

Post 2020 Multiannual Financial Framework *What EU humanitarian aid needs and why.*

United around the commitment to providing assistance to people in need, the European Union, together with its Member States, is the world's leading donor of humanitarian aid and has been able to build common positions and influence the international humanitarian system. The critical level of funding reached at EU level enables humanitarian aid actions to have a greater impact: with less than 1% of the EU budget, through its partners - NGOs, the Red Cross, the ICRC and UN - the EU provides life-saving humanitarian assistance to more than 120 million victims of disasters and conflicts around the globe every year. The EU has a tangible added value in providing humanitarian aid.

However, in the last ten years, humanitarian needs worldwide have more than doubled and the humanitarian aid budget within the EU 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework has been stretched to its limits. The next MFF will not only determine the role the EU can play as a leading humanitarian aid donor, but will also shape the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the aid that humanitarian partners are able to deliver.

NGOs are the EU's main partners in delivering humanitarian aid, providing aid where it is most needed, in accordance with humanitarian principles, and, thanks to their expertise, field presence and professionalism, contributing towards responding to the diverse needs of crisis-affected populations.

VOICE key recommendations for the next Multiannual Financial Framework

The VOICE network addresses the following recommendations to the European Commission, the EU Member States and the European Parliament:

VOICE (Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies) is the network representing European NGOs active in humanitarian aid worldwide, most of them holding a Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) with the European Commission's DG ECHO. VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the European Union on emergency aid and disaster risk reduction.

1

The next MFF should have a separate and specific budget line for humanitarian aid,

2

The next MFF should provide an increased allocation for humanitarian aid to keep up with increasing needs and global developments,

3

The next MFF should ensure funding predictability and flexibility for humanitarian aid, by providing full funding of the EU humanitarian aid budget line and priority access to the emergency aid reserve.

1

The next MFF should have a separate and specific budget line for humanitarian aid

WHY?

Because principled humanitarian aid is enshrined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (article 214) and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. The humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality are used by humanitarian actors to secure access to people in need and for their own security in the field. Independence means the autonomy of humanitarian objectives from political, migration control, economic, security or other objectives. A separate budget line is therefore a safeguard which helps to avoid confusion or blurred lines among different EU policy and political objectives and actors present in crises.

Because providing needs-based humanitarian aid to save lives, prevent and alleviate suffering is the objective of the EU's humanitarian aid. The consequence of the principle of impartiality is the EU's commitment to a needs-based approach to humanitarian aid, to reach the most vulnerable, answer the most urgent needs and fulfill the humanitarian imperative. It should therefore be translated into a needs-based allocation of funding, which is better guaranteed with a clear separation between the source of humanitarian aid funding and other funding instruments, which may have legitimate political objectives, as is currently the case.

Because of the timely response humanitarians need to provide. Humanitarian aid does not function like other policies: it is governed by the emergency contexts and tight timeframes in which it must be delivered. The Humanitarian Aid Regulation and a specific budget line have made the humanitarian aid instrument more flexible in terms of programming than many others^[1], in order to react to changing circumstances in crises and sudden onset crises. A specific instrument and budget line therefore best match the important operational necessity of reaching people before it is too late.

2

The next MFF should provide an increased allocation for humanitarian aid: €2 billion yearly

WHY?

Because of the increasing needs worldwide. In 2012, when the previous MFF was being developed, 62 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance globally. Last year, 164.2 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance, around one quarter of who are in Yemen, Syria and Iraq where violent conflicts are still raging today. Over this period, the EU humanitarian aid budget has remained stable in accordance with the current MFF, while the global number of people in need has more than doubled. The EU and its member states represent the second largest economy of the world and have committed to crisis-affected populations in the Lisbon Treaty. Having reiterated this commitment at the World Humanitarian Summit, the EU must therefore contribute to global efforts aimed at answering increasing needs, as it strives to reduce needs and to improve humanitarian responses.

