

VOICE POSITION PAPER

Humanitarian aid in European Commission external action funding (post-2013 Multi-Annual Financial Framework)

The future European Union budget must respond to the challenges of the changing global environment and set priorities for action both inside and outside of the EU to address them. EU humanitarian aid as an instrument will not solve the challenges faced across the world by itself, but acting in solidarity with those in need is a core European value. Needs-based humanitarian response to save lives and relieve suffering must be a priority. Quality humanitarian action also provides a solid foundation for reconstruction and rehabilitation which prepares the way for sustainable development.

Strong evidence of the rising humanitarian needs across the globe is given by the United Nations having launched their biggest funding appeal ever (€ 5.7 billion) for 2011. Over the coming years, humanitarian needs and the related costs will continue to increase due to external factors such as climate change, population growth and pressure on scarce resources, leading to more devastating natural disasters and conflicts. Given these challenges, the European Union's role as the biggest humanitarian donor will thus even be more crucial in the future.

Humanitarian aid is a common European goal

Reaching out to people in need across the world, humanitarian aid is essential in implementing European values and demonstrating the solidarity of European citizens towards those affected by disaster.

Providing rapid, principles-based support to vulnerable populations following man-made and natural disasters is a strategic objective of the EU, in line with the EU 2020 strategy. This is confirmed in the Lisbon Treaty, which contains a specific legal basis for EU Humanitarian Aid. Moreover, in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid^[i], the member states, the European Parliament and the European Commission (EC) have agreed upon common values, principles and objectives of EU Humanitarian aid. They reiterated that humanitarian aid is a shared competence between them, which builds upon a long tradition.

In addition, EU citizens widely support EU Humanitarian Aid, as demonstrated by the 2010 Eurobarometer (a significant 79% expressed support)^[ii].

The added value of European Commission Humanitarian Aid

The EU collectively accounts for about 40% of the world's humanitarian aid^[iii]. Due to its scale and composition, the EU can mobilise an adequate amount of money and respond to disasters in a coordinated and comprehensive way. In addition, as the biggest humanitarian donor, the EU can influence the international humanitarian agenda and multiply good donorship practices.

At the heart of this is the humanitarian aid allocated via the European Commission (EC). In 2010, 140 million people have benefited directly and indirectly from EC humanitarian aid^[iv]. The EC structures for humanitarian aid, including its funding mechanisms, field experts, and wide range of quality implementing partners, means it can respond in a timely and effective way to sudden disasters, showing flexibility in allocations and means of response.

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Moreover, EC humanitarian aid maintains a unique balance between addressing sudden emergencies and forgotten, long term crises. The reason is that EC humanitarian aid is based on professional humanitarian needs assessments, looking solely at needs of affected populations with the aim of saving lives. While the quality and timeliness of EC humanitarian aid can contribute to the EU's external visibility, EC humanitarian aid must not be driven either by visibility or political/security purposes.

EC humanitarian aid money is efficiently spent, as confirmed in the assessment by the European Court of Auditors, and accountably spent through direct funding to a diversity of professional humanitarian civilian actors (NGOs, Red Cross, United Nations). These humanitarian actors manage to reach a wide variety of affected populations in conflict situations and natural disasters. Their long term involvement is crucial for the impact of humanitarian aid operations.

The solid field expertise of the EC's humanitarian and civil protection aid department (DG ECHO) (112 experts and 315 local staff in the field) combined with the professional implementation by the partners mentioned above, contribute to quality delivery of aid and better targeting of disaster affected populations. Recent independent evaluations confirm that the EC is a quality donor. DARA (Development Assistance Research Associates) ranks ECHO 6th of 23 OECD donors, while the UK Department for International Development states that "*Programming, peer reviews, planning, procurement, independent implementation monitoring and evaluation are standard across the EC and allow the EC to make efficiency savings*".^[v]

Future funding for EU Humanitarian Aid: recommendations:

1. It is crucial that there is a separate budget line for EU Humanitarian Aid in the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) in order to enable independent decision making at EC level. This is necessary to uphold the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence, which were agreed upon in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid as the fundamental basis for EU humanitarian aid. As the Consensus (art.10) confirms, "*This principled approach is essential to the acceptance and ability of the EU, and humanitarian actors in general, to operate on the ground in often complex political and security contexts*". It is fundamental for the security of implementing partners and affected populations that humanitarian aid is perceived as independent in the field.

2. EC humanitarian aid requires at least €1 billion for each year of the next MFF, based on the evolution of humanitarian needs and given that the humanitarian aid budget is efficiently spent. The last few years, DG ECHO consistently had to use budgetary reinforcements (the Emergency Aid Reserve) to be able to meet humanitarian needs, demonstrating a shortage of core funding for operations which should be addressed in the next MFF.

3. Development funding in the next MFF should explicitly integrate Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). The EU should support preparedness of disaster prone countries, including building up their institutional capacity. Close coordination between humanitarian and development funding instruments is essential to ensure that the DRR experience of the humanitarian community benefits development. Within the new MFF, development instruments should be able to directly fund DRR initiatives as well as supporting its mainstreaming. This will not only lead to a better sustainability of DRR activities undertaken by humanitarian actors and to poverty reduction, but it will also save money by mitigating future crises.

4. The EU has to make tangible adaptations to their financial instruments, making them more flexible to ensure the effective transition from relief to recovery and development phases. In order to enhance the impact of the EU's action in the humanitarian field, the link with rehabilitation and development (LRRD) should be ensured. However, under current structures and instruments, EU financial support to LRRD is insufficient and ineffective. There is a lack of follow-up of short-term funding cycles and a lack of flexibility in longer-term instruments. In the next MFF there is a need for reliable and flexible funding for LRRD, in order to ensure that aid is more sustainable and adapted to local needs.

^[i] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:025:0001:0012:EN:PDF>

^[ii] http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_343_en.pdf, p.38.

^[iii] Speech Commissioner Georgieva at International conference organised by Order of Malta, 27-28 January 2011.

^[iv] Ibid.

^[v] http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/mar/multilateral_aid_review.pdf, p.179 (page DG ECHO).