VOICE

ACTIVITY REPORT 2016

BRUSSELS, APRIL 2017

VOICE

Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies

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AUSTRIA

- care
- Caritas Österreich
- Hilfswerk
- SOS Children's Villages International
- World Vision

DENMARK

- ADRA Danmark
- Danish People's Aid
- Folkekirkens Nødhjælp Denmark
- DRC Danish Refugee Council
- Mission East
- Save the Children Denmark

GERMANY

- ADRA
- ASB Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund
- care
- caritas Germany
- Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
- Die Johanniter Aus Liebe zum Leben
- Malteser International
- medico international
- Plan
- welt hunger hilfe
- World Vision

SWITZERLAND

- MEDAIR
- The Lutheran World Federation
- Terre des hommes

THE NETHERLANDS

- care
- Cordaid
- ICCO
- Oxfam Novib
- ZOA Relief | Hope | Recovery
- Save the Children

BELGIUM

- caritas international
- Handicap International
- Médecins du Monde
- Oxfam Solidariteit | Solidarité
- Plan

FINLAND

- World Vision
- Finn Church Aid actalliance

GREECE

- Médecins du Monde Greece

IRELAND

- Concern worldwide
- Trócaire Working for a Just World

UNITED KINGDOM

- Action Against Hunger
- actionaid international
- tearfund
- CAFOD just one world
- care
- christian aid
- International Medical Corps (UK)
- International Rescue Committee
- Islamic Relief
- World Vision
- HelpAge International age helps
- Mercy Corps
- Oxfam
- Plan
- Save the Children

LUXEMBOURG

- caritas Luxembourg

NORWAY

- NRC Norwegian Refugee Council
- Norwegian Church Aid actalliance

CZECH REPUBLIC

- People in Need
- ADRA

FRANCE

- Action Contre La Faim
- ACTED
- care
- Caritas France Secours Catholique
- Handicap International
- Secours Populaire Français
- Secours Islamique France
- Médecins du Monde
- Solidarités International
- tsf

POLAND

- pah

PORTUGAL

- Médicos do Mundo

SPAIN

- Acción Contra el Hambre
- Cáritas Española
- Médicos del Mundo
- Oxfam Intermón

SWEDEN

- Svenska kyrkan
- IOS
- PMU

ITALY

- Caritas Italiana
- cesvi
- GVC a world we care
- INTERSOS

SLOVAKIA

- Habitat for Humanity Europe, Middle East and Africa

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INTRODUCTION

After a series of international high level initiatives and summits (the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Sendai, COP 21), the High Level Panel for humanitarian Financing launched the Grand Bargain, while the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) produced the Agenda for Humanity after a thorough global consultation process. They will all hopefully have an impact on the way the international community and the aid and humanitarian community in particular, are going to go about responding to the ever increasing challenges the world is facing. Climate change, protracted conflicts and with them, increasing humanitarian needs, need urgent solutions. While "leaving no one behind" became a message everybody supports, it was a big disappointment that the WHS lacked ambition and progress when it came to such critical issues as investing strongly in conflict prevention and resolution.

Early warning is important but has to be followed by early action, as we now see with hunger and risks of famine in the Horn of Africa. It is a sad state of affairs that the world does not seem to mobilise the political will to turn the tide on rising needs.

The European context, with the EU –Turkey deal and other political initiatives to stop refugee and migration flows and with rising nationalism, has also raised a number of challenges for civil society organisations, including the many VOICE members seeking to work on the poor humanitarian conditions in Greece. In the face of the challenges that the humanitarian community faces, the operational and advocacy work of NGOs and the engagement of their supporters is more needed than ever.

The VOICE network's global, regional and national engagement, building on the strength of its European expertise, led to a year of great successes.

Together with the other global and regional humanitarian networks, VOICE succeeded in ensuring strong NGO participation in the WHS. Our members advocated for a solid EU position building on the unique European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, ensuring a community approach to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is maintained by the EC, and reaching out beyond the 'usual suspects' with work on the EC financial regulation, counter-terrorism measures and the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy. The network also launched its second study, this time 'Exploring EU humanitarian donors' funding and conditions for working with NGOs', making a strong call for the European Commission and the EU member states to simplify the administrative procedures used by the various donors.

All this has paid off; the network is now systematically invited to the European Commission, European Parliament and by stakeholders working on these issues at national and/or global level, due to the proven expertise of its members. In sum, VOICE is a key actor, especially at EU level, on topics of EU funding for emergencies and crises, and is well positioned to mobilise members to ensure that humanitarian NGOs` operational concerns under the EU rules and regulations related to funding are understood, respected and defended, so that they can deliver quality assistance to crisis affected people. Members' long track-record of work on DRR, LRRD and resilience has also meant the network is a well-established partner when it comes to discussions on the humanitarian – development nexus.

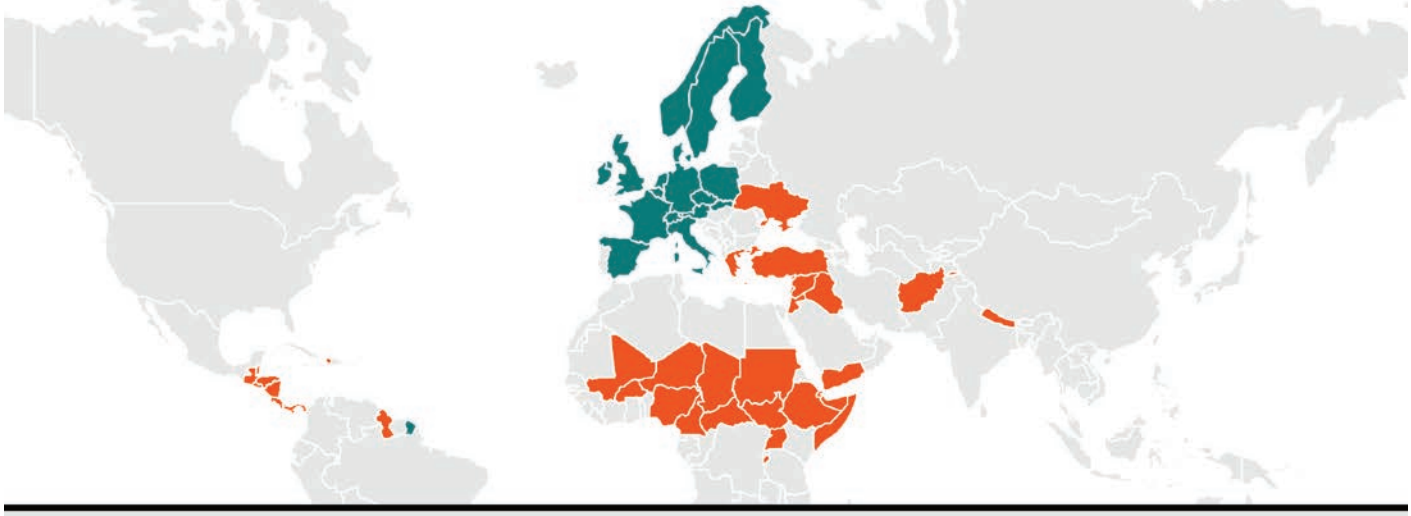
The network has also achieved higher visibility – and that's a key focus for us in the next year – to ensure that our work and communications serve to make the added value of humanitarian NGOs, the work they do in the field and the public solidarity they represent, even more visible. We are proud to have launched a new website recently so please have a look: ngovoice.org

We also see our membership's humanitarian activities growing – the sad legacy of the political failures is that it is boom-time in our 'industry'. This brings its challenges too – with local actors rightly asking for more recognition of their essential role and more power in the humanitarian eco-system, while donors drive for efficiency and effectiveness – hopefully not at the cost of quality and a diversity of actors!

2017 will be the 10th anniversary of the European Consensus for Humanitarian Aid and the European Commission has launched a wide ranging evaluation of its humanitarian assistance. This will hopefully be an opportunity for the EU and member states to stress the importance of the humanitarian principles and needs-based humanitarian aid. The latter is a challenging endeavour for the EU which increasingly focuses its efforts on the countries considered crucial to stop refugee and migration flows. Another aspect of its relevance is that the Consensus links naturally to several of the commitments made by the EU at the WHS. 2017 will see the first anniversary of the WHS and the Grand Bargain, so VOICE members will be committed to contributing to everybody's commitments being taken forward!