According to the Global Humanitarian Aid Report, in 2016, 164.2 million people in 47 countries were in need of international humanitarian assistance and 65.6 million were forcibly displaced. The last years have seen an average of 40% global shortfall between the needs and the funding levels, while more and more crises are protracted. The trend is of increasing needs, due to a number of factors ranging from conflicts dragging out to the effects of climate change.

[1]Including thanks to innovations such as the ECHO instrument called [Acute Large Emergency Response Tool \(ALERT\)](#)

Because it would make humanitarian aid more efficient and effective. Spending for humanitarian aid in previous years has systematically ended up at above €1.5 billion while starting from a lower budget line, under €1 billion according to the current MFF ceiling. A lot of welcome efforts have been undertaken in order to mobilise more funds to answer growing humanitarian needs, using the Emergency Aid Reserve but also drawing from other EU instruments. However, striving for more efficiency, an increased allocation from the start would allow for better planning and more efficient administration of the Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIP) during the year, instead of the current top-ups which create a further administrative burden for both the EC services and ECHO partners.

Because 88% of European citizens support humanitarian aid. As stated in the Consensus, the EU's humanitarian aid is a fundamental expression of the universal value of solidarity between people. The Consensus also states that through NGOs, citizens can take an active role in the humanitarian cause. The 2017 Eurobarometer[2] showed a continuous support for humanitarian aid: asked about the current pressure on Europe's public finances, 84% supported the continued funding of EU humanitarian aid. At a time where the EU institutions are trying to come closer to citizens, support for humanitarian aid should be reflected in the decisions taken, including for the next MFF.

Because of the international commitments taken by the European Union and its role on the international scene. The role of the EU as a recognised global and needs-based donor is part of the Union's position on the international scene. Through the Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy the EU's ambition to expand its influence is clear. In this process, the EU should maintain its commitment to saving millions of lives worldwide, including by making humanitarian aid actions more effective and efficient, as it has committed to at the World Humanitarian Summit and through the Grand Bargain process. Implementing these commitments is a matter of credibility for the EU and the next MFF must provide the means to do so.

3

The next MFF should ensure funding predictability and flexibility for humanitarian aid, by providing full funding of the EU humanitarian aid budget line and priority access to the emergency aid reserve.

WHY?

Because the EU needs flexibility to be prepared for unpredictable and escalating crises. For humanitarians, flexibility means being able to respond on time, before people die, by mobilising money and programmes responsively. In the next MFF, DG ECHO must be able to rapidly access an emergency aid reserve. Since 2014, the Emergency Aid Reserve has been one of the key sources of additional funding for humanitarian aid to swiftly address suddenly increasing needs and unforeseen crises in non-EU countries. The next MFF must include a significant Emergency Aid Reserve, used as a flexibility instrument i.e. mobilised in exceptional cases on top of the humanitarian aid budget, and secure priority and quick access to it for humanitarian assistance.

Because predictability matters for the EU's engagement towards crisis affected populations. For humanitarian partners, predictability also means confidence that the EU will actually be able to pay. In the past, a gap between the level of commitments and payments has led to uncertainty regarding ECHO-funded projects and the engagement NGOs have towards crisis-affected populations on Europe's behalf[3]. Indeed, because humanitarian aid programming responds to emergency situations and DG ECHO rapidly allocates funding thanks to pre-assessed humanitarian partners[4], for whom pre-financing rates are very high. Consequently, the entire amount of commitment appropriations is usually contracted during the year and a very close level of payments is made in the same financial year. Therefore, commitment appropriations and payment appropriations must be at the same level for both the humanitarian aid budget line and the emergency aid reserve, as has been the practice for several years.

[2]Special Eurobarometer 453, Humanitarian Aid, May 2017

[3]At the end of the 2007-2013 MFF, a backlog of unpaid bills spilled over into the current one and resulted in delays in the start of 2014-2020 programmes and in payments, including for humanitarian aid. NGOs partners in the field had to make difficult choices and use their own resources to maintain the commitment to people in need. One of the lessons learned was that given the live saving purpose of humanitarian aid, and the limited size of its allocation in proportion of the whole MFF, payment appropriations should match commitment appropriations.

[4]About the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) and the FPA Watch Group :<https://ngovoice.org/fpa-watch-group>