to lift logistical obstacles to the speedy and efficient delivery of humanitarian aid.

DG ECHO also encourages other donors to advocate on these issues in a coordinated way when necessary.

Advocacy work in this area can be supported by several different initiatives. For example, the IMPACCT Working Group has initiated the drafting of a high-level policy recommendation on “Cross-Border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief”<sup>34</sup>. Meanwhile, the IFRC has produced the *Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation*

*of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance (IDRL Guidelines)*, which set out recommendations to governments on best practice when preparing disaster laws and plans, to help avoid regulatory problems in international disaster response operations. DG ECHO contributed during the development of these Guidelines.<sup>35</sup>

DG ECHO will also ensure coordination and complementarity between the EU’s humanitarian response and its civil protection response, while ensuring the mandates and principles of both instruments are respected. The recently revised legal basis of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) has clearly recognised the need to strengthen the logistics and transports area at EU level, with the aim to overcome recurrent challenges that have emerged in response operations over the past years – particularly since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic – and to fill needs and gaps identified by Member States at national level.

<sup>34</sup> - United Nations Economic and Social Council, Economic Commission for Europe, Recommendation No. 44: Cross-Border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief, 2021

<sup>35</sup> - IFRC, Introduction to the Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance (IDRL Guidelines), 2007

# Annex 1: Framework for Operations

## Key considerations during project life span from conceptualisation to implementation and evaluation

Logistics should be embedded in project conceptualisation and planning, and then considered at all stages of the project cycle, including evaluation. Organisations should ensure that sufficient staff resources are committed to logistics, and that relevant competency frameworks should include logistics competencies. Where an

organisation has dedicated logistics staff, they should ensure they are included as early as possible in the project conceptualisation and planning stages. Logistics is a specialised area that requires staff with the specific technical competencies needed to understand, conceptualise and deliver the logistics aspects of programmes.

Colleagues at all levels of the organisation, including leadership, should recognise the importance of considering logistics from the initial stages of actions in all sectors.

## DG ECHO encourages humanitarian actors to consider the following key logistics elements during all phases of a humanitarian intervention.

This is an initial indicative list. More detail will be set out in guidance on DG ECHO's expectations of its partners on logistics, which will follow this policy document.

### 1. Staffing

- Appropriate staffing on logistics, ensuring staff with appropriate technical expertise are consulted at all stages of project conceptualisation and implementation.
- Training needs on logistics, standards and compliance.

### 2. Planning and monitoring

- Conducting assessments and mapping of resource and logistical needs.
- Monitoring tools, to assess logistics and supply chain performance, improve performance, and understand the market. This could include using digital tools, satisfaction surveys of aid recipients, conducting market surveys etc.
- A risk based approach can be taken to logistics planning, which can take into account areas such as:

- Risk assessment to identify possible blockages or bottlenecks in the supply chain, and consider possible remedies.
- Risk assessment to prevent fraud, sexual exploitation and abuse, and harassment (SEAH) as well as modern slavery in the supply chain.
- A careful assessment of the security situation along the entire supply chain, and consideration of how to reduce or avoid security risks along transport routes.

### 3. Procurement

- Considering sources for the procurement of items, taking into account issues such as the possibility of using existing stocks, pre-positioned items, the possibility of using the local market, opportunities to work with other organisations through e.g. joint procurement, common services and the use of Humanitarian Procurement Centres. Particular attention should be paid to the procurement of medical equipment and medicines, which can prove more difficult and involve relying on international markets.

- Sustainability and social responsibility in procurement.
- Whenever feasible and appropriate, and following market assessments, the provision of cash should be prioritised, in line with the revised DG ECHO Thematic Policy on Cash Transfers, which sets out DG ECHO's strong preference for cash over vouchers or in-kind assistance. This is in consideration of the beneficiary's perspective and as unrestricted cash assistance is more cost-efficient and effective than vouchers or in-kind assistance.

#### 4. Warehousing and transport

- Warehousing and storage requirements, including the opportunity for shared warehousing.
- Management of stocks, including maintaining data on location of stocks, stock levels, shelf-life and turnover of stock.
- Fleet management, including the opportunity to share fleets.
- Transportation routes, both globally and in-country. Particular attention should be paid to last mile transportation and distribution. Consideration should be given to particular needs such as cold chain, equipment such as forklift trucks, types of storage container etc. The use of innovative logistics solutions, such as drones and digital solutions, should also be investigated and promoted.