Kathrin Schick
VOICE Director

VOICE members responding to crises across the world



VOICE:

85 NGOs
from
20 countries

On the agenda in 2016

- Syria
- Ukraine
- South Sudan
- Afghanistan
- Central America
- Turkey
- Haiti
- Lebanon
- Lake Chad
- Yemen
- Nepal
- Palestine
- Horn of Africa
- Iraq
- Greece
- Burundi
- Jordan
- El Niño

VOICE's main strategic objectives 2013-2018 are:

1. Ensuring policy, practice and funding are increasingly adherent to core humanitarian principles and good practice
2. To increase the recognition of NGOs as key actors in the delivery of humanitarian aid
3. Collective action in pursuit of quality humanitarian aid
4. To increase the capability of the VOICE network to meet the needs of the current and future operating environment

In addition to VOICE's work with members, EU institutions and member states, continued engagement with others remains a key part of the VOICE strategy and has been highlighted throughout this report.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BREXIT	the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union
COHAFA	Council working group on humanitarian aid and food assistance
CONCORD	European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development
DG	Director/Directorate General
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EC	European Commission
ECHO	the European Commission's Department for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Operations
EPLO	European Peacebuilding Liaison Office
EU	European Union
Excom	Executive Committee of the VOICE Board
FPA	Framework Partnership Agreement
HIPs	Humanitarian Implementation Plans
HLP	High-level panel on humanitarian financing
HRDN	Human Rights and Democracy Network
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
LRRD	Linking relief, rehabilitation and development
MFF	EU's multiannual financial framework – a multiannual framework budget
MS	member states
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
NGO(s)	non-governmental organisation(s)
NOHA	the University Network on Humanitarian Action
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNISDR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

1. A YEAR OF VOICE ADVOCACY TOWARDS THE EU: FROM INTERNATIONAL TO NATIONAL LEVELS

1.1 THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT (WHS) AND THE INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN FINANCING FRAMEWORK

In May 2016 the multi-stakeholder World Humanitarian Summit finally took place in Istanbul. Following over two years of regional, thematic, global, online and face to face consultations and planning meetings, 9000 participants converged on the city straddling Europe and Asia, to discuss themes shaped by the United Nations (UN) Secretary General's *'One Humanity – Shared responsibility'* report and the five core commitments in the 'Agenda for Humanity'. VOICE worked to great success throughout the process on:

- the inclusion of NGOs in the process and Summit, and
- the EU position.

This process brought VOICE's work closer to the national level in EU member states (MS) through the many national summits and meetings and reinforced our global alliances to ensure NGO voices were heard and, where desirable, aligned.

NGO engagement

While the European Union (EU) position and NGO representation were highly successful (over 70 VOICE members were represented there), there was some disappointment around the level of participation by heads of state and government or foreign ministers. This is because one of the key themes of the Agenda for Humanity – and messages from NGOs in consultations – was the need for political leadership to end conflict and build peace to stop the ever escalating scale and number of crises. The VOICE president was honoured to deliver a statement to the plenary of the Summit, emphasising this and some key points on respect for International Humanitarian Law and humanitarian principles, and challenging the UN and member states to commit more and better for the good of humanity.

ICVA, VOICE and InterAction were in particular pleased to work with Dr. Françoise Sivignon from Médecins du Monde to develop her speech on behalf of international NGOs to the closing session of the Summit. The joint statement from 7 NGO networks *'we must all act now'* which was agreed after the Summit was largely based on this speech.

The EU position and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid

VOICE succeeded in ensuring that the EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid informed EU preparation of the World Humanitarian Summit. The EU's commitments at the WHS, reflected 7 of the 9 priorities for implementation of the Consensus, while the European Parliament and the Council positions reflected the common framework signed nearly ten years ago jointly by the Commission, Parliament and MS.

VOICE's own positions, and efforts in relation to the high-level panel on humanitarian financing especially, built on the Consensus' commitment to reduce the administrative burden for implementing partners (see below).

WHS

NGOs contributing to a fairer and more effective humanitarian ecosystem

VOICE events and views

- Influencing the EU
- Demystifying outcomes
- NGO views sought at national, European & international level

NGOs at the WHS

78 VOICE members represented at the Summit

Common NGO priorities

- conflict
- IHL (international humanitarian law)
- humanitarian principles
- localisation
- funding
- simplification
- UN systems

fed into

- Network coordination
- Common speech
- We must all act now! joint NGO statement

EU priorities at WHS

Consensus
Grand Bargain
humanitarian
conflict IHL UN
principles
preparedness

SUCCESS FOR NGOs!

Commitments

100 commitments made by European Union

1,044 commitments made by EU member states

3,724 commitments made by NGOs

The legacy of the WHS?

VOICE was keen to ensure that momentum from the Summit was not lost, and ensure that there be a long-lasting legacy from the WHS, both to:

- implement the commitments in areas that had brought progress or consensus, such as gender, education, localisation, inclusion of persons with disabilities, the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing, … and,
- maintain the key themes on the table that did not receive the attention hoped for: such as the impact of counter-terrorism, disrespect for International Humanitarian Law and principles and UN reform.

To do this, VOICE quickly followed up with an event, with speakers from Medair, Handicap International, the German Foreign Office and the ICRC to demystify the outcomes for our membership and Brussels stakeholders.

Working with others: NOHA

The university network on humanitarian action remains a key partner in VOICE's outreach beyond its membership and the EU. In 2016 NOHA and the European Commission (EC) organised four regional multi-stakeholder roundtables reflecting on themes linked to the WHS. The VOICE board, membership and secretariat were all well represented as speakers and participants in Aix-en-Provence, Uppsala, Warsaw and Dublin, resulting in the 'One Humanity, shared responsibility – A European perspective' report. In addition, the VOICE secretariat was invited to give input to a qualification framework for humanitarian workers being developed by NOHA and EUHAP. VOICE's expertise was called upon again for NOHA's intensive programme for its incoming post-graduate students in Warsaw and at the fall-school for practitioners and students alike in Brussels. VOICE introduced the students to the world of humanitarian NGO advocacy and to priorities linked to the EU's humanitarian policy and practice, and shared NGOs' views on humanitarian financing.

Influencing the high-level panel on humanitarian financing

In 2015 VOICE engaged its members in order to make sure NGOs' perspectives would be reflected in the outcome report of the high-level panel on humanitarian financing (HLP). Joint messages were developed with other humanitarian NGO networks. Together we were successful as many of the messages, such as on administrative burden and counter-terrorism, were reflected in the final report launched early in 2016.

The report proposed three avenues to improve the humanitarian funding architecture and improve the humanitarian delivery of aid:

- Reduce the needs
- Expand the donor base
- the Grand Bargain

The Grand Bargain

The humanitarian community immediately took up the Grand Bargain and the major donors and main implementing actors gathered four times to further shape the bargain. Following the NGO networks' joint letter to the HLP, the three NGO network members of the IASC (SCHR, InterAction and ICVA)

were invited to represent the voice of NGOs. VOICE decided to involve its members in order to support the work of the networks. Given this, VOICE representatives were also asked to attend the second 'Sherpas' meeting in Brussels in March 2016 in InterAction's place. Donors and agencies eventually agreed on a set of over 50 commitments built around 10 different work streams, which aim to improve the efficiency of humanitarian aid by increasing trust within the current humanitarian funding system.

Launched at the WHS, the Grand Bargain is perceived as one of the most concrete outcomes of the summit process. Since then NGOs have shown enthusiasm and a dozen have signed up to it. At EU level, the European Commission's Department for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Operations (ECHO) has taken a prominent role in the process, and 11 EU member states are also signatories, making it an important addition to the EU humanitarian aid architecture. Thus, VOICE decided to maintain the engagement and create a Task Force whose objective is to strengthen collaboration among humanitarian actors in view of supporting the implementation of the Grand Bargain at EU level, and ensuring its potential benefits have a positive impact on the work of NGOs in the field.

By the end of 2016, the Task Force, representing some 48 members of the network, had its Terms of Reference approved and a work plan set for the months to come. The Task Force aims to develop key messages and provide input to EU decision-makers involved in the Grand Bargain implementation around three main priorities:

- simplification of the administrative burden,
- multi-year planning and funding, and
- supporting the involvement of frontline responders.

1.2 EU POLICY AND FUNDING ENVIRONMENT

EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid continues to inform EU WHS engagement

A crucial element of the effort to ensure that the principles and standards agreed in the EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid were reinforced through the WHS process is in the implementation of the WHS Commitments. In September VOICE Director Kathrin Schick was invited by the Slovak EU Presidency to present an NGO perspective on the Summit and its outcomes to the Council working group on humanitarian aid and food assistance (COHAFA). In the dialogue with member states in what proved to be a wide-ranging exchange VOICE's key messages were that implementation of the WHS commitments at EU and EU national level requires:

- multi-stakeholder partnerships,
- joint EU and member state work on implementing the WHS commitments together
- dialogues at national level,
- transparent reporting
- champions on key issues and
- focusing on the areas of relevance to continued implementation of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

VOICE's position very much underlined that member states and the EU institutions should capitalise on the complementarities between the Consensus and WHS agendas to ensure progress in implementing both. The EU should maintain a commitment to a multi-stakeholder approach, as characterised by the WHS process and recognised in the Consensus 9 years earlier.

