



VOICE KEY HIGHLIGHTS

NEW HUMANITARIAN TRENDS AND CHALLENGES IN DELIVERING HUMANITARIAN AID IN LIGHT OF THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

VOICE-FoRS ROUNDTABLE IN PRAGUE

8 SEPTEMBER 2022



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SUMMARY

This paper is a summary of the main ideas discussed during the event and does not necessarily reflect the speakers' opinions.

The round table aimed at triggering reflections on the global and regional humanitarian context from the perspective of donors and NGOs, reviewing the state of play of principled humanitarian aid given the Ukraine conflict, and identifying solutions to cope with the increasing needs and funding gap ahead of the European Humanitarian Forum 2023 in Brussels.

The meeting, co-organised by VOICE and ForS, gathered 65 people, including representatives from DG ECHO, Ministries of Foreign Affairs from the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and Sweden, as well as humanitarian aid actors from 15 European countries.

The Chair of ForS' Board, Richard Schinko, and Dominic Crowley, VOICE President, opened the round table before the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Jiří Kozák, gave his auspices for the event and highlighted the Czech presidency's priorities, including Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), humanitarian diplomacy, and a triple nexus approach in fragile contexts.



Panel I: A glimpse of the current humanitarian context - addressing new challenges and trends

In March 2021, the European Commission (EC) launched the Communication on the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles, setting the direction for the EU's work on humanitarian aid for the upcoming years. In June 2022, VOICE members approved their Policy Resolution "An urgent call to protect principled humanitarian aid", outlining key recommendations towards the EU and its Member States to ensure the delivery of principled humanitarian aid given the conflict in Ukraine. One month later, the Czech Republic succeeded France by taking over the Presidency of the Council of the EU until the end of the year. The global humanitarian context has significantly changed over the past months. The conflict in Ukraine and its global economic repercussions have exacerbated the already dismal humanitarian situation worldwide, which was aggravated over the past years by conflicts, climate, COVID-19, and the chronic underfunding of humanitarian crises. Taking this into account, speakers were invited to reflect, from their European, national, and NGO perspectives, on the current humanitarian trends, how their priorities have changed over the months, and the role they play in addressing these humanitarian challenges.

Speakers:

- Petr Gandalovič, Head of the Department for development cooperation and humanitarian aid, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic
- Michael Kühn, Senior Policy Advisor, Welthungerhilfe & VOICE Board member
- Mihaela Zupancic, Head of Unit DG ECHO E.1. - International and Interinstitutional Relations, Legal Framework

Moderator: Francesca Giubilo, Senior Advocacy Officer, VOICE



Key Highlights

- The current trends in the global humanitarian context are not new but are increasingly alarming. Among these: International Humanitarian Law (IHL) violations and security risks for aid workers, instrumentalisation and politicisation of humanitarian aid, the growing gap between humanitarian needs and available resources, acute food insecurity, the consequences of climate change, the need to empower national and local organisations.
- A nexus approach is key to breaking the silos and meaningfully addressing protracted crises.
- IHL needs to be upheld and aid workers protected.
- Investments in DRR and Anticipatory Actions are key to preventing disasters and further humanitarian suffering.
- Political solutions need to be sought to address the consequences of climate-related disasters, such as displacement.
- Besides the EU, national governments and NGOs, decision-makers, including Finance Ministers, are crucial in addressing the current humanitarian challenges. The conflict in Ukraine demonstrates that financial resources can be mobilised quickly and significantly if there is political will.

Panel II: Regional round table - Donors' and NGOs' challenges and enablers in delivering principled humanitarian aid in light of the Ukraine conflict

The panel was introduced with a video by People in Need (PIN), featuring testimonials from people affected by the conflict in Ukraine. This was followed by the moderator's in-depth definition of the four humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. In the first round, the five speakers were invited to exchange on the challenges they are facing when delivering principled humanitarian aid in Ukraine, including the risk of politicisation of humanitarian aid and the questions regarding the principle of neutrality. The point of view of Caritas Ukraine was extremely valuable to help understand the context as well as the specific challenges a local NGO faces, especially when it comes to the principle of neutrality. Reflections on how to overcome these challenges took place in a second round and raised interesting insights on the importance of humanitarian access as well as a deep knowledge of humanitarian principles.