#### 5. Customs and other administrative requirements

- Administrative requirements, such as customs clearance processes, recognition of qualifications for medical workers etc.

#### 6. Joint approaches

- Opportunities to work jointly with other organisations to reduce costs and bureaucracy through e.g. shared services, joint procurement, sharing of information on the local market and infrastructure.

#### 7. Greening

- Consideration should be given to end-of-life of packaging waste and distributed items, including possible ways to reuse or recycle packaging and NFIs. This also applies to the end-of-life of vehicles.
- Likewise, consideration should be given to future use and re-use of equipment employed during the operation or remaining humanitarian items.
- An open approach to information sharing with other organisations working in the country can promote efficient (re-)use of resources post-implementation. Planning of transport routes and methods should also be prioritised to ensure the reduction of carbon emissions.
- Use of appropriate means of transport to reduce the consumption of fossil energy.
- Use of renewable energy sources whenever possible along with appliances with lower energy consumption.

#### 8. Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus approach

- Possible opportunities for humanitarian-development-peace nexus approaches related to logistics, for example in areas such as localisation, transport infrastructure, or disaster preparedness.

For EU-funded humanitarian projects, these issues should be discussed with the DG ECHO Desk Officer and Technical Assistant during the application stage. This will ensure a common view is established early on regarding possible difficulties in the supply chain during the project, so that these can be monitored throughout project implementation. To this end, since 2021 the revised eSingle Form, through which every partner applies to EU-funded humanitarian projects, has included a dedicated section on logistics and supply chain in which partners are asked for more information about the logistics planning for

the project, and a forecast of possible barriers along the supply chain.

**Progress on the above issues should be monitored at each stage of the project**, so efforts can be made quickly to resolve any issues or blockages in the supply chain. Monitoring may include the use of digital tools, and for last mile delivery and distribution should also include consultation with aid recipients.

For EU-funded humanitarian projects, close collaboration with the DG ECHO Desk Officer and

Technical Assistant will be crucial to help overcome significant blockages such as humanitarian access constraints or issues with equipment and stock management. When DG ECHO is aware of problems early it can support the partner to overcome them, and work with local governments or the EU Delegation in country where necessary. Throughout the project, organisations should also act in a spirit of transparency, promoting transparency and close collaboration with key logistics actors on the ground, including the Global Logistics Cluster, other aid agencies, service suppliers, local authorities, aid recipients and other local actors.

**Logistics should be fully considered during the evaluation of the project.** Lessons learned can be integrated into future projects, and should be seen as a source of knowledge for the organisation that should be shared with other

humanitarian actors. Particular consideration to sharing knowledge should be given to projects that use innovative approaches to delivering aid or improving the effectiveness of logistics and the supply chain. Any data gained on the local situation, e.g. the state of the local market, can also be shared with other partners to aid future delivery of aid in the country or region.

Consideration should be given to environmental issues such as end-of-life of packaging and distributed items, including possible ways to reuse or recycle packaging and NFIs. This also applies to the end-of-life of vehicles. Likewise, consideration should be given to future use of equipment employed during the operation or remaining humanitarian items. An open approach to information sharing with other organisations working in the country can promote efficient (re)use of resources post-implementation.



# Annex 2: Existing Policy Framework

This policy builds on the following framework of policies and documents of the European Commission and other actors.

## EU policies

The EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid of 2007 set out a commitment to examine the issue of transport and logistics in humanitarian aid and to underpin international efforts to tackle response gaps related to the international coordination of logistics.

More recently, the Communication on Humanitarian Aid of March 2021 included a provision for the facilitation of logistics and to enable resource pooling.

This policy reflects the European Commission's vision regarding logistics in all sectors, promoting supply chain visibility and data sharing among organisations (in full respect of data protection requirements), and favouring bottom-up approaches that provide solutions to organisations, in particular digital solutions.<sup>36</sup>

The objectives of this policy will be pursued in a holistic manner, in accordance with the humanitarian principles (humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence) and the 'Do No Harm' approach. DG ECHO encourages actors to take into account potential negative impacts throughout the supply chain. Such impacts could for example be:

- Protection based, for example if in the procurement and distribution of aid account is not taken of gender, disability or other characteristics;
- Environmental, such as the impact of means of transportation used for moving and

delivering aid, plastic pollution caused by packaging of aid in the absence of proper means to dispose or recycle waste locally; and

- Market based, if aid delivery disrupts local markets.