> *EU humanitarian action is framed in an overall international approach that brings together the United Nations, the Red Cross/Crescent movement, humanitarian NGOs and others, in support of local responses to humanitarian crises through a partnership approach with the affected communities.*
>
> *European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, 2007 – paragraph 4*

The work in spreading the message about the WHS and doing this jointly with the Slovak EU Presidency continued through a roundtable event with humanitarian actors in the central and eastern European region, held in Bratislava in November (see below).

Humanitarian NGOs struggle to be heard in the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy:

This engagement in the development of the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy was a considerable success for the VOICE network because it established the network as a stakeholder of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and because it paved the way for follow-up engagement in the implementation of the strategy. By being very active at an early stage in a non-humanitarian agenda, VOICE could ensure a distinct humanitarian position in a broader foreign policy process was known.

Following the announcement that the EU´s vice-president of the European Commission and high representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security would launch a broad and inclusive dialogue process to replace the EU´s 2003 Security Strategy with a new strategy on foreign and security policy, the relevant NGO networks in Brussels were keen to get involved. This turned out to be less than easy, as the EEAS did not use the usual EU institution consultation processes and was reaching out primarily to universities and think-tanks around the EU. Through the collective networking of CONCORD, VOICE, EPLO and HRDN a meeting was secured with the authors of the new Strategy. Based on the network's monitoring and intelligence-sharing VOICE brought forward a few key points in that meeting, including:

- on the importance of civil society participation,
- on resilience being primarily a community based concept
- on the key principles guiding humanitarian action
- the network´s satisfaction with the balance struck in the EU Comprehensive Approach to Conflicts and Crises paper in 2013 on the degree of integration of humanitarian aid.

VOICE followed up on this meeting with a collective position paper shared widely with the main EU institutions.

Working with other European NGO networks

Crucial to the work on the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy, exchange and work with other European NGO networks, such as EPLO, CONCORD and Civil Society Europe continued throughout the year, resulting in some coordination and collaboration on issues such as Brexit, NGO input to the Lebanon and Jordan compacts, the EU financial regulation revision, the EU budget and counter-terrorism initiatives.

VOICE director with CONCORD and EPLO colleagues

Bringing a humanitarian perspective into the EU counter-terrorism risk assessment discussions

Through a collective paper and a public event VOICE was again able to bring a distinct humanitarian perspective to a non-humanitarian topic, thus raising awareness of humanitarian concerns among non-humanitarians, in this instance, the EC's DG Justice and Home Affairs, on the subject of counter-terrorism, risk assessment and mitigation. VOICE continues to engage in this process throughout 2017 in the hope of ensuring that its members' mandates and modus operandi are understood and that they are protected from further unnecessary bureaucracy.

In follow-up to the terrorist attacks in Paris and then Brussels in 2015-2016, there was renewed impetus at global and EU level to revise and tighten anti-terrorism and money laundering provisions. As part of this process the European Commission (EC) was tasked in 2016/2017 with carrying out a supra national risk assessment on risks at EU level ('SNRA process'), to mirror the national risk assessment processes happening all over the world as part of the FATF (Financial Action Task Force) procedures. VOICE engaged with this process in collaboration and with the support from Civil Society Europe, the European Foundation Centre and others with long-standing experience in engaging with FATF processes. The network considered it important to engage because the EC had provisionally identified the non-profit sector, and specifically humanitarian NGOs, as a risk factor. This process meant that potential mitigation measures could be made mandatory, potential reputational risk for humanitarian NGOs was increased and it could constrain their action further.

Participants in the VOICE event on counter-terrorism and humanitarian action

The EU funding environment

The EU agenda was also of high importance for VOICE given that two major dossiers were launched in 2016: the mid-term review of the multi-annual financial framework (MFF) and the revision of the EU Financial Regulation. VOICE's messages were heard as the EC proposal for a revised financial regulation reflected many of our recommendations.

Given its expertise on the MFF, developed over a number of years and during the 2014 liquidity crisis, and on the Financial Regulation following VOICE's input on the last revision process in 2012, the network decided to engage. The mid-term review of the MFF provided an opportunity for ensuring that the 2014 crisis would not happen again and VOICE asked for the payments level to be systematically as high as the commitment for humanitarian aid, given the different nature of the actions delivered through this budget line.

On the financial regulation process VOICE first provided collective recommendations to the EC consultation, based on its study on EU humanitarian donors' funding and conditions (see below). It asks for further simplification of EU financial procedures and directly linked the messages with the successful implementation of the Grand Bargain.

VOICE was also invited to speak at a workshop on the Financial Regulation and addressed a letter to key decision makers in order to promote the importance of simplification and flexibility, building on its advocacy towards improved management of the EU Trust funds (see below).

> Thank you for your letter of 9 June 2016 on the revision of the Financial Regulation and for your contributions. The review seeks further simplification and more flexibility of the EU regulatory and financial set up. These are particularly important to me as this is one of the ways to deliver on the Grand Bargain commitments around which we have collectively united at the World Humanitarian Summit.
>
> I have therefore taken good note of your concerns including the need for flexibility and adaptability of EU instruments and delivery for EU trust funds. This revision of the EU financial rules should have a real positive impact on our partners implementing humanitarian aid projects worldwide.

Extract from letter of Kristalina Georgieva EC Vice-President Budget and Human Resources, 01/09/2016

> The Commission recognises the prominent role that NGOs and European NGOs in particular play in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable populations through the delivery of humanitarian aid and one of our primary goals with this revision is indeed to make our partnership with NGOs more effective and more result focused.

Extract from letter of Michael Hager – Head of Cabinet, Budget Commissioner Günther Oettinger, 16/01/2017

Given that in 2016 the EU had its highest ever EU humanitarian aid budget, VOICE called for an increase of the humanitarian aid line for 2017. The European Parliament had picked up on the need for more money for humanitarian aid in the annual budget negotiations for 2017 given that needs had not shrunk and to prevent an unpredictable gap between the scale of operations from one year to another. However, it was unexpectedly unsuccessful in obtaining an increase for the 2017 humanitarian aid budget line in the negotiations. As a result, ECHO's 2017 budget is lower, but in line with the EU's MFF level foreseen for 2017, nonetheless entailing a delay in release of some of the annual Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs) to accommodate a smaller budget and other priorities.

1.3 VOICE'S RELEVANCE CONFIRMED THROUGH HIGH LEVEL INSTITUTIONAL DIALOGUE

The recognition of VOICE's expertise, built on the operational presence of its members, and VOICE's profile on key portfolios meant that in 2016 opportunities to raise crucial issues in dialogue with the Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, Christos Stylianides, and the appropriate high-levels of management in the Commission, continued to arise. Amongst these were:

VOICE President Nicolas Borsinger meets Commissioner Stylianides

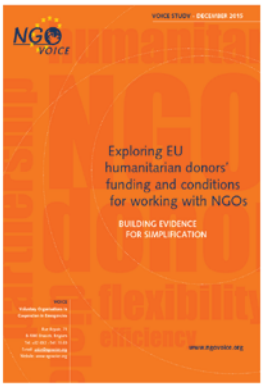
- the handling of refugee issues in Greece,
- the HIPs process and content,
- the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA),
- the annual budget and
- advocating successfully for a better partners' conference in late 2016 on the basis of feedback from VOICE members earlier in the year.

1.4 MONITORING EU FUNDING FOR NGOS

Exploring EU humanitarian donors' funding and conditions for working with NGOs

Building evidence forsimplification

Input and expertise from VOICE members



key messages

- increased flexibility in grant conditions and funding
- streamlined and efficient procedures to make funding allocation processes faster
- simplification of administrative burden
- harmonised proposal and reporting format to improve cooperation
- strengthened dialogue between donors and NGOs

Actions and Outcomes

International level

- Input to High-Level Panel on humanitarian financing
- Grand Bargain includes a commitment to harmonize reporting
- Messages shared in the LessPaperMoreAid campaign

2000+ received the VOICE study

European Union

- Dissemination and events at national level

- Joint presentation with the European Commission
- Revision of the EU's financial regulation
- VOICE Grand Bargain Task Force established

VOICE study on 'Exploring EU humanitarian donors' funding and conditions for working with NGOs – Building evidence for simplification'

Following up on VOICE's previous report on 'NGO perspectives on the implementation of the EU Consensus on humanitarian aid', this study on donors' conditions and requirements for working with NGOs has confirmed that there is a real interest from members and key stakeholders for using such methodologies of comparing different donors' policies and practices to capture good practices, and suggest NGOs' recommendations. The report remains a key document in VOICE's work on financing issues and thanks to its wide dissemination and active presentation at national level it has supported VOICE members in engaging further with their national representatives, while at EU level the report will provide an essential element in shaping the next revision of the FPA.

Commissioned in July 2015, VOICE's study published in early 2017, seeks to examine and compare the funding and grant modalities of four donors, illustrating the institutional diversity within the EU: Denmark (DANIDA), the EU (ECHO), France (Centre de Crise) and Germany (Auswärtiges Amt).

In total, this study consulted 43 respondents from several NGOs or networks active in humanitarian aid across eight countries in Europe.
The report contains:

- An overview of selected donors' humanitarian funding and funding architecture
- The analysis of the four donors' conditionalities through a matrix that maps the requirements of each donor.
- NGO perspectives on donor funding requirements
- VOICE findings and advocacy recommendations

Given the evidence the report brings forward in relation to the administrative burden faced by NGOs in their daily work, it was very well received by our members for its relevance.

Several presentations were organised jointly with members fostering exchanges with member states and ECHO and looking at ways forward based on the recommendations proposed in the report.

The study was commended in discussions in Italy, Germany, France and during the VOICE roundtable in the Netherlands, in Geneva via ICVA, and at a public event co-hosted by ECHO in Brussels. It was also published at a crucial moment: while the Grand Bargain was being developed and in support of at VOICE 's advocacy on the EU financial regulation revision.

The main findings also fed into the *LessPaperMoreAid* campaign undertaken by ICVA in which VOICE actively took part.

Work on trust funds – the EU´s latest innovative aid modality

EU Trust funds are not considered a humanitarian funding instrument but currently rather share an objective of building resilience and ECHO contributes funding in this context to them. While they present an opportunity for VOICE members to engage in longer term planning and aid delivery they are not a substitute for humanitarian aid funding to respond to humanitarian needs. Thanks to the engagement of VOICE, the perceptions, concerns and the operational realities of humanitarian NGOs were shared with key decision-makers.

Since 2014, the EU has launched four Trust Funds, creating a new aid funding modality, that the EC manages but that can pool funding with other donors or from diverse EU budget lines. Given that these new instruments were having a direct impact on NGO access to aid funding, VOICE undertook a number of activities with members to gain an understanding of the Trust Funds' current functioning and NGOs' perception of their advantages and disadvantages.

A first brainstorming session was organized in March 2016 and gave the network a first set of recommendations and issues to be brought forward in VOICE advocacy on humanitarian funding (notably within the messages shared in the financial regulation revision process). In parallel the secretariat developed and regularly updated a matrix gathering key data and information for the first three Trust Funds (Madad for the Syria region, the Bekou for the Central African Republic and the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and migration in Africa). In order to gain further understanding and collect evidence of the challenges faced by NGOs in accessing funding under the Trust Funds, a survey was launched in the autumn. The results re-confirmed the need for more information to be shared, for negotiation phases to be shortened and for clearer objectives for the funds to be agreed. VOICE presented the outcome of this survey at an event with EU trust funds managers which was organized by NRC in December 2016.

1.5 BUILDING ON EUROPE´S SOLIDARITY WITH CRISIS AFFECTED PEOPLE: RESPONDING TO THE GLOBAL REFUGEE AND DISPLACEMENT CRISIS

In 2015 and 2016 the EU became a more involved actor in the global refugee and displacement crisis. With refugees and migrants arriving on the EU's shores via Greece and walking to countries in the north of Europe through the Balkans and a number of EU member states, the EU took a number of initiatives, challenging its own approach in development and humanitarian policy to tackle the root causes of displacement, and to try to ensure a more humane treatment of those people who found themselves in Greece and in need of humanitarian assistance. Of our 85 members, at least 70 have been in some way engaged or responded in relation to the current refugee crisis. However, this response has been very varied, has taken different amounts of time (some have been active for years for instance in the Mediterranean and in Calais). Some have longstanding expertise on displacement and know a lot about the push and pull factors for people to migrate. Some have built a humanitarian response on top of an existing social care mandate in Europe while others have focused on reinforcing their activities in countries of origin or transit, and others still have focused on advocacy or providing technical expertise to state or state-mandated agencies that need it – while others have not changed their operations in any way. Many more have engaged in advocacy at European level on the issues of reception and integration of refugees, as well as their treatment along migration routes and in relation to conditions in countries of origin and transit.

Education in Emergencies at Kakama refugee camp
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A changing environment: the EU adapts with a new instrument for emergencies in Europe

Realising that the current EU funding instruments did not permit a predictable, timely or adequate response to people's needs in Greece, the member states tasked the Commission in February 2016 to propose a new regulation to do this. What became known as 'emergency support within the Union' was adopted in record time and was largely modelled on the existing 1996 humanitarian aid regulation – meaning that ECHO's existing NGO partners were eligible for funding. VOICE ensured that members wishing to avail of the funding that would become available were kept informed in a timely manner of the conditions and context related to this funding. VOICE can highlight the following positive elements of this new instrument:

- the instrument is principled and proposes a needs-based approach
- it is in many instances modelled on and refers to the existing humanitarian aid regulation that ECHO uses
- to fund this activity, money was not taken from existing humanitarian or development operations
- the Commission wants a diversity of implementing partners, including NGOs
- Partners need to have the requisite expertise
- Up to 100% will be financed, on a case-by-case basis.

However, experiences and the situation on the ground remain challenging and VOICE continues to ensure open dialogue with members about the challenges of implementing funding within an EU member state and to support members to raise these issues vis-à-vis the EU institutions where appropriate.

Humanitarian NGOs call for a better EU response to Refugees and Migrants at VOICE's General Assembly

This General Assembly resolution was widely disseminated and used to support advocacy at national and European level. This resolution showed the consensus of the network on a highly politicised and controversial issue, drawing on the extensive field experience and expertise of the membership.

In June, a few months after the declaration of the controversial EU-Turkey agreement, VOICE members, as humanitarian NGOs working around the world in support of crisis-affected people, many with long-standing experience of dealing with refugees, decided unanimously to adopt a strong position on the situation of refugees in Europe and globally.

The EU and its member states must:

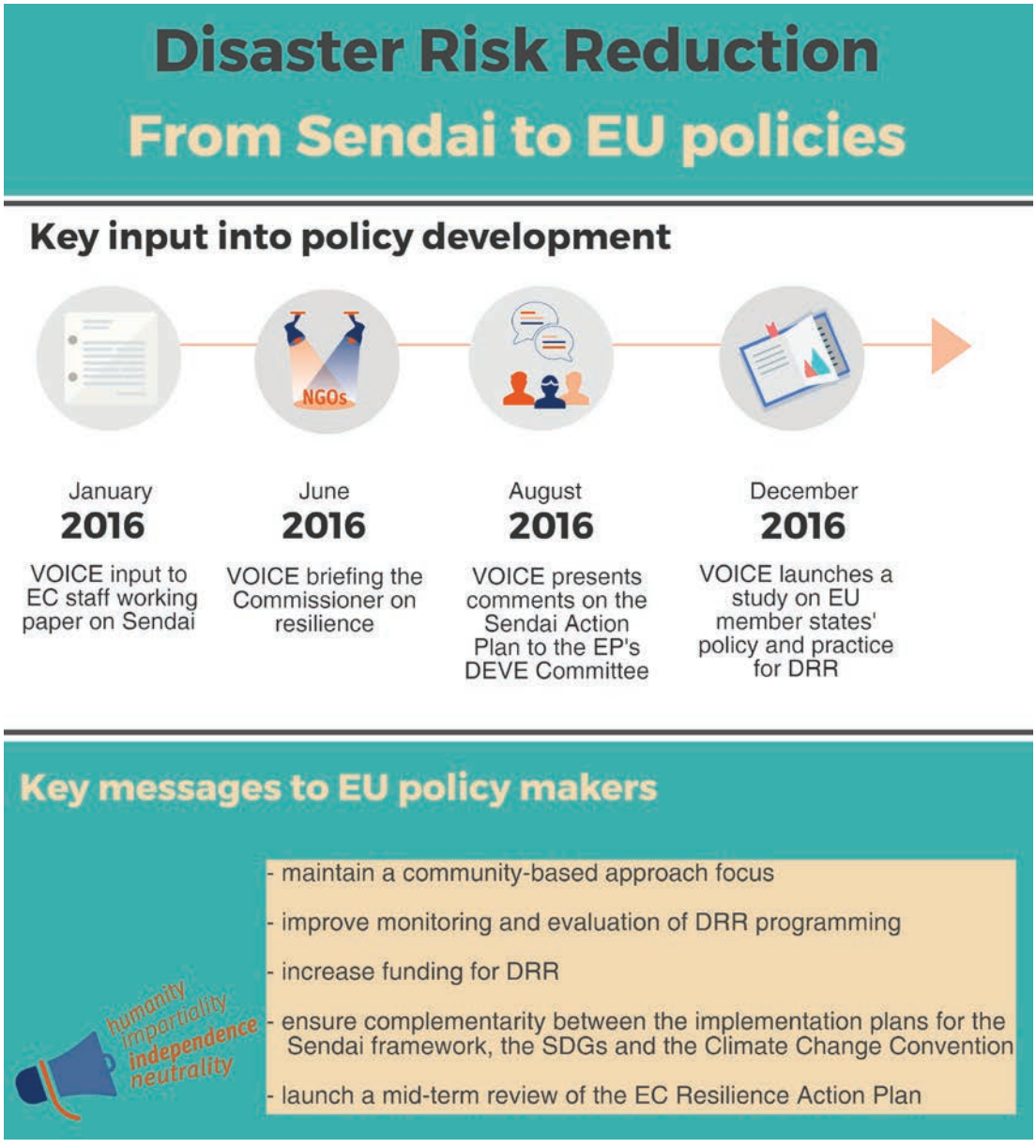
- show leadership to find political solutions to conflict, as the key root cause of displacement, and step up its role in conflict prevention.
- show greater commitment to respect and to promote respect for international law, international humanitarian law and refugee law.
- ensure that the EU's humanitarian assistance is not instrumentalised for political purposes in response to this crisis. It should go to the areas with the greatest need and not be linked to strategic decisions aimed at preventing migration to the EU.
- ensure effective search and rescue, independent of objectives of deterrence or border control.
- create credible and sufficient safe, legal and accessible mechanisms for those forced to flee, to prevent more lives being put at risk.
- further rely on their humanitarian NGO partners and their principled professional approach.
- ensure that protection is a priority in the current humanitarian funding on the refugee routes and in Greece.
- assess the added-value of new funding instruments with regard to flexibility, as well as timely and predictable delivery, and regarding programming and financial disbursements.

Extract from VOICE's 2016 General Assembly Policy resolution

A new policy for protracted displacement

The EU's development and humanitarian departments decided to adopt a new policy on protracted forced displacement the 'Lives in Dignity Communication' as one of its contributions to the World Humanitarian Summit. However, policy and practice are often not in step with one another and VOICE continues to promote implementation and attention to this policy document in its dialogue with EU decision-makers regarding the response to migration and displacement. This policy, which a number of VOICE members and the secretariat fed into, through consultation and other input, looks at how to address the situation of persons in protracted forced displacement, through a combination of its longer-term development tools and shorter-term emergency assistance. This mirrors the real field practice of many VOICE members and other NGOs and was thus an interesting approach. This Communication is widely viewed by implementing actors as a promising step forward, and if implemented, in bridging between humanitarian and development assistance and adapting the EU's funding instruments more appropriately to the longer-term needs of these people and their host communities.

1.6 BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN HUMANITARIAN AID AND DEVELOPMENT



Ensuring a community based approach is retained in the EU Implementation plan following adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

2016 was another busy year for the DRR Working Group which engaged in different but complementary actions. Calling for the EC to maintain the community based approach focus, which is central to DRR and for improved monitoring and evaluation of DRR programming and funding, the DRR Working Group messages were heard and reflected in key EC documents.

Early in 2016 the group finalized its review of the 2015 Sendai Framework for DRR(SFDRR) and agreed on a set of priorities and recommendations to be shared with the EC to influence the draft action plan following the adoption of the SFDRR. VOICE's main messages are reflected in the EC Action Plan.

Thanks to its expertise, the EP also asked VOICE to present the views of the group and react to the Commission's presentation of its Action Plan to the European Parliament. There the group took the opportunity to also ask for a mid-term review of the EU Resilience action plan and for more funding for DRR.

Working with others: GNDR

The Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR) was launched in 2007 with the purpose of strengthening civil society's ability to work together and place the interests and concerns of vulnerable people at the heart of DRR policy formulation and implementation. Since then GNDR has been an essential contributor to the work of the VOICE DRR working group. Thanks to GNDR's collection of evidence at field level on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Actions and now the Sendai framework, and thanks to its international network, GNDR has strengthened the group's advocacy at EU level but also supported joint cooperation between regional advocacy groups of NGOs (like VOICE) which has proven to be essential in bringing one NGO voice to the Sendai conference.

Looking ahead with the DRR working group

In the autumn, the group agreed that building on the EC action plan following the adoption of the SFDRR, member states´ policies and practices for DRR must also develop and adapt to the commitments taken in Sendai. So the group launched a donors' mapping exercise analysing eight different member states in order to draw good practices and develop recommendations for improved national policies and programming for DRR in third countries. A consultant was recruited to support the work of the group and the study is to be published in 2017.

In parallel the group also maintained its dialogue with UNISDR. A first open regional forum was announced to take place early in 2017 ahead of the Cancun global platform meeting. While the DRR Working group welcomed that the EU finally has a regional forum like other regions, NGOs also shared their disappointment that it was to focus only on DRR issues inside Europe, not recognizing the EU´s prominent role in funding DRR programming worldwide. The group asked several times for a re-consideration of the agenda and hope that next time this important dimension of the EU and MS role as global donors will be reflected in the regional forum.

Ensuring the EU Resilience Action Plan is implemented with high-level dialogue

Later in the year, when the European Commission announced the Resilience forum in the framework of the European Development Days, representatives of the VOICE DRR working group organized a meeting with Commissioner Stylianides' cabinet and were successful in securing better NGO representation in the panel discussions. A number of messages on resilience including on education, early warning and participation were also shared.

Building on the DRR group advocacy messages, VOICE President Nicolas Borsinger met with the EC's Development Cooperation Department's Deputy Director-General and discussed linkages between humanitarian aid and development, including resilience and follow-up to the WHS. Late in 2016, the EEAS launched a new initiative aiming at a new communication on resilience in follow-up to the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy. As the current communication on resilience and its action plan are considered quite good, VOICE stressed the importance to build on the current one and to ask for an NGO consultation.

Reflecting the 2015-2016 international humanitarian commitments in the new European Consensus on Development

VOICE engaged in the European Parliament's consultations on the revision of the Development Consensus. At a public consultation hosted by the European Parliament's Development Committee on 30 November, VOICE and other NGOs were invited to comment on draft documents related to the EU Consensus on Development, due to be adopted in Spring 2017. VOICE welcomed the increased focus on fragility and conflicts which reflected the WHS outcomes, and stressed the importance of case-by-case and contextual approaches. NGOs also seized the opportunity to speak of the importance of protecting civil society space, and enhancing the role of civil society organisations. VOICE emphasised that the parliament's paper would be strengthened if DRR and the Sendai commitments were added, and stressed the need for monitoring implementation of the Consensus.

1.7 MEMBERS ENGAGEMENT IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING FPA

The added-value of NGOs

VOICE also sees its role as to bring forward the added value of NGOs, as the main implementers of humanitarian assistance in the field, expressing European public solidarity with crisis affected people. Part of that work involves ensuring that the funding and funding conditions for EU humanitarian assistance enable European humanitarian NGOs, in their full diversity, big/small/niche/generalist, to continue to be able to operate, by looking at issues as technical and diverse as the multi-annual EU budget (the MFF), the annual EU budgets, the framework partnership agreement which governs the contractual relations between the European Commission's humanitarian aid office ECHO and its NGO partners, the EC financial regulation, how open the EC trust funds are to NGOs, the annual process for the Humanitarian Implementation Plans and in 2015-2016 the high-level panel on humanitarian financing and one of its outcomes, the Grand Bargain.

VOICE members are very engaged in these issues, as they directly affect the quantity and quality (timeliness, predictability, flexibility, needs-basis) of funding they can receive and appreciate the leadership the secretariat and board can take in mobilising on these issues. VOICE members´ own knowledge of these issues has increased over the years, enabling them for instance to engage faster with member state financial actors (e.g. the finance ministry) on the financial regulation, as they did in Austria, Germany, France, Spain and the Netherlands in November 2016.

VOICE was very visible on these issues in 2016, and is now systematically invited to the European Commission, European Parliament and by stakeholders working on these issues at global level, due to its proven expertise on these big files. In sum, VOICE is a key actor, especially at EU level, on questions of EU funding for emergencies and crises, and is well positioned in the case of future funding crises/needs arising. This helps VOICE to ensure that humanitarian NGOs` interests under the EU rules and regulations related to funding are understood, respected and defended, so that they can focus on quality assistance to crisis affected people.

The FPA Watch Group

Thanks to the dynamism of the Watch Group and its Task Force, numerous discussions have taken place with ECHO representatives. The group has been consulted on various issues affecting the FPA including the Key Results Indicators, the audit process and training for partners. The group dedicated major efforts to improving ECHO's annual funding allocation process – and despite the openness showed by ECHO in those conversations, the challenging budgeting phase for 2017 prevented the full implementation of the Watch Group recommendations for this year.

In 2016, the newly reconstituted FPA Watch Group composed of 31 organisations approved its first work plan and elected its new Task Force of eight members.

Key issues in 2016 included the funding allocation process, the definition and interpretation of eligible shared costs and key result indicators.

Annual Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs)

The annual HIPs are legal decisions published by ECHO and giving to its partners the basis to submit applications for funding. For each region, crisis or country ECHO's HIP identifies the needs it intends to cover, the priorities for funding, the available budget and the potential partners. HIPs publication are thus of major importance for VOICE members given that they collectively receive about 80% of ECHO funding allocated to NGOs.

In relation to the HIP process the group was really active. Drawing on lessons learnt and experiences from the 2016 process, the group engaged very early in order to improve the 2017 process. It called for:

- more field consultation with partners to define HIP priorities,
- earlier publication of the HIPs (at least the narrative parts) for partners to get more time to submit proposals and improve quality of proposals
- spreading the deadlines to avoid bottle neck in the negotiating and contracting phases both for ECHO and partners
- increased clarity in relation to ECHO's expectation towards its engagement for education in emergencies.

Through a number of meetings, the Watch Group managed to get some of these recommendations through. However, towards the end of the year, while the humanitarian aid budget was not yet approved it became more difficult for ECHO to maintain its commitment to earlier publication of HIPs. The first Watch Group meeting in 2017 is assessing the extent to which all messages were heard by the EC.

Developments in shared costs and indicators

NGOs in the field usually work on numerous projects often funded by different donors. Costs associated with field offices, vehicles or administrative staff may be covered by those different donors; and are referred to as "shared costs". However, donors' recognition of this category of costs and methodology for accounting them in a project are very diverse.

After one year of regular exchanges between the group and ECHO on the definition of eligible shared costs, ECHO drafted a note providing more clarity and proposing a Simplified Allocation method for shared costs. The Task Force had the possibility to provide feedback to the document which should be published early 2017.

The introduction of Key Results Indicators (KRI), one the main novelties in the FPA 2014, was also widely discussed in 2016. First assessments on their use lead ECHO to revise its approach and to define a set of indicators and ask partners to use those pre-defined ones. This was in order to improve their use and be able to aggregate them and to compare proposals. ECHO also introduced some Key Outcomes Indicators (KOI) at project / outcome level.

The Task Force asked ECHO to ensure a pilot phase would take place before the launch of those new indicators; piloting started in May 2016. Some indicators were fine-tuned and the launch for all partners was finally done in September 2016. 2017 will be key to assess the impact of this new approach given that numerous proposals will be submitted within the 2017 HIP process. The Watch Group will continue monitoring the impact KRI and KOI have on partners' project management.

2. A VIBRANT NETWORK:

2.1 RELEVANCE OF THE NETWORK

VOICE members in 2016

In 2016, the General Assembly welcomed three new members in the network: Lutheran World Federation (Switzerland - *https://www.lutheranworld.org*), Polish Humanitarian Action (Poland - *http://www.pah.org.pl/*) and Terre des Hommes (Switzerland - *http://www.tdh.ch*).

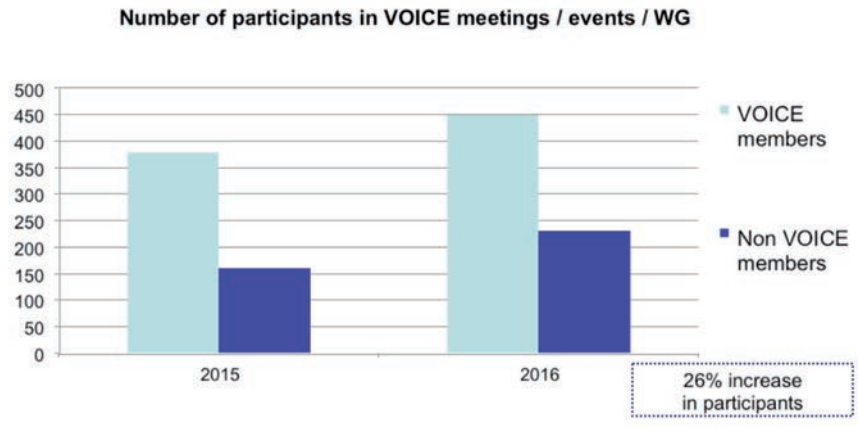
As of end 2016, the VOICE network gathered 85 NGOs from 20 European countries.

Increased impact and relevance of the network

The network's success and relevance can really be demonstrated through the growing interest of members and others in VOICE's work, and the measurable impact of VOICE's positions. NGOs' views were taken on board, amongst others in the EU's positions for the WHS, in the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, in the proposals for the revised EC financial regulation and in the shaping of the European Commission's annual conference for its humanitarian partners. VOICE's continued efforts to ensure effective humanitarian assistance and the recognition of humanitarian NGOs at EU level remain relevant.

The number of requests for speeches, participation and external meetings increased for VOICE in 2016 – with the secretariat ultimately participating in 278 events over the year.

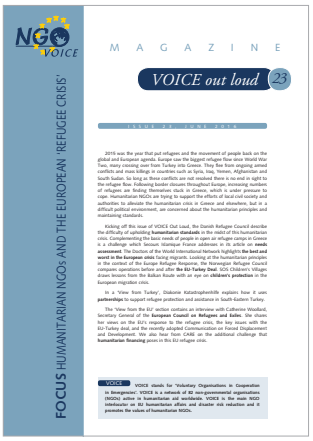
VOICE also noted a slightly changing profile of the people from member organisations participating in VOICE meetings and attending VOICE events. In 2015, 63% of participants were either advocacy, funding or management staff of organisations, a percentage which grew to 81% in 2016. A higher percentage of people from management levels in organisations accounted for a large proportion of that growth, growing from 20-34% from 2015-2016.



This is an outcome of VOICE's increased work at global level and engagement on wider issues (e.g. the WHS and the Global Strategy) and underlines the establishment of VOICE's relevance as a global actor with a specific expertise on the European Union.

In addition to the growing interest in VOICE's events, the core of VOICE's work remains in collective activities, positions and written outputs contributing to policy processes. Highlights from them include:

- the two VOICE Out Louds on the *'European refugee crisis'* and on *'humanitarian NGOs'* work with the private sector'.
- VOICE study on *Exploring EU humanitarian donors' funding and conditions for working with NGOs – Building evidence for simplification*
- VOICE contribution to the high-level panel on humanitarian financing
- VOICE letter to Commissioner Georgieva on the EC financial regulation



- VOICE contribution to the Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy
- VOICE DRR positions on the implementation of the Sendai framework for DRR at EU level
- VOICE events in Brussels on the WHS follow-up and the impact of counter-terrorism on principled humanitarian assistance
- VOICE roundtables in Netherlands and Slovakia on preparation for the WHS and working differently after the WHS.

2.2 OUTREACH AND MEMBERS´ ENGAGEMENT IN ADVOCACY AT NATIONAL AND EU LEVEL

VOICE members and secretariat engagement at national and EU level was visible through the WHS processes (linking for example to the Dutch, Irish, German, French, Spanish, Swedish, Polish, Slovakian WHS preparatory or follow-up discussions), through the debates generated by the VOICE study on humanitarian donors' funding and conditions for NGOs in the Netherlands, France, Italy and Germany, an event commemorating the 1st anniversary of the earthquake in Nepal in Belgium, an advocacy event in the European Parliament on the humanitarian situation in Turkey led by one of our German members, a roundtable on cash in humanitarian assistance with the member states' COHAFA representatives led by one of our UK based members, an event promoting inclusive humanitarian assistance, organised by a number of our members in Brussels, with representation from the Italian, Dutch, UK, Finnish and EU humanitarian leaderships, and through the dissemination of VOICE messages, for instance on the financial regulation and EU 2017 budget processes, in a number of countries and through MEPs.

From left to right: D. Kaba, ADRA Slovakia and MVRO board member, B. Lipovska Slovak Presidency, C. Cranfield and K. Schick, VOICE secretariat and M. Stys, People in Need and VOICE board member

Increased engagement – in figures:

From 2015 to 2016, the participation of member states officials in events organised by VOICE rose from 2 to 12% while almost 2/3 of the participants from our membership in VOICE events came from offices at national level (alongside EU liaison/representative offices). Altogether VOICE events reached participants (members or not) from at least 21 member states.

Working with other humanitarian actors

VOICE's work on the WHS was characterised by working with other humanitarian actors, at global, European and national level. Working with ICVA, SCHR and InterAction at global level to ensure NGO perspectives were heard at the WHS was a huge success for VOICE. At European level, the regular informal exchanges with OCHA, ICRC, MSF and Red Cross EU offices was crucial to ensuring complementarity in our messages to EU institutions (for instance on EU trust funds and the response to the crisis in Greece) and getting the European humanitarian NGOs perspective across to these other main humanitarian actors. VOICE was happy to invite the ICRC to be a key guest speaker at the VOICE event in follow-up to the WHS. At national level, working with and through the humanitarian groups, such as the Platform for Humanitarian Action in the Netherlands, or the Slovakian National Development NGO platform (MVRO) to organise our roundtable exchanges was invaluable.

