

Post COVID-19: EU humanitarian aid in the next Multiannual Financial Framework

VOICE POLICY RESOLUTION 2020

The European Union (EU) has a global diplomatic and humanitarian footprint. It is a strong supporter of humanitarian aid with an [excellent reputation as a principled donor](#) that respects international humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles, and has strong policies and partnerships. With 1% of the EU budget and Member States' contributions, the EU is the biggest global donor and its humanitarian budget saves lives and restores human dignity. As the Special Eurobarometer surveys consistently show, EU humanitarian aid benefits from strong public support.

Faced with the current COVID-19 pandemic, the EU has taken a significant leadership role at the global level, facilitating a donor pledging conference and adopting the recent EU Communication on a Global Response to COVID-19. This shows the EU's intention to support crisis-affected people, and provides an important framework, but for the EU to seize the opportunity to live up to its responsibilities, this must be followed with a corresponding investment in support for humanitarian action in the upcoming EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021 – 2027. The EU must take the need for additional funding in the medium- and long-term into account and ensure that any funding released to respond to the crisis caused by COVID-19 is additional to and does not take from funding allocated to the record level of global humanitarian needs that currently exists.

With the arrival of COVID-19, humanitarian needs are exacerbated

In addition to the level of suffering and need created by COVID-19, the UN has estimated that 180.9 million people need life-saving assistance and humanitarian protection (United Nations Global Humanitarian Overview - April 2020), and that the cost of meeting humanitarian needs in 2020 has already increased by 50% since December 2019. The impacts of climate change, conflict, protracted crises and bad governance have led to ever more internal displacement, forced migration, food insecurity, extreme poverty and suffering. These erode people's coping strategies and resilience and increase their overall vulnerability to sudden onset crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. While supporting the vitally needed response to COVID-19, the EU must continue to play its part in helping to address the systemic and growing shortfall in global humanitarian funding.

EU Member States have been severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, its consequences are anticipated to be even more dramatic in countries with poor public health infrastructure, food poverty and little access to water and sanitation. COVID-19's impact already goes far beyond its public health effects. Humanitarian donors and organisations are urgently trying to address urgent protection, access and logistics consequences as they are eager to continue and adapt their planned operations.

The significant indirect longer-term consequences expected from the measures taken against the pandemic, such as from shrinking economies and global trade, include a struggle for food, resources and livelihoods. They will affect people in the most vulnerable countries the most. The level of humanitarian need will spiral, having an impact at the global level, potentially creating national and regional security risks. The urgency of the COVID-19 crisis and the multiple needs arising from it require the EU to seek complementarity and flexibility between aid instruments to ensure a people-centred approach that addresses both acute needs and the longer-term impacts of this multi-dimensional crisis. The EU's humanitarian aid and development budgets, and the Emergency Aid Reserve are all valuable tools in implementing this nexus approach to changing circumstances.

Civil society is crucial in humanitarian response

The EU's existing tools for humanitarian aid and foreign policy already encompass the bottom-up and top-down approaches needed to support third countries and vulnerable communities. European humanitarian organisations are currently working closely with local communities, partners and authorities to support community preparedness and emergency health interventions in Europe and around the world. Together, they are addressing some of the most urgent needs: hygiene, water, sanitation, community preparedness, protection, public information, etc. The staff of European, local and national NGOs and their partners are essential workers who hugely contribute to the global response. They and their programmes need to be supported over the medium and longer term. They are asking the EU to support efforts to prevent, contain and mitigate the spread of the pandemic around the world in a substantial, additional and sustainable way. This work is additional to, and may be an adaptation of, existing aid operations.

VOICE RECOMMENDATIONS:

THE MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK 2021-2027

The EU's financial forecasts must take the likely severe increase in humanitarian need into consideration. COVID-19 has exacerbated a very difficult humanitarian situation worldwide and its impact is expected to last for years. For humanitarian NGOs, it is fundamental that the next EU aid budget goes well beyond being a COVID-19 response. If policies and an operational toolbox are in place, the next MFF must provide the funds to allow them to be effective. To support the people affected by humanitarian crises around the world, we recommend that the EU should:

- Agree on an ambitious external action heading, and approve the MFF before 2021
- Increase the humanitarian aid allocation through the next MFF
- Keep a ring-fenced envelope within the new Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve for crises outside the Union, and maintain the existing capacity to rapidly mobilise additional funds in the case of emerging, escalating or sudden onset emergencies
- Ensure the necessary flexibility and complementarity between the different aid instruments when addressing the changing needs on the ground
- Commit to funding a diversity of humanitarian actors, recognising the crucial role of international, national and local NGOs as frontline responders

Adopted by the VOICE General Assembly
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