This logistics policy is closely connected to DG ECHO policies in other areas, particularly greening and disaster preparedness, as well as the revised Cash Thematic Policy. Where relevant, partners should cross-check other DG ECHO policy documents and ensure they are mainstreaming these areas into their approach to logistics.<sup>37</sup>

Donors and partners should also consider working according to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach when programming logistics of humanitarian operations. A clear example where a nexus approach could be relevant in terms of logistics is localisation. This could involve working with local populations to build the capacity of local communities and markets, thereby limiting community vulnerability to crises, strengthening capacity to recover quickly after a human or natural disaster, and supporting professionalisation of local market actors. This could also involve working with local government authorities, for example to develop their capacity to manage humanitarian aid and to put in place governance systems to allow the access of aid. Efforts to improve transport routes and infrastructure, and to incorporate temporary humanitarian supply chains into existing ones, could also benefit from a nexus approach.

Many of the issues raised in this policy, such as customs bottlenecks, infrastructure maintenance, and interaction with the local market, are also addressed by the Commission through international partnerships under the Neighbourhood,

<sup>36</sup> - European Commission, DG MOVE official website

<sup>37</sup> - European Commission, DG ECHO, Policy guidelines, 2021

Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)-Global Europe 2021-2027<sup>38</sup>. The EU's Aid for Trade Strategy, adopted in 2017, is also relevant to nexus activity on logistics. A report on the Strategy is published yearly<sup>39</sup>.

Alongside this policy, the Commission outlined in the Communication on Humanitarian Aid of March 2021 its intention to develop a European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC). This will build on the Commission's activities in response to the COVID-19 emergency. The EHRC will seek to further enable humanitarian action by EU partners and Member States. The EHRC will be launched in 2022.

DG ECHO can also build on the success of initiatives such as the Humanitarian Air Bridge, ECHO Flight, the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, and the Emergency Support Instrument, using its experience gained in these areas to refine its approach to logistics in this policy<sup>40</sup>.

The recently revised legal basis of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) has also clearly recognised the need to strengthen the area of logistics and transport at EU level, to overcome recurrent challenges that have emerged in emergency response operations over the past years and to fill needs and gaps identified by Member States at national level.

## International initiatives

### 1. The Grand Bargain

The world's major humanitarian donors and aid organisations signed up to the Grand Bargain during the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016. The Grand Bargain aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian aid delivery. The goal is to reach more people in need and spend less money on administration and overheads, while improving the design and delivery of humanitarian action. The Communication on Humanitarian Aid of March 2021 recalled the

Commission's commitment to the Grand Bargain goals.

This logistics policy aims to support a renewed approach to logistics across the sector, which will help the Commission and other humanitarian actors achieve the Grand Bargain objective of more effective and efficient delivery of humanitarian aid.

### 2. The Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in 2015 by all United Nations Member States as part of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through this, countries collectively pledged to eradicate poverty, find sustainable and inclusive development solutions, safeguard everyone's human rights, and ensure that no one is left behind by 2030.

In line with the Commission's holistic approach, DG ECHO is committed to implementing the SDGs in all its policies, and encourages EU Member States to do the same. Efforts to improve the timely delivery of humanitarian aid, and to ensure aid is delivered in a more environmentally sustainable way, will contribute either directly or indirectly to all 17 of the SDGs.

### 3. The Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty that sets out a global framework to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C.

The European Union and its Member States are parties to the Paris Agreement. The EU formally ratified the agreement on 5 October 2016, thus enabling its entry into force on 4 November 2016. The EU has been at the forefront of international efforts to fight climate change. It was instrumental in brokering the Paris Agreement and continues to show global leadership.

<sup>38</sup> - European Commission, *International Partnerships, EU external action budget: European Commission welcomes the final adoption of the EU's new long-term external action budget for 2021-2027*, 2021

<sup>39</sup> - European Commission, *DG INTPA, EU Aid for Trade Progress Report 2021*

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