Speakers at event in the Netherlands

The top 10 countries of origin of participants:	
1 France	**6** Belgium
2 UK	**7** Slovakia
3 Italy	**8** Switzerland
4 the Netherlands	**9** Poland
5 Germany	**10** Denmark

Listening to members' concerns about Brexit

A key event having an impact on our members at national level, was the vote by referendum in the UK in June to leave the European Union. The UK's contribution to EU humanitarian aid policy making, and the participation of UK members in the VOICE network are important and the VOICE board and secretariat were quick to ensure that solidarity with the affected members was expressed, and that members were informed of the state of affairs. Hearing directly from the affected members was crucial so the secretariat organised collective teleconferences for our UK based members to share their specific concerns, and this was followed up in September with the VOICE president and Excom (Executive Committee of the board) choosing to have its regular meeting in London, in order to meet with our UK based members face to face.

In addition, an information note for the wider membership was shared through the internal Flash newsletter and was our most popular internal document in 2016. VOICE also joined the CONCORD task torce on Brexit as an observer to ensure complementarity of work and relevant exchange of information. The network's response to Brexit is an example of the network's flexibility and responsiveness to members' specific and diverse needs.

Reaching out, sharing and learning

VOICE remains committed to raising awareness of humanitarian NGOs' work, views and expertise, while also supporting members in sharing and learning – contributing to the overall professionalization of the sector. The contribution of our members to the VOICE Out Loud magazine, the use of our website, and responding to media requests, such as interviews on the EU response to the refugee situation in Greece and the new Commission approaches to humanitarian assistance in Turkey received particular attention. VOICE's participation in the Commission's partner conference, including with a stand, is always a treasured moment to reach out to potential new members and give members a chance to catch up with the latest news from the network in person.

VOICE stand at partners' conference

In 2016, the Slovak national platform of Development NGOs (MVRO) wanted to use the opportunity of their country's EU presidency to provide their membership with the chance to learn more about humanitarian assistance. VOICE was happy to work with MVRO to organise a regional roundtable and workshops in Bratislava under the heading 'working differently to end need' with the high-level presence of the Slovak Foreign Ministry, board members, and members from Norway, EU offices and Poland contributing to the day's discussion. NGOs came from as far as Ukraine and Slovenia to participate in the workshops on 'humanitarian proposal writing' and 'working in consortia'.

Workshops in Bratislava

2.3 ENSURING VOICE GOVERNANCE

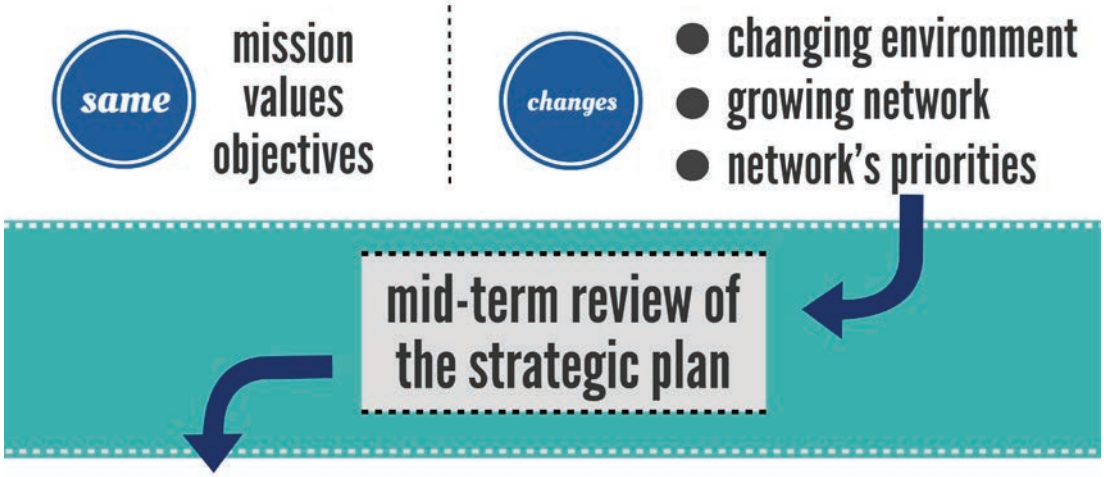
Mid-term review of the Strategic Plan

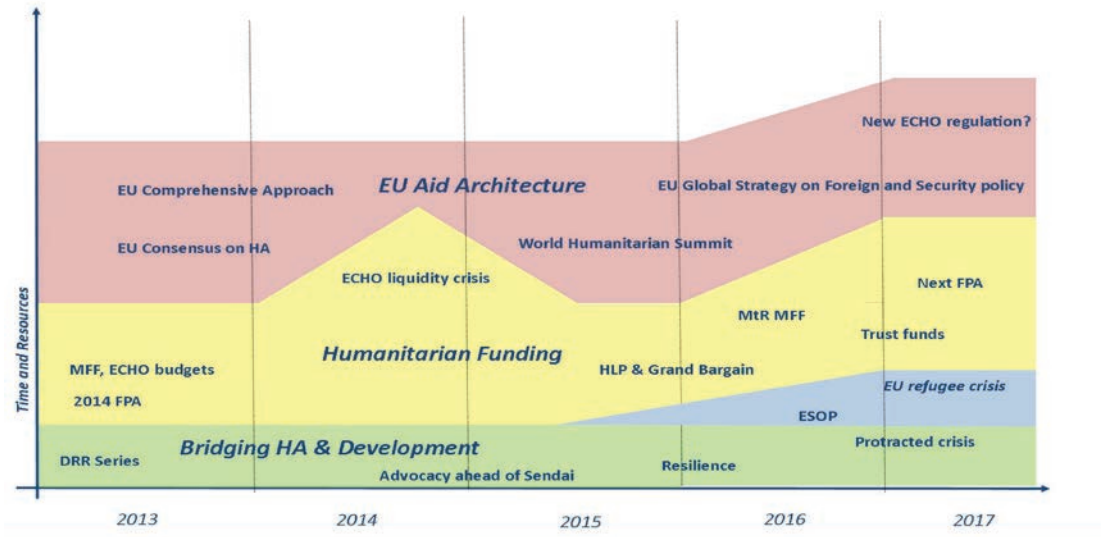
Launched in June 2015, the board conducted the mid-term review of the VOICE Strategic Plan 2013-2018. After an analysis of the main changes in the political environment affecting the network and humanitarian aid delivery, the board proposed to the General Assembly an updated strategic document. The General Assembly approved that VOICE´s mission, vision and strategic objectives remain the same given that they are still very much fit-for purpose.

The revision rather focuses on the changing priorities for the network, acknowledging where achievements were made since the adoption of the Strategic Plan and the necessary action the network needs to undertake to adapt to a rapidly changing environment.

Under each strategic objective the narrative was thus revised in order to adjust and define the direction the network will take in the next two years until the next strategic plan is drafted and adopted by the General Assembly.

Main priorities now include the World Humanitarian Summit and follow-up in line with the implementation of the Consensus on Humanitarian Aid; the implementation of the EU Global Strategy, ECHO´s broad evaluation in 2017 and its potential impact on NGOs. Under financing issues, the updated strategic objectives include VOICE's engagement in the Grand Bargain and at EU level focus on the mid-term review and next MFF, the revision of the financial regulation and ECHO budget. Under objective 3 the momentum to increase collaboration with development actors following the SDGs and WHS is now featured as well as the opportunity for improving the EU response to protracted crises.





The board

The VOICE board of directors ensures that VOICE adheres to its purpose and statutes. It decides on major directions and policies, provides accountability and ensures proper management. Board members are elected at the General Assembly and contribute their professional experience, and as such represent the broader membership of the VOICE network. An executive committee (Excom) consisting of the president, treasurer, secretary and VOICE director deals with administrative tasks and guarantees the financial and legal accountability of VOICE.

After the elections at the General Assembly the board was composed in 2016 by Nicolas Borsinger (president), Jean-Michel Grand (Action Against Hunger UK - treasurer), Florence Daunis (Handicap International - secretary), Anne Street (CAFOD), Ester Asin (Save the Children), Marco Rotelli (InterSos), Marek Stys (People in Need), Daniel Zetterlund (IAS) and Rikke Friis (DRC). In 2016 the board held four meetings and a two-day retreat in Lyon to prepare the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan, while the Excom met three times. The VOICE board's active participation in events and roundtables across Europe as speakers and chairs, contributing their professional expertise and experience and representing the network, is much appreciated. The network also wishes to express its gratitude to Dominic Crowley (Concern), whose board mandate expired in 2016, for his commitment to the board's work over the years.