Speakers:

- Anna Duda, Country Director for Ukraine, People in Need (PIN)
- Grzegorz Gruca, Director, Polish Humanitarian Action (PHA)
- Karolina Krupa, Deputy Director (Humanitarian Aid), Development Cooperation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland
- Maroš Mitřík, Director, Department for Development Assistance and Humanitarian Aid, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic
- Tetiana Stawnychy, President, Caritas Ukraine



Moderator: Elżbieta Mikos-Skuza, NOHA Director of Studies, University of Warsaw

Key Highlights

- Humanitarian principles were defined in 1965 and they should be universally applicable.
- Apart from the core principles, quality, transparency, and accountability should not be forgotten.
- Among the challenges of delivering humanitarian aid in Ukraine: funding, logistics, internal and external coordination, access to energy – which can become a weapon of war – access to non-Government Controlled Areas.
- Local actors remain the main providers of humanitarian aid, especially when humanitarian corridors are not available. Nevertheless, there is a lack of support for local actors, who need to meet numerous donors' administrative requirements.
- Ukraine might be a game changer on the issue of neutrality and localisation.
- Raising awareness about humanitarian principles is of utmost importance to ensure these are not forgotten and properly understood. This is also crucial to get society acquainted with humanitarian principles and being able to call on politicians for their respect.

Panel III: Reflections on how to address the record level of humanitarian needs and increasing funding gap ahead of the European Humanitarian Forum 2023

The Global Humanitarian Overview is currently only 35% funded. Neglected crises such as Syria (in its eleventh year of conflict), Yemen (seventh year), the Horn of Africa, and Afghanistan, despite experiencing harrowing levels of humanitarian needs, have appeals that are significantly underfunded. The scale of humanitarian needs is catastrophic, and the available resources are insufficient. Several initiatives have been developed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian aid, including the Grand Bargain 2.0 and the EC initiative to expand the resource base. However, concrete steps forward are still lagging. The European Humanitarian Forum, whose first edition was co-hosted by DG ECHO and France, as holder of the Council Presidency in March 2022, is an opportunity for political actors to step up efforts toward the reduction of this ever-increasing funding gap. In this third panel, NGOs were invited to share some data on the current humanitarian funding system and the impact of these limited financial resources on the ground. Donors were then asked to share their funding priorities and plans to address the gap between needed and available resources, notably in view of the next European Humanitarian Forum in March 2023 in Brussels.

Speakers:

- Sofia Karlsson, Deputy Head of Division for Humanitarian Affairs, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden
- Vincent Stehli, Director of Operations, Acción Contra el Hambre & VOICE Board member
- Hana Volná, Deputy Head of the Department for Development cooperation and humanitarian aid, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic
- Richard Walker, Regional Director for Africa, People in Need (PIN)
- Mihaela Zupancic, Head of Unit DG ECHO E.1.



Moderator: Maria Groenewald, Director, VOICE

Key Highlights

- Humanitarian needs are drastically increasing. However, both private and institutional funding is quite steady. The funding gap is not new, but the current global instability and challenges are unprecedented.
- It is extremely hard to get reliable data on some EU Member States' (MS) contributions to Official Development Assistance, especially on the humanitarian share.
- NGOs are the main implementers of humanitarian aid worldwide, whether international, national, or local.
- It is crucial to increase EU MS' contributions to cover the funding gap. Nevertheless, it is also important to look outside the EU and enlarge the humanitarian donor base.
- Localisation is key to addressing the more protracted crises. Local response capacities need to be further developed.
- A nexus approach is confirmed to be crucial to addressing crises more holistically. However, financial tools to implement it remain unsuitable. Denmark could provide a good example of how nexus funding could be implemented.
- The EHF is a way to accelerate policy discussions about humanitarian aid at the European level. More specifically, this should be an opportunity to get political actors more familiar with humanitarian needs and challenges.

VOICE recommendations for the EU and its MS

- **Ensure that the speed and scale of funding provided to Ukraine is replicated for all humanitarian crises, current, and future.**
- **Promote and uphold IHL, support humanitarian access, protect civilians and aid workers.**
- **Guarantee the delivery of principled humanitarian aid, by ensuring that humanitarian aid funding allocations prioritise life-saving aid and are not reallocated for any political or economic considerations.**
- **Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian aid by meeting the Grand Bargain 2.0 commitments in terms of quality funding.**
- **Adapt financial frameworks and tools to a nexus approach in line with humanitarian principles and built on NGOs' experiences.**
- **Significantly increase funding for DRR and emergency preparedness, especially in fragile contexts.**
- **Guarantee that the next EHF will combine interesting panel discussions with specific outcomes to meet the key challenges in addressing the record level of humanitarian needs.**

This event was co-organised by VOICE, the network of 87 European humanitarian NGOs, and FoRS, the Czech national platform of humanitarian and development CSOs,



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