2.4 DEVELOPING THE NETWORK

Internal growth processes underway

2016 was also an important year for the network in its internal development.

The secretariat invested time and resources in the development of its new website and new members' area. After a pilot phase with a couple of members late in 2016 the website was launched in early 2017. Offering a clearer look and easier navigation, the new website received a very warm welcome from our members and partners. For the secretariat it provides a more responsive and user-friendly tool that will better serve the communication of the network´s activities both towards the general public and towards our members.

Communications strategy and reflections on a membership strategy

Within the revision process of the mid-term strategic plan, the board also agreed to give an increased focus on developing further the network itself. It was approved that in 2016 and 2017 a strategy on communication would be developed, with reflections beginning on a membership strategy.

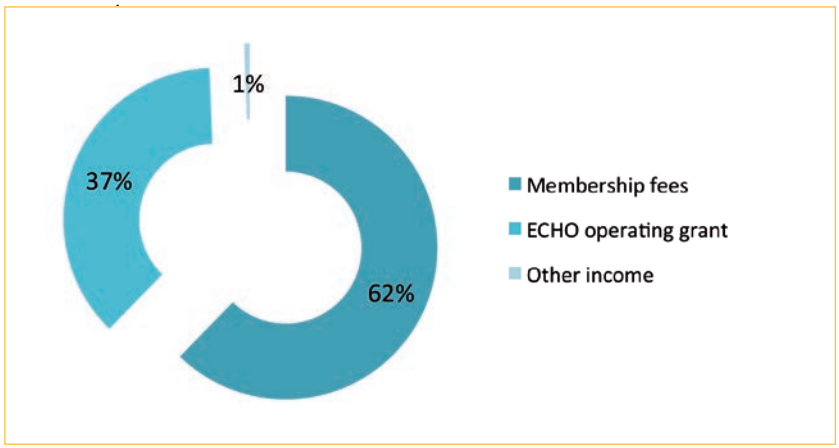
In 2016, the board and the secretariat dedicated resources and energy to building a communication strategy. Reinforcing VOICE's communication towards its main target groups (including EU institutions and member states) is a key priority since it will be of benefit for the advocacy work the network undertakes. In order to develop the communication strategy and increase awareness and knowledge of the VOICE secretariat, in-house workshops and trainings were organised, while the internal Flash newsletter was migrated to a new online design and dissemination tool. The communication strategy is expected to be finalised in Spring 2017.

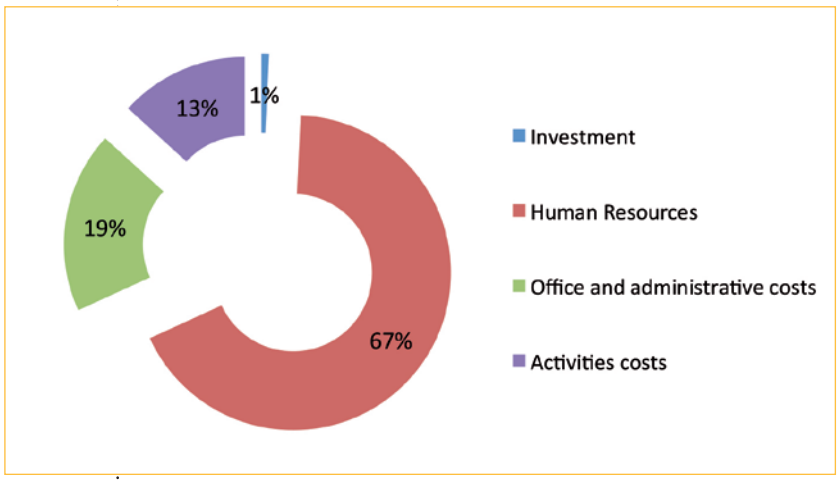
A year to take stock and further develop ways of working

As mentioned in the first part of this activity report, the World Humanitarian Summit has given a fantastic opportunity for the network in identifying with our members the main challenges but also main strengths of the sector and the role of NGOs within the sector. It supported the work of the board in the midterm review process and helped the secretariat shape its reflection on its approach to communication and membership.

While new members joined the network, members showed also a higher degree of engagement in VOICE's activities and advocacy initiatives. Such dynamism is not only received as a recognition of the relevance of the network but also as an additional motivation for pursuing that direction.

2.5 RESOURCING THE NETWORK





In 2016, the turnover of the VOICE network as administered by the secretariat totalled € 538.768. As in previous years, the majority of this (63%) was made up of membership fees. Following an update exercise of individual turnovers launched late 2015, 2016 membership resources from individual members were slightly increased reflecting the growth of our individual members.

VOICE implemented the second year of a two-year ECHO operating grant under the project *'Enhancing cooperation between European NGOs and strengthening NGOs collective influence towards the European Union and Member States in relation to policies, programmes and funding affecting the delivery of humanitarian aid'*. This provided resources for additional activities and services to members and ECHO partners, and enabled the network to increase its outreach and support to collective advocacy.

A similar turnover exercise was conducted in the autumn towards VOICE members that are grouped in families. It gave a wider perspective on the state of our membership and provided necessary background elements for the board to consider revising VOICE's membership fee structure in 2017.

2.6 A DYNAMIC SECRETARIAT!

The VOICE secretariat is responsible for implementing the activities indicated in the Annual Work Programme and Strategic Plan. It is also in charge of the financial management of the organisation under the supervision and general control of the VOICE board. 2016 has been an active year for the secretariat with an exceptional number of travel days, events and meetings attended.

The staff of the secretariat in 2016 included the Director *(Kathrin Schick)*, Programme Coordinator *(Magali Mourlon)*, Advocacy and Communication officer *(Celia Cranfield)*, Policy and Funding assistant *(Marjorie Tonnelier)*, Communication assistant *(Livia Bottoni)* and Office Administrator *(Cécile Muller). VOICE would also like to thank its intern, Sára Põdör who supported the secretariat team in the first months of the year.*
For even better cooperation and team spirit in 2016, the team had a staff day out practicing laughter yoga.

85 VOICE MEMBERS IN 2016

AUSTRIA

CARE Österreich
Caritas Österreich
Hilfswerk Österreich
SOS Kinderdorf International
World Vision Österreich

BELGIUM

Caritas Secours International Belgium
Handicap International Belgium
Médecins du Monde Belgium
Oxfam Solidarité – Solidariteit
Plan Belgique - België

CZECH REPUBLIC

ADRA Czech Republic
People in Need (PIN)

DENMARK

ADRA Denmark - Nødhjælp og udvikling
ASF Dansk Folkehjælp
DanChurchAid (DCA)
Danish Refugee Council - DRC
Mission East – Mission Øst
Save the Children Denmark - Red Barnet Denmark

FINLAND

Finn Church Aid
World Vision Finland

FRANCE

Action Contre la Faim
ACTED – Agence d'Aide à la Coopération Technique et au Développement
CARE France
Handicap International France
Médecins du Monde France
Secours Catholique - Réseau Mondial Caritas
Secours Islamique France
Secours Populaire Français
Solidarités International
Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF)

GERMANY

ADRA Deutschland e.V.
Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB) Deutschland
CARE Deutschland – Luxemburg e.V.
Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.V.
Deutscher Caritasverband e.V (Caritas Germany)
Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe e.V.
Malteser International
Medico International
Plan International Germany
World Vision Germany

GREECE

Médecins du Monde – Greece

IRELAND

Concern Worldwide
Trócaire

ITALY

Caritas Italiana
CESVI - Cooperazione e Sviluppo
GVC - Gruppo Volontariato Civile
INTERSOS – Organizzazione Umanitaria Onlus

LUXEMBOURG

Caritas Luxembourg

THE NETHERLANDS

CARE Nederland
Cordaid
ICCO (Dutch Interchurch Aid)
Oxfam Novib
Save the Children Netherlands
ZOA

NORWAY

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
Norwegian Church Aid

POLAND

Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH)

PORTUGAL

Médicos do Mundo

SLOVAKIA

Habitat for Humanity International

SPAIN

Acción Contra el Hambre
Caritas Española
Oxfam Intermón
Médicos del Mundo

SWEDEN

Church of Sweden — Svenska kyrkan
International Aid Services (IAS)
PMU Interlife

SWITZERLAND

Medair
Terre des Hommes
The Lutheran World Federation

UNITED KINGDOM

Action Against Hunger
ActionAid
CAFOD
CARE International UK
Christian Aid
HelpAge International
International Medical Corps UK
International Rescue Committee (IRC UK)
Islamic Relief Worldwide
Mercy Corps
Oxfam GB
Plan International UK
Save the Children UK
Tearfund
World Vision UK

VOICE

VOICE stands for 'Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies'. VOICE is a network of 85 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in humanitarian aid worldwide. VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor on EU humanitarian affairs and disaster risk reduction and it promotes the values of humanitarian NGOs